





# **Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe**

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, BULGARIA, CROATIA,  
KOSOVO, FYR OF MACEDONIA, MOLDOVA,  
MONTENEGRO, ROMANIA AND SERBIA



ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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**Les politiques d'éducation pour les étudiants à risque  
et ceux présentant un handicap en Europe du Sud-Est**

BOSNIE-HERZÉGOVINE, BULGARIE, CROATIE, KOSOVO,

L'EX-RÉPUBLIQUE YOUGOSLAVE DE MACÉDOINE, MOLDAVIE, MONTENEGRO, ROUMANIE ET SERBIE

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## *Foreword*

These reports on the situation of education development for students at risk and those with disabilities in South Eastern Europe have been prepared by the Centre for Co-operation with Non-Member Economies (CCNM) and the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) of the OECD. They contribute to the commitment of the OECD to the overall aims and strategies of the Education Reform Initiative of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe by taking stock of the current situation and contributing to the identification and implementation of education policies of ministries of education in this region.

This book offers reports on special needs education policies of education systems in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. These reports are part of the follow-up of the *Reviews of National Policies for Education in South Eastern Europe* (OECD, 2003). This volume, for the most part, offers contributions by ministry experts from the region itself. This clearly indicates the commitment and attention of education ministries in South Eastern Europe for issues of education for children with special needs within the framework of ongoing education reform.

The country reports, being one of the cornerstones of the project “Education Development for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe”, serve not only as a reference point but also as encouragement for further action in this field. Following these findings, a number of seminars and related activities have been and will be organised for key stakeholders: ministry officials, experts, teachers and statisticians. Furthermore, the intention is to disseminate the findings of these reports to the widest possible audience, thus encouraging the various efforts in the countries themselves.

This OECD activity was made possible by grants from Finland, Norway, the Flemish Community of Belgium and the World Bank. Additional support was provided by the Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Culture and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

Overall co-ordination and substantive support were provided by Peter Evans, Christine Stromberger, Gerhard Kovař and Ian Whitman, with technical support from Conor Breen and Ginette Mériot of the OECD Secretariat.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Ischinger". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Barbara Ischinger

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## Synthesis Report

The synthesis report compares the country reports of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia using the following guidelines: existing legal frameworks, scope of policy development, statistics and indicators, teacher training, involvement of parents, pedagogical concepts, curriculum development and school organisation. It underlines the fact that the analysed education systems only recently started to pay full attention to education for children with special needs and the concept of inclusive education. Without a doubt, international policy documents such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or the Framework for Action of the World Education Forum in Dakar have played a crucial role in identifying and implementing reform policies with respect to inclusive education. Though a number of countries share a joint historical and political background, the resources, scope and methods for adjusting education practice to students with special needs vary considerably from country to country. Nevertheless, some problems still remain comparable, such as the scarcity of reliable statistical data or the lack of public awareness for the concerns of inclusive education.



## Introduction

All countries participating in the project include the education of “children with special needs” as part of their national education systems, even though there are different approaches and policies chosen by individual governments and education ministries. Since the political changes in the region in the early 1990s, national education systems have undergone extensive reforms and each country has developed a strategy with policies to implement changes.

In some countries (*e.g.* Bulgaria and Kosovo), the implementation of inclusive education is a priority of the government and part of national education law. Croatia also gives priority to children with special needs. In FYR of Macedonia, on-going education reform aims at the social integration of all children with special needs, including children with learning difficulties as well as gifted and talented children. In Moldova, the existing education system covers education for children with special needs in terms of offering special training to them but the government strives for the social integration of children with difficulties. The same goal is shared by the government of Montenegro, where the on-going education reform intends to create conditions to provide for the integration of children with special needs into regular education. In Romania, special education is part of the national education system. In Serbia, the status of special education and special schools is not clearly regulated within the education system, but an expert group for special needs education has been established by the Ministry of Education which has prepared an analysis of the current situation and made proposals for reforms in this sector.

In all countries, there is an official commission, body or expert institution dealing with the classification of children with difficulties and deciding on their enrolment in special schools or in the regular school system. Parents are usually involved in this decision process.

The process of integration of children with any kind of difficulties, disabilities or special needs into regular education is under way in all countries – even in those countries that do not yet have inclusive education as a goal in their legislation or policies.

In all countries, education for children with special needs is organised through:

- Special schools.
- Special classes in regular schools.

- Integration of children with special needs into regular classes.

The countries differ in the degree of difficulty and the number of children being integrated into regular education. In Bulgaria, more and more children are being integrated into regular schools, but there are special schools for other categories of disabilities. In Kosovo only a small number of children with “different disabilities” are integrated into regular schools while in Croatia some of the children with “developmental difficulties” are educated in special groups and classes within regular primary schools. In FYR of Macedonia, primary education is organised within a network of special institutions and in both regular and special classes in regular schools. In Moldova children with severe problems and difficulties are transferred to special institutions run by the Ministry of Labour. However, several pilot programmes on inclusion have been instituted. There are also special institutions for abused children, orphans and children with psychological problems. In Montenegro, there is a network of institutions for “children with difficulties in development”. Some inclusive schools and special classes in regular schools also exist. In Romania, according to the degree of the disability (medium and severe), children are enrolled in special schools. Children with minor deficiencies, learning difficulties and behavioural problems, etc. are integrated into regular schools where they are provided with special support. In Serbia, education for children with special needs is organised through special schools for children, special classes in regular schools and regular classes in regular schools including some children with difficulties or special needs. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, education for the majority of children with special needs still occurs in special schools or special classrooms within regular schools. However, attempts are currently being made to move toward one integrated education system that values all pupils equally.

The level and type of special support children receive in regular or special schools also varies from country to country, as does the extent and type of training of teachers and other personnel as well as the availability of other resources and equipment of the schools and institutions.

A wide range of interpretations of “special needs education” can be found in all countries. To describe “children with special needs”, different terminology is used within the respective education systems. The reports speak of “disabilities, difficulties, disorders, deficiencies, developmental obstacles, etc.” and it is not always clear whether these children are at risk or have special needs such as mental, physical, psychological, health or social problems. This results, in part, from the application of the model of “defectology” or from a medically-oriented classification which is still applied.

Recently, almost all countries have increasingly begun to consider school leavers, children of minorities, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with social problems as “children at risk”. An example of a broadening of the definition of children with special needs includes FYR of Macedonia, which intends to replace the expression “physical and psychological difficulties” with “special needs” and includes a broader social context in this definition. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and Serbia also express awareness that poverty, the economic situation, poor living environment and children without parents, etc. need to be included in the category of “children with special needs”. In Montenegro, this also includes gifted children.

## Legal framework

With the exception of Kosovo, which has a special political status, the countries in the study have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). All countries refer to international documents including the CRC, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) and the Framework for Action of the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) in their respective strategy and policy papers.

All countries have undergone legislative changes relating to education since the political changes in 1989. Governments are aware of the necessity of education reform in their countries and they have undertaken enormous steps toward education for all and toward “European standards” in education.

All countries are supported in their efforts of education reform by the international community, especially within the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe of 1999. This aims to support the region’s countries “in their efforts to foster peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity in order to achieve stability in the whole region”. Ministers of Education and Higher Education also signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2003/04 in which they commit themselves to co-operation with respect to the European Union’s “Detailed Work Programme on the Follow-Up of the Objectives of Education and Training Systems in Europe”. Signatory ministries also stated that “Widening access to quality education and ensuring equal opportunities – taking account of gender equality – for national minorities, especially Roma communities and other disadvantaged groups including members of low income groups, people with disabilities, citizens from isolated rural communities, etc.” is a priority area for education development and reform.

In all countries, the Ministry of Education is responsible for education. In some countries, this task, especially the issue of special needs education,

is shared with the Ministry of Health and Ministry for Social Affairs or the Ministry of Labour. In addition, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the division into entities and cantons has led to differing education standards and individual characteristics of education policy.

In the course of legislative changes concerning education, almost all countries focus in one way or another on “special needs education”. For example, Bulgaria adopted a Public Education Act in 2002, followed by several amendments focussing on special needs education. In Croatia, the education of children with special needs is regulated by different laws concerning different segments of education. For example, the *Pre-School Education Act* gives priority to children with special needs, but at the same time, it is mentioned that this is not sufficiently supported due to budgetary and other resource problems. In Kosovo, the *Law on Primary and Secondary Education* provides education for all children. There is no special law for children with special needs but in a strategy plan for education development it is recommended that a policy be developed for education for children with special needs.

In FYR of Macedonia, the *Law for Elementary Education* covers the obligation to provide education for children with special needs, children with learning difficulties and for gifted children. The law includes several articles on the various groups of children with difficulties, disabilities and special needs. In Moldova, the “Law of Education” covers special needs education and in the “National Strategy of Education for All”, special needs education is one of the three priorities. Various cantons throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina still have many obsolete laws in practice. Nonetheless, the *Overall Law on Elementary and Secondary Education* of 2003 states that regular primary schools should educate children with difficulties in regular classrooms.

In Montenegro, special needs education is covered by seven different laws: the General Law on Education (2002), the Law on Pre-school Education (2002), the Law on Elementary Education (2002), the Law on Gymnasium (2002), the Law on Secondary Vocational Education (2002), the Law on Adult Education (2002) and the Special Education Law (1992).

The Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro set up a commission to prepare a first draft for a “Law on Education of Children with Special Needs”. This draft was forwarded to the Council of Europe for consideration and they recommended that the provisions of this draft be incorporated into the General Law on Education. This was done in December 2004. In Romania, according to some international documents signed by the country, the “Education Law” refers to special education –



especially on the question of integration of children with “light and medium deficiencies into mainstream education”.

Serbia has also ratified the international documents on education and children’s rights. In the *Law on Primary School Education*, there is no reference to children with special needs but in an amendment of 2002, children with “developmental problems” are mentioned and the law also defines the procedure by which children are classified. In a *Law on the Basis of the Education System* of 2003, general principles and objectives of education are redefined and for the first time the law speaks of an “outcome of education” that could have a long-term impact on special needs education.

## Policy review focusing on special groups

### *How are special needs defined?*

Not surprisingly, given the background in defectology in South Eastern European countries, children with special needs are for the most part defined in terms of categories of disability – many referring to the terms used in defectology. However, in many countries, recent reforms have broadened the concept to include ethnic minorities and even gifted children in a few cases. Serbia is a clear example of where the concept “children who require special social support” covers this broad range of children and is preferred to “special education”. This definition closely reflects that of OECD countries in general.

The main differences between regular and special education are seen in terms of placement (*e.g.* for the most part, children with disabilities are educated in special schools) but also in terms of the need to individualise teaching to meet the needs of the pupils. Changes in class sizes are also widely accepted as being important. Special schools usually have more favourable teacher-pupil ratios and in regular schools, class sizes were reduced if they included pupils with disabilities. At the secondary level, there is a tendency for special education needs students to be trained in vocational schools with the clear intention of future employment and not future higher education. One country report made it clear that a disabled student with the secondary school certificate would be able to access tertiary level education. In another, there was no link between special and regular education with parallel systems and no connection between regular and special schools.

### ***How are concepts of integration and inclusion understood and defined? How can inclusions be implemented?***

As in almost all OECD countries, special schools, special classes and regular classes are found in all South Eastern European countries. In a few, many schools are both institutional and residential. Following international agreements (e.g. Salamanca and the United Nations charter on the rights of the child), most countries have given considerable thought to developing inclusion. The understanding of the concept of inclusion, in contrast to integration, varies widely. In some countries, there is no difference in the usage of these terms. However, for the most part, they are viewed as clearly different – integration is understood as re-inserting special education needs students into regular classes and inclusion implies a substantial change in the way the school functions so that the school makes adaptations to meet the needs of the child. This will often mean that children go to their local school and receive individualised teaching. Countries recognise that this requires considerable changes in thinking about education provision.

To implement inclusion requires reforms at a number of levels in the system and in a wide range of factors. These include changes in the legal framework, changes in terminology, in financial provision, in the extent and type of services that support education, in teacher training – both pre-service and in-service (INSET), in physical access to the schools and in pre-school education. Parents also need to become more involved and the attitudes of teachers in both special and regular schools need to be changed. Parents of non-disabled students also need to become more accepting. Furthermore, better monitoring procedures need to be implemented.

In short, there needs to be cultural change at many levels, with new strategies and policies at the school level that must be implemented in practice. Some countries have addressed implementation issues directly and have envisaged the importance of the development of early intervention and the enrolment in pre-school education and the first year of primary school. In parallel, there could be the transfer of students with less severe disabilities from special schools to regular classes. In addition, some special schools become open schools for all children in the community. Teachers in special schools may also help with integration by becoming flexible and travelling from school to school. Certain teachers selected from this group may be given a more extended role to support and mentor in regular schools and to develop specialised materials.

### ***Are all children educable and is it a government responsibility?***

Although this was not always true in the past, now, in all countries, the government takes responsibility for the education of *all* pupils, at least up to

the end of primary education, although this responsibility might not always rest with the ministry of education. Nonetheless, because many of these changes are very recent in some countries, not all children with disabilities attend school.

***Are the needs of disabled and at risk students taken into consideration at all levels of the education reform process?***

The responses to this question were meagre and mixed, extending from fully to not at all.

***Are resources substantial or minimal?***

Resources were universally considered inadequate. In most countries, few if any additional resources were given to schools for the education of children with disabilities. Some special school staff and administrators also fear that integration will mean the loss of jobs for staff of special schools.

***What factors are considered to be barriers and facilitators of inclusion and equity?***

Facilitators were education reforms introducing positive legal frameworks, policies and the support of authorities, commitment to international agreements, the role of non-governmental organisations, school interest and flexibility, the professional autonomy of teachers, their training – especially INSET and positive teacher attitudes. Other facilitators are motivated and dedicated parents, school boards and community organisations including numerous domestic and foreign assistance organisations. Co-ordination among service providers, including auxiliary services such as for healthcare and social services, is an essential facilitator of sound education systems. One country identified the role of marking and the importance of a system that allows for individualisation. Individual education plans are another facilitator of success in inclusion and equity. Other facilitators are a positive socio-emotional climate including sufficient equipment and materials in the school and classroom. Resources already present in special schools are facilitators of inclusion when successfully taken advantage of in training and assistance for regular schools. The use of the media to promote reform was noted in some reports.

Barriers were manifold – the economic situation itself, the legal framework, lack of clarity in the role of stakeholders, lack of diagnostics, lack of pre-school education, lack of quality for special education needs in regular schools, lack of data, lack of teacher training, negative attitudes of non-disabled children (leading to isolation) and their parents and teachers in mainstream schools, prejudice, turf disputes over responsibilities, oversized

classes, over-demanding work, a lack of materials, inadequate resources, limited access to other essential services, rigidity, the difficulty of using a multi-disciplinary approach, the insensitivity of marking systems for assessing individual progress, subject teaching at secondary level whereby children meet a large number of teachers in contrast to the single class teacher at primary level and age restrictions on access to primary education.

### ***New policy developments for disabled and at risk students***

Children who are “at risk” are of increasing concern throughout the region. Bulgaria points to the many children who drop out of school, who are orphans and who may live on the street or may even become part of illicit trafficking rings. Many of the children who drop out and those living in poverty are from Roma families. Remoteness from school, social isolation, a lack of family interest in education, unattractive pedagogy and poor health are all given as reasons for leaving school. Interestingly, many of these factors were also identified in the OECD/CERI study<sup>1</sup> on children at risk in OECD countries. In Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and some other countries, the government also provides some residential provision for such children.

It is clear that there are new policy initiatives intended to improve education for these groups. New laws on the rights of children are being put into place stressing, as in Serbia, democratisation, de-centralisation, de-politicisation and evaluation of the education system in the context of the general economy. More pressure is being put on regular schools to accept all children. The need for a child-centred and individualised approach for all children is widely accepted for both disabled (including those with the most severe needs) and at risk groups (such as Roma children) with more flexibility being allowed for these groups (*e.g.* in Bulgaria, special education needs pupils are not required to repeat classes).

Changes in class sizes are being implemented and training of professionals including teachers is being made more relevant. Some countries have strategic plans for specifically addressing socio-economic factors and a lack of family support. Vocational training is also being improved.

### ***How do parents participate in the decision-making process regarding their child?***

The importance of the involvement of parents of disabled children in their education is very widely accepted by the ministries even though

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<sup>1</sup> *Inclusive Education at Work: Students with Disabilities in Mainstream Schools* (OECD, 1999)

sometimes parents may not be open-minded about having a child with disabilities and in the past parental involvement in education has been minimal. In many countries today parents are involved in school governance at various levels and can even support their children in classrooms. In addition, parents are frequently involved in the assessment of their children and can insist on their being kept in regular classes even though the support there may not be as good as it might be.

### ***How is it decided that a child needs special education?***

The trend has moved away from a specifically medical approach, often based on principles of defectology that still exists in some countries, towards a multi-disciplinary approach involving a wide range of practitioners. Criticism was made of methods which relied on a diagnosis of the child being based on a single meeting. This could lead to serious errors, *e.g.* over the unconsidered diagnosis of Roma children leading to special school placement.

### ***Who helps special education needs pupils in regular schools?***

In many countries, regular schools have support services to help with the education of pupils with disabilities. In Romania, regular schools receive support services through itinerant teachers and inter-school centres for speech therapy. Classes are often smaller. In Croatia for instance, the maximum size of a class with one special education needs pupil is 28, with two it is 26 and with three it is 24. Teaching at home is provided for pupils who become ill. There is also specific career guidance for older students.

In other countries, there is very little professional support. In FYR of Macedonia, mobile defectology units have been introduced in the context of a pilot project, but other experts may also be available. In general, a great deal of pressure is put on parents to provide the extra help the child needs.

## **Statistics and indicators**

The statistics and indicators presented in the national reports reveal a paucity of information on students with special needs in each country. Many countries state that data is either non-existent or very limited. As a result, a detailed analysis at this point is not justified. In addition, there is recognition that many special education needs children do not attend school. Furthermore, in some countries, these students find themselves in institutions run by different ministries (*e.g.* education, health, labour) and this factor, in itself, does not help in developing accurate databases.

However, countries recognise the importance of developing comprehensive databases in this area.

Where estimates are available, as in OECD countries, there are great variations in the figures. The proportion of children with disabilities in compulsory education vary from 1.7% in Bulgaria to 4.76% in Serbia and Montenegro (based on the results of a report prepared by UNICEF in the 1990s). Croatia (2.9%) and Kosovo (3.3%) are between these two extremes. (However, in Croatia, the census data provided gives a substantially lower estimate at approximately 1.3% for ISCED levels one and two. This estimate has been derived by the OECD from the data provided by Croatia).

Croatia and Kosovo provided data on special education needs students in different locations. In Croatia, approximately 66% of special education needs students are in regular schools with the remainder being in special classes or special schools. The picture in Kosovo is more complex because of incomplete data but it is indicated that 90% of special education needs students attend regular primary level schools. Bulgaria educated a small minority of students with disabilities in regular schools (0.1%). This includes kindergartens, schools and vocational schools and it is unclear at present how this figure relates to the figure of 1.7% given above for Bulgaria. In Serbia, approximately 6% of those with disabilities are in special schools.

Data from Romania show that over the last few years the raw numbers of children attending special schools has declined from 53 446 to 27 539 whilst those in regular schools has increased from 1 076 to 11 493. Simply adding the figures together for each year in the different locations and subtracting one from the other leaves 15 670 children unaccounted for. While this figure is a crude estimate, because annual changes in the school roll for all children are not given and therefore cannot be taken into account, it seems likely that some other factor is operating to explain the observed differences.

A couple of other features are worthy of note. Serbia and Montenegro provides estimates of children with hearing problems (1%) and visual problems (0.5%) both of which are substantially higher than OECD data (hearing impairment OECD range 0.05% to 0.31%; visual impairment 0.01% to 0.10%).

Serbia provided data on gender differences of students in special schools. At primary level the percentage of boys is 59.37% and girls is 40.63%. At secondary level the percentage of boys is 63.51% and girls is 36.49%. Similar proportions were cited in Kosovo for students with disabilities (61% boys and 39% girls) and 55% boys to 45% girls for students with special education needs in regular schools. This ratio of

approximately 60 to 40, being three boys for every two girls replicates almost exactly the gender ratios for these students in OECD countries.

Croatia also provided data on the numbers of other professionals involved in education for supporting special education needs students. But no comparative data is available to put these figures into perspective. Interested readers may find the data in the Croatian report. In Croatia, there are seven special schools for every 100 000 primary school students with an average size of 114 students per school. For secondary schools the equivalent figures are seven special schools per 100 000 secondary students with an average size of 87 students per school.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Duga” a local NGO carried out extensive research which details numbers of children and types of disabilities throughout the country.

In all of the reports, the limited nature of the data is remarked upon which emphasises the need for substantial investment and technical development in this area.

## **Teacher training**

The reports clearly recognise the importance of teacher training for teachers of both disabled and non-disabled children but the impression is given that much of the training is theoretical. Training is differentiated according to the different demands made in pre-school, primary and secondary education. Training on special education needs students for regular teachers is very limited in all countries. Training for teachers to work in special schools with particular types of disability is generally available, often within the “defectology” framework. Training for teachers working in pre-schools is also very limited and non-existent in some countries.

However, despite the current limitations, many countries are planning to reform their training arrangements in the light of the needs demanded by inclusion. For instance, Bulgaria and Romania are planning for all teachers to receive some training about special education needs students.

A particularly notable feature is that much of the in-service training offered in this area is provided by NGOs and through foreign aid. University-based courses seem to be generally regarded as too theoretical.

Substantial efforts are clearly needed to develop appropriate training courses and local facilities for all teachers.

## Training for other professionals

Courses exist in some countries for the training of other professionals such as psychologists and speech therapists but this is not universal in the region. Romania runs INSET courses for school managers and evaluators.

## Parents

Most countries recognise the important role that parents play, not only in the running of the school at the level of the school board but also in the education of their children with disabilities. Some give them extensive access to classrooms so that they may support their children in the schools and although others are considerably more restrictive, the importance of parental involvement is recognised and there are plans to involve parents more fully in the future. In Montenegro, legislation which is currently being drafted dictates that parents can choose whether or not their child should be involved in the inclusive education programmes made available in primary schools. Many countries, such as Moldova and Romania, run courses and seminars for parents about the education of disabled children.

## Pedagogy

The education of children with special needs in South Eastern European countries has been dominated in the past by the principles of defectology which of itself encourages the development of special schools provision. However, more recently the acceptance of principles of inclusion into regular school has created the opportunity for re-thinking the pedagogy for these students in almost all countries. Current views, involving putting the child at the centre of teaching and the development of individual teaching plans, are widely evident if not totally established in practice. A lack of resources, especially human resources and teaching materials, is identified as a serious limitation and few countries seem to have good access to information technology as a teaching resource. Particular influences in encouraging a “constructivist” approach have been the “Step by Step” programme and, in Kosovo, the support provided by Finland for the development of teacher training for special education needs students. Other NGO and pilot project work throughout the region also deserves recognition in this regard. Although these methods are being developed for special education needs students, there is widespread recognition that they are also useful for non-special education needs students. In general terms, however, a different pedagogy is foreseen for special education needs students which is more resource-intensive and more individualised. It is recognised that the full frontal teaching method, where the teacher is an information source



only, is not always appropriate and there needs to be change towards the idea of the teacher as an organiser of learning for pupils. This teaching method uses a more information-seeking, problem-solving and independent approach to their learning and thus engages the child more creatively – stimulating independence in learning, critical thinking etc. These are all believed to be essential cognitive strategies for functioning effectively in the knowledge economy.

Co-operative learning – in which children help each other – is also stimulated by this process and encourages and confirms the importance of team work and collaboration. Providing multiple approaches for these children, as described very fully in the Kosovo report, are important innovations to help special education needs children learn more effectively while keeping in line with their individual differences. These strategies enable class teachers to use some of their time to understand the learning difficulties that students are having and to use this information in new lesson plans and in the development of new teaching materials. These materials should motivate and activate children, be based on real life, increase social behaviour, be multi-sensorial (*i.e.* give the children the opportunity to use all senses) and meet their specific needs.

## Curriculum

It is clear that in all countries there have been and continue to be substantial changes in the process of curriculum development, often implemented through newly established special needs boards or bureaus. A number of trends can be identified. Firstly, the control of the curriculum, which in the past was by central authorities, is now shared between central and local authorities and communities. Secondly, the influence of moves towards inclusive education has led countries to look at the similarities and differences between regular and special curricula and to begin the process of aligning them. There are still substantial differences between curricula in regular schools and those in special schools. Thirdly, there is extensive use of the individualisation of the curriculum through, for example, individual education plans (IEPs) and the use of formative evaluation through close monitoring of individual student progress. In Romania, the more extensive individual service plan (ISP), provides for a more comprehensive set of supports for special education needs students.

This curriculum development process is described in general terms in Croatia at four levels:

- General curricula set centrally.

- Executive curriculum (education plan and programmes) with local implementation.
- Operational curriculum prepared by a group of teachers or a single teacher responsible for a subject area across the school.
- Class implementation by a teacher, which would allow for individualisation.

There is also the development of new textbooks and materials. All of these reforms follow from the widely stated and modern view that education needs to change so that schools can adapt to the needs of the children rather than children having to adapt to the demands of the school.

Another interesting feature is for special education needs students to be offered a more skills and work-oriented secondary curriculum. It would appear that there is a general view that special education needs students are not able to attend higher education institutions, which is certainly not the case for all of them. While the attention to education for employment is clearly of great importance for all students, expectations for special education needs students should not be restricted at the same time.

## **School organisation**

In general terms, schools are organised centrally and have the same basic structures with rules about curriculum, hours worked, teacher to pupil ratios, etc. In almost all countries the teacher to pupil ratio is much more favourable in special schools in contrast to regular schools. In many countries, there are a range of boards and councils that ensure the involvement of staff, parents and pupils in decision-making in the schools. Schools also often work in shifts. For the most part these schools are not readily accessible to students with disabilities and although, in principle, the systems are supposed to be adapted to special education needs students, in practice, most countries report that they are not. Not only is physical accessibility a problem (*e.g.* lack of modification to the buildings) but there are also difficulties in the flexibility of funding mechanisms and in teacher attitudes in mainstream schools towards pupils with disabilities.

In Romania, education provision for students with cognitive and complex disabilities is in special schools while those with physical and sensory disabilities are in regular schools. Furthermore, in that country the examination systems allow for accommodations for special education needs students, *e.g.* in terms of extra time and also the presentation of the exams in bigger print or in Braille for students with visual impairments. These students may also go on to higher education if they pass the baccalaureate

examinations. Other countries report the development of special classes in regular schools to help bridge the gap between special school provision and inclusion.

Provision for children with disabilities is mainly through special schools, although all countries have policies, albeit at various levels of development, for creating inclusion. In some countries, special school provision is in boarding institutions. These schools are adapted to the particular needs of their pupils, have very favourable teacher to pupil ratios and are supported by additional consultants such as itinerant teachers, psychologists and speech therapists.

In general, there is a lack of accessibility, a lack of resources as well as hostile teacher attitudes and thus education for special needs students is in need of improvement. On the positive side, most countries report development of new policies and practices towards creating inclusive education. There is clearly a long way to go in all of these countries.

## Chapter 1 – Bosnia & Herzegovina

The National Report on “Education Policies for at Risk Students and those with Disabilities” of Bosnia and Herzegovina describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as the reform efforts underway. It mentions the specific situation of special needs and inclusive education in a society and identifies the problems in establishing countrywide valid standards due to a highly decentralised and scattered education system. Although essential progress has been made in the past three years with respect to education reform, Bosnia and Herzegovina has just begun to explore issues in relation to inclusive education. As is the case with all of the other reports presented in this book, this account covers the following sections: a short overview of the education system followed by chapters describing the legal framework policies focusing on special groups, statistics and indicators, the current situation of teacher training, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. The report also describes necessary goals and strategies of policy development to improve the situation for disabled and at risk children.



## Introduction

A crucial step in changing society's views towards inclusion of persons with special needs is the development of a positive attitude towards others, including respect of human rights (Ibralić, 2002). In addition, economic development, technical knowledge and expertise are also important factors. Until the middle of the twentieth century, children with special needs remained in segregated education systems that had the intention of “repairing” the child and preparing him or her to return to the community and society (Whittaker, 1995; in Ibralić, 2002). Students with impairments or disabilities were excluded from regular schools and the local community. It was taken for granted that the education system had no problems to overcome – it was rather the pupil who “needed to be changed” (Ornstein, 1998, p.151). However, the increasing democratisation of education throughout the twentieth century, with the new vision of education being “not a privilege for the few, but a right for all” (UNESCO, 2001), promoted the principle of inclusion as a basis for education systems and schools by meeting the needs of all pupils.

This chapter will describe the situation of persons with special needs in the complex context of post-war society in Bosnia and Herzegovina – still characterised by intensive divisions, struggles and prejudices that may continue to last for many years. In all state and local legal documents, from the constitution to other laws and regulations, non-discrimination is specifically highlighted. The constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Article 2, paragraph 4), states that all persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be free from discrimination based on gender, race, colour, language, religion, politics and other opinions, nationality or origin. However, policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina has developed faster than implementation and, for the time being, discrimination towards persons of different ethnicities and persons of all ages with disabilities remains an important issue. Consequently, the development and democratisation of society have been delayed and barriers remain to further changes. Further efforts to reduce discrimination need to be made in the future.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was the battlefield of a cruel war. The war lasted three years and had devastating effects – the dissolution of families, of small communities and of the entire social structure. This destruction of an environment of tolerance and peaceful co-existence was one of the most tragic long-term consequences of the war. A society is infinitely more

difficult to reconstruct than roads or bridges. The destruction of the system of public administration and governance, the interruption in the development of knowledge and technological innovation and the brain drain of qualified workers and experts has had a tremendous effect. After seven years of reconstruction and recovery with broad international support, the country is still at a lower level of development than in earlier periods (Bosnia and Herzegovina Human Development Report, 2003, p.15). Before the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina, being part of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, was a progressive state of medium development, with a gross domestic product of USD 2 450 per capita in 1990 and with developed capacities in the social and health sectors. Today one of the main challenges is re-building the economy. The UNESCO Report on *Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina Priorities for 2002* underlines how essential the economic situation is for the continuous respect of other fundamental civil and political rights and other freedoms, which can be threatened by a weak economy. Improving the economic situation will require European standards in education and training, economic growth, the creation of new jobs, and increased employment rates and living standards (Smajić, 2004). Poverty and unemployment still remain high. The unemployment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently approximately 40%. A survey of unemployed persons shows that 21% of unemployed persons had completed secondary education. However, the disparity between the output of secondary vocational education and the requirements of the labour market is significant (Programme for Finnish Co-operation in the Education Sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2003-2006).

The loss of life and material devastation during the 1992-1995 war were enormous. According to the *Bosnia and Herzegovina Human Development Report (UNESCO)* of 2003, the number of dead or missing inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been estimated to be at about 258 000 – a loss of 5.9% of the pre-war population. Most of the health expenses in the country are still covered by emergency and humanitarian funds. War in Bosnia and Herzegovina stopped all development in social policies and led to a large number of invalids. Over 2 500 children are orphans and over 30 000 children lost one parent. Around 25 000 elderly people are in need of different kinds of care. One third of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have the status of refugees in other countries and 70% of citizens have the status of displaced persons living under extremely difficult social conditions. Today, there are around 800 000 people in need of social assistance; 500 000 have monthly incomes lower than BAM 20 (approximately USD 10), while the estimated price of a typical basket of consumer goods needed for one month is around USD 112 per person. During the war, state

social policies completely ceased to function and at present, over 50% of institutions, including social centres, exist only in name. As an example of the overburdened social services, each social worker in the Federation is responsible for 13 000 citizens (UNESCO Human Development Report, Bosnia and Herzegovina Youth, 2000).

### **Socio-economic conditions and their impact on the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

In terms of education, Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a unique situation in that no overarching governmental ministry of education exists. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports only has a co-ordinating function amongst the various regions and administrations. Each Canton has its own ministry which is fully responsible for education policy and implementation. The Office of the Higher Representative (OHR) is the only body with a mandate and responsibility for policies throughout the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the education sector, the OHR has transferred co-ordination responsibility to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) which operates through six working groups. As a result the role of the international community in the field of education is very strong. According to the national report from the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004), in the Republic of Srpska, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for monitoring policy, planning and implementation. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBH) it is the responsibility of education ministries in each canton. The Federal Ministry of Education has the role of co-ordinator of cantonal ministries. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska, formed a joint commission to promote standards in education. This basic principle of operation is also valid for the Higher Education Co-ordination Board. These two bodies act to facilitate the formulation of a coherent education policy framework.

The division into entities and cantons has led to differing legislation, differing languages of instruction, differing curricula and textbooks, differing modes of administration and differing standards. The burden on fiscal and human resources of this sort of reduplication of programmes, institutions and administrations is not sustainable. To some extent, the atomisation of policy left space for reinforcing ethnic divisions, *e.g.* textbooks have been used which contain material offensive to others. There is now a tendency towards finding common ground, both at the classroom level and on the level of textbook production, but also in terms of structural and systemic change. Much progress has been made recently in gaining



consensus from all ministries on the need to modernise the education system and bring it up to European quality standards. This policy is the most important trend of development.

Poverty can pose an important obstacle to achieving full access for all children to primary education, even though primary education is, for the time being, most resistant to poverty-related difficulties. The *UNESCO Bosnia and Herzegovina Human Development Report* (2003) points to a connection between socio-economic conditions and education matters. World Bank research has proven that poor populations have, on average, one and a half years' less education than wealthier groups. The urban population goes to school for an average of two years longer than the rural population. Furthermore, poverty strongly affects pre-school education. While an average of 4.3% of all children attend a pre-school institution, just 1.1% of children from poor families attend (even though they could be subsidised), compared to 5.6% from richer families. The data on primary school indicate that this level of education is the least subject to inequality based on gender, regional background (rural/urban) or household income.

Besides poverty, as stated in the *UNESCO Human Development Report*, national discrimination also contributes to the falling enrolment rate. In the years since the end of the war, the education sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been shaken by the “discovery” that children of returnees to areas in which they belong to an ethnic minority have been prevented from attending the nearest school. This has been accompanied by reminders of the past disregard of the enrolment of Roma children, as well as children with developmental and physical disabilities. When taken together, this constitutes a powerful obstacle to achieving full enrolment in primary schools. Although certain attempts have been made to overcome discrimination of this type and some results have been achieved, they have been moving slowly and are often the result of the efforts of only individual schools and teacher collectives.

## **Legislative framework**

### **Law on pre-school education in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

In the law on pre-school education, the main approach to schooling is outlined in Article 2 which states that scientifically grounded theories of education and child development should be applied in preschools, respecting

the level of development, individual needs and characteristics of the child. Article 12 states that “children with special needs are included in organisations of preschool education following programmes that are adjusted to their individual needs”. Furthermore, “individual programmes adjusted to individual needs and abilities shall be created for each and every child and the necessary developmental status (intellectual, speech and language) is to be determined”. Article 13 also includes the opportunity for children with special needs at the pre-school level to be educated partially or completely within special organisations for pre-school education using full developmental programmes, specialised developmental programmes, intervention, compensation and rehabilitation programmes and programmes of strengthening parental competencies as well as programmes for pre-school children if they do not attend any kind of pre-school education activities. Article 30 states that the government budget provides the financing for the organisation of activities within the pre-school education system as well as for financing pre-school education units within hospitals, departments for children with special needs within institutions for children with special needs, as well as for minority group children (Roma children).

### **Law on primary school education**

Each child shall have the right to access to education without discrimination on any basis whatsoever. Equal access and equal possibilities shall ensure equal conditions and opportunities for all as related to enrolment and the pursuance of education. An adequate education indicates an education process which shall provide the optimal development of a child’s innate potential, intellectual capacities and moral characteristics. Elementary or primary schools are institutions of primary education and upbringing established as “ordinary, parallel or special primary schools”. Article 5 defines the age of children in school (from ages 6-15). Article 5 also states that “Inclusion shall be understood as the inclusion of persons having difficulties in development and difficulties in both learning and general social integration not only in the upbringing-education system but also in everyday life”. Special education is defined as “education for pupils with special education needs when adequate education at ordinary schools cannot be provided”. Article 27 states that no school may decide upon children’s access to education based on race, sex, language, religion, political beliefs, national or social origin or any other basis. Primary school founders, together with the primary school itself “shall ensure the functional accommodation and facilities for undisturbed access to education and participation in the education process. The same applies for children with special needs, youth and adults”.

Education for children with special needs is specifically defined in the Law on Primary School Education in Articles 48-52. Article 48 states that the education of children with special needs is a “public priority and represents an integral and unique part of the education system”. The basic aim of education for children with special education needs is to offer the same opportunities for the enjoyment of benefits of education and participation in society based on the best interests of the child. Article 48 also states that “Education of children with special needs shall be carried out at ordinary primary schools, based on the principle of integrated education, which means that all pupils, including pupils with special needs, have the right to attend ordinary classes where children with special needs should be included into educational activities in each class to the highest possible degree”.

The education process for children with special education needs at an ordinary school can be realised in groups at school or through individual work with a teacher or specialist (*i.e.* a defectologist with a specialisation), at the recommendation of a commission or by consent of the Minister of Education. In addition, a special primary school can be an integral part of upbringing and education, which could cover, in addition to the fundamental upbringing and education, some other activities, programmes, diagnostic procedures, categorising methods and an early rehabilitation of children with impediments to development. For the sake of the children who are attending the special primary school, the elementary training and education can be organised in combination with a full day sojourn. Special schools are also responsible for the teachers’ professional training. They are also obliged to carry out support and information activities with parents of students with special needs in order to support pupils to return to and abide in the ordinary residential area school.

Article 49 states that any changes in the development of a pupil should be recorded and transitions from a special to an ordinary school, or vice versa, require the school to encourage the pupil to address the Commission for Capabilities Assessments. Based on the findings and opinions issued by the Commission, the pupil shall be registered for a primary school and the information is to be reported to the Minister of Education.

Article 50 explains that the school is responsible for creating adequate learning conditions for students with special needs in primary schools. Education goals shall be identified and described by the school in co-operation with the parents. The school is permitted, with prior consent from the Ministry of Education, to engage teachers and experts for implementing special programmes for pupils with special needs. The pupils with special

education needs have the right to be educated on the basis of an individual syllabus in which education activities and goals are defined. The parents shall be provided with a written report for each term containing the pupil's scores relating to the goals determined in the plan.

Article 51 allows institutions educating children with special needs to allocate budget resources to cover the costs of an individual programme or to adjust the school environment to the physical needs of a pupil. Article 52 entitles an ordinary school to co-operate with a special school for the purpose of educating teachers through seminars, workplace training, over short or extended periods, including for individual programmes and other activities, with a view of educating the pupil with special needs in the realisation of special programmes described under Article 48.

### **Law on secondary school education**

General provisions under Article 37 state that secondary schools shall educate “both ordinary and talented pupils and also pupils with special education needs”. In addition, according to Article 70 “the vocational secondary school educates ordinary pupils having disturbances in psychical or physical development”. These studies will be in accordance with adjusted programmes for vocations of the first, second and third degrees of vocational education from two to four school years.

According to Article 84, students with special education needs should be integrated into ordinary schools according to individual programmes adjusted to the pupils' needs, abilities and capabilities. Students with a severe disturbances and developmental difficulties can be educated partially or totally at the special upbringing education institutions when it is impossible to provide adequate education at an ordinary school.

In Article 86, it is stated that secondary schools are entitled to enrol students with special education needs based on a certificate of completed primary school but also on the recommendation of an expert from the Commission for Professional Orientation. Recently, there have been some changes in the legal provisions relating to the increasing number of general conventions on the rights of a child with special needs. Inclusion is now seen increasingly in the framework of a broad education system reform.

### **Legal protection for basic human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina no longer contains just two legal systems, but rather 13 given the division of the Federation into

cantons. This involves a variety of regulations from one canton or one entity to another and also a certain legal insecurity. According to the *UNDP Human Development Report*, the only player that is entitled to take concrete actions throughout the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the United Nations High Representative, whose competencies are not clearly defined. Under the provisions contained in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution under Article 2 “the highest level of internationally recognised fundamental human rights and freedoms (based on international standards such as the 1950 European Convention on the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms) shall be directly applied in the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina”. All persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina are subject to human rights and freedoms, including the right to education. (Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article 2; Constitution of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chapter 2, Article 2; Constitution of the Republic of Srpska, Article 38). In this somewhat unusual way of implementing an international legal document, Bosnia and Herzegovina undertook the application of the provisions of the European Convention, despite not being a member of the Council of Europe at that time.

### **Overall law on elementary and secondary education**

For a number of reasons, Bosnia and Herzegovina’s official policy has not been able to sufficiently influence the critical situation facing education. Laws that were in force within the previous system of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina have regulated the education of children with special needs or “children with psychical and physical disturbances” (terminology used in previous education laws). In certain regions, some of these laws are more or less still in use. However, the newest *Overall Law on Elementary and Secondary Education* (Official gazettes, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 18/03) has stated that:

Regular primary school is supposed to educate children without psychical and physical difficulties, but also children who experience psychical and physical difficulties. Regular classrooms (grades 1-8) should include children with special needs and provide them with individual education programmes in subjects where they are encountering difficulties (language, literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology). These classrooms should have not more than 25 children.

## Policy review focusing on special groups

While no accurate data exist, the *Bosnia and Herzegovina Human Development Report* estimates the number of persons with disabilities at close to 10% of the total population. Persons with special needs are often isolated by the poor quality and quantity of support services, which in turn can affect their already vulnerable psycho-social condition. According to a Statement by NGOs about the rights of children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, children with special needs are the group of people who are most discriminated in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. The state has not systematically protected their rights, which has negative influences on persons with special needs and their access to services. Resolving these problems requires an interdisciplinary approach. Indeed, this is not just a health-sector issue touching on disability prevention and treatment, but also a problem of social welfare, education, lifelong learning and vocational training.

### Plans for education reform

Overcoming any type of discrimination and segregation is one reason for inclusive education today. Though changes have occurred in many parts of the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in “special education” there has been some reluctance. In general, the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina has fallen behind the rest of the Europe. Reform is not only necessary but also imperative in order to improve the quality of education and the lives of many young people. The reform towards better and more satisfying futures for our youth demands the fulfilment of a number of prerequisites for successful inclusion and the provision of quality education. The include changes in legislation, improved funding and other economic inputs, qualified staff and respect for social and cultural diversity.

An education system that divides and segregates children is unacceptable. Our education system should enable children to respect and cherish the precious cultural diversity that makes Bosnia and Herzegovina unique. In the *Basis for the Educational Policy and Strategic Development of Education in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2001), it is stated that the official curriculum is characterised by overloaded contents and outdated teaching methods, and learning is based primarily on teaching and memorising of facts. According to Smajic (2004) education reform should end segregation and discrimination through education, and encourage children with special needs, returnees, Roma children and others at risk to participate together with other children in regular educational settings.

The war and the subsequent destruction of the education system made education reform almost impossible. As a result, most of the characteristics of the schools in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have not changed at all. There remains a collectivist approach to education, *i.e.* the same goals for all pupils irrespective of their talents, the same education programme content and a single prescribed textbook. Blackboards and chalk are the basic equipment and discipline is the guiding principle. Moreover, the latest war caused a fragmentation of the education system across jurisdictions, national divisions into three separate curricula, segregation of pupils, dualism and a pronounced discrepancy between education goals and targets and ethnic and religious enmity amongst pupils. All of these factors are clearly unacceptable in terms of democratisation of the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

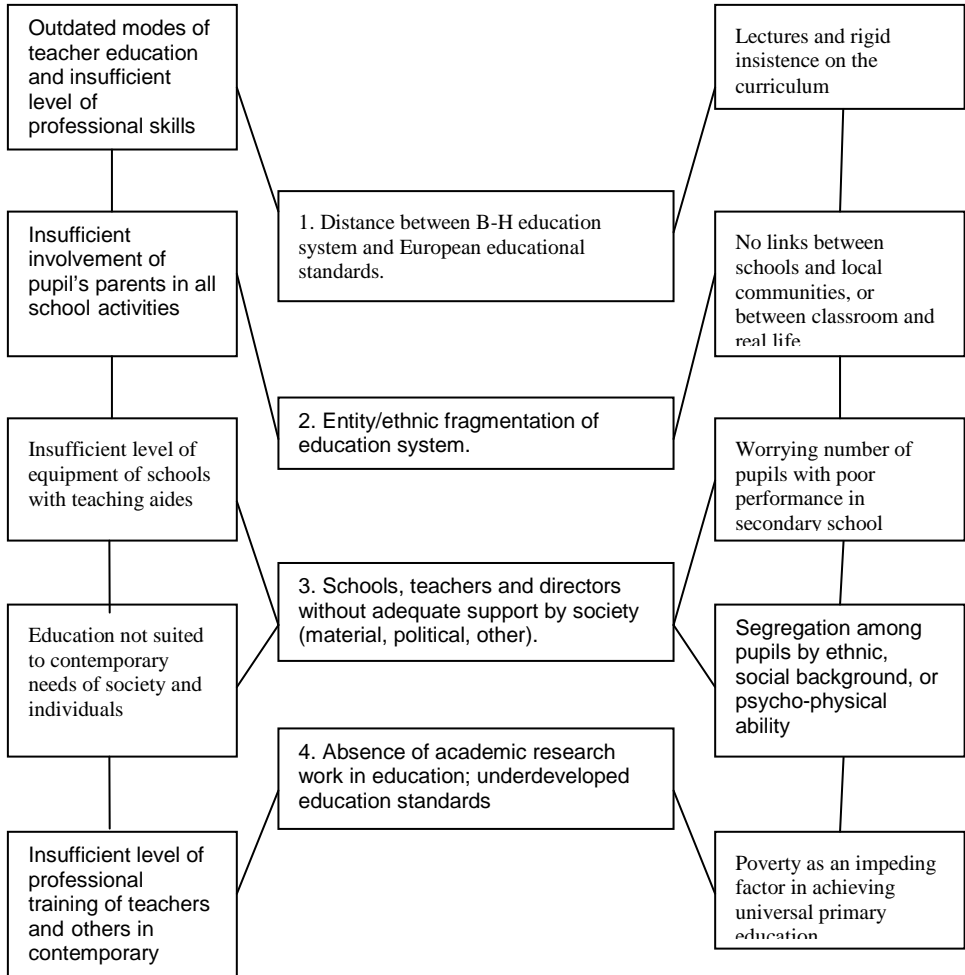
Several issues raised in the *Bosnia and Herzegovina Human Development Report* deserve to be mentioned here. Primary schools seem to be unprepared to open their doors to marginalised groups of children. Pupils with developmental difficulties are systemically isolated and marginalised. Such children, if they receive any education at all, are educated in specialised institutions. Officially, only 0.4% of children with difficulties in their development go to school (some authors estimate 0.8%). Roma children, poor children and children of ethnic minorities find themselves in a similar situation. With no sensitivity to these issues and with little preparedness in how to tackle this kind of problem, the dominant attitude is that everyone should be educated in his or her “own” culture, language and history – a situation that is predisposed to the development of conflict. This usually results in a situation whereby children belonging to a minority are required to learn according to the majority’s language, culture and history. With regard to children with special needs (various developmental or physical challenges), the dominant approach remains that of keeping those with similar developmental difficulties or physical disabilities together.

In addition, teachers are still insufficiently trained to recognise the individual needs of particular pupils and do not develop the curriculum in a manner so as to allow talented children to learn at a different pace. Moreover, special education needs of students are still not recognised, resulting in a failure to meet the fundamental requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) and the Salamanca Action Framework (1994), which specifically insist on education for all children in their local school, in an unrestrictive environment and in conditions that will meet their needs.

The education of future primary school teachers is still carried out in a traditional fashion, with lectures and a small number of practical exercises. Even though some changes have been made, they tend to be formal only, rather than essential or qualitative – such as the transition from two-year to four-year terms. The permanent education and continuous professional training of teachers still lags behind contemporary needs and requirements. The lack of expertise is more pronounced in remote, rural and suburban schools, compared to schools located in urban centres. In principle, the further away a school is from the urban, political, and cultural centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the lower the level of its staff profile will be. Bosnia and Herzegovina also lacks a sufficient number of educators trained to work with children with special needs. There is a growing need for almost all teachers to undergo additional training for innovations in education work (*i.e.* individualisation in education, interactive learning and teaching, education inclusion, partnership with parents, development of a democratic environment in schools).



Figure 1.1 **Diagram of the situation of the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the 21st century - qualitative assessment**



Source: Human Development Report, 2003 in Smajić, 2004

## Education for all without discrimination or prejudice

The first strategic aim of education reform is to enable all children to have high quality education in integrated multicultural schools at all levels,

free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudices and discriminations.

### ***Right to education of returnee children***

Considering the increased number of families returning to their pre-war homes, as well as the problems of inclusion of returnee children into the education system, education ministers signed a “Provisional Agreement on Meeting Essential Needs of Returnee Children” on 5 March 2002. The aim of this agreement is to increase the enrolment of returnee children in schools throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in places where returnees belong to minority groups. A co-ordination board comprised of all education ministers was formed to ensure the implementation of the provisional agreement. Results show an increased number of returnee teachers and teachers belonging to ethnic minorities and 25 schools with alternative curricula chosen by parents. The number of returnee students reached over 27 000 in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and over 6 200 in Republic of Srpska. The national composition of school boards has been harmonised with the national composition in schools and inter-entity review of textbooks has been conducted – aimed at the removal of offending content. Criteria for school names and symbols have been developed and the number of pupils transported to school in another canton has decreased in four cantons, but increased in two (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004).

### ***Education needs of Roma and other national minorities***

Almost no Roma children attend higher classes of both primary and secondary schools. It is estimated that 80% of Roma children do not attend schools. The main reasons for this situation are poverty, discrimination, lack of confidence in authorities, distinct tradition and customs, language, war and resettling. In mid-February 2004, all education ministries of Bosnia and Herzegovina signed an “Action Plan on Roma and Other Ethnic Minorities’ Education Needs” which provides funds at municipal level for education of Roma children. Analyses show that poverty of the population is the core reason for their inability to attend school (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004).

### ***Children “at risk”***

At risk children may have temporary or life-long needs because of social, emotional, economic, political or other conditions. This term does not only refer to children who have impairments, but also to other children with

different types of disabilities. According to the available data from the Federal Institute of Statistics in 2002, around 3 720 children do not have parents. These children are considered tremendously vulnerable and at high risk for behavioural and emotional difficulties during their development. Within this population, around 1 067 (28.68%) children are without both parents, 97 (2.60%) children are of unknown parentage, 649 (17.47%) are abandoned children, 1 482 (39.83%) children have parents who have lost their parental rights and 425 (11.42%) children have parents prevented from performing their parental duties. The majority of these children are placed in foster families (2 700 children). 1 004 children are in special institutions and 16 children are in boarding houses.

In addition, according to the data of the Federal Institute of Statistics from 2001, the following groups of children are considered to be at risk as they are living in extremely difficult situations: children suffering from extremely difficult family situations (29 962), children abused and neglected in the family (269), educationally deprived and neglected children (628), vagabond children (176), children who beg (91), children who were formerly engaged in prostitution (24) and children who engaged in criminal actions (674). According to the Federal Institute of Statistics (2004) in 70.01% of cases, extremely bad relations with parents were mentioned as a reason for their behaviour – alcoholism in the family (19.7%), financial problems (41.4%) and prohibitions by parents (27.1%).

## **Definitions of special needs and special education needs**

Definitions of different difficulties, or special needs, given within the “Rulebook on Detection, Assessment, Classification and Evidencing Children and Young People with Psychic and Physical Disturbances in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (1975, most recently 1986) lag behind current international definitions. Persons with special needs are divided into the following categories: persons with visual impairments, persons with hearing impairments, persons with motor disabilities, persons with mental retardation (mild, moderate, severe or profound), persons with combined difficulties and persons with speech and language difficulties.

As the heterogeneity of society becomes more recognised, the terms that are used to describe its diversity become the focus of intensive debate. This applies to both concepts that are associated with visible markers of diversity such as race or ethnicity (Ryan, 1999) and to concepts that are associated with changing views on diversity such as handicap and disability (Corbett 1995, 1998 in Fredrickson and Cline 2002:5). “Special needs” may be of many kinds: disabled and gifted children, street and working children,

children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups (Salamanca statement, 1994). “Special needs”, though not a legally defined term in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is generally used to refer to the needs of pupils from particular social groups whose circumstances or backgrounds are different from most of the school population (*i.e.* children whose families are homeless or children whose language spoken at home differs from the language of instruction at school). The needs of these groups of children are likely to require special consideration by their schools. Sometimes the term “special needs” is used to refer to “special education needs” and this may cause confusion since individuals from groups that have special needs may or may not also have special education needs.

In legal terms, children are said to have special education needs if they require special education provision because they have greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children their age. This could be because they suffer from a disability that prevents them from making use of the education facilities generally provided for children of their age. However, a child should not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or medium of communication of the home is different from the language in which he or she is or will be taught (Smajić, 2004). In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the term “special education needs” is related primarily to children with different disabilities such as mental retardation, physical, hearing, visual and multiple impairments, speech and language difficulties. A similar situation exists in neighbouring Croatia. In the legislation and education documents of Croatia the term, “children and youth with developmental difficulties” is still in use (Ibralić, 2002.). Special education needs differ according to general psycho-physical characteristics, as well as in relation to important methodological aspects of teaching.

One of the best definitions in Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning school-age children with developmental difficulties is given by Stančić (2000, p. 37-41): “children and young people with special education or rehabilitation needs are those who, in order to reach their optimal level of abilities and other social or positive personality characteristics, need specifically adapted, individualised conditions and activities”. Igrić (2001:20-25) states that “children with special needs are those who experience difficulties in social integration because of different psychical or physical conditions such as mental retardation, autism, specific learning difficulties, visual, hearing, motor impairments, chronic diseases and/or multiple impairments”.

There are two conceptualisations of the nature of learning difficulties: *individual differences* (between children) and *environmental demands* (placed on an individual, which exceed their current capabilities). The causation of individual differences is within the child and may be *biological* (profound hearing loss, CP), *behavioural* (the length of time the pupil can stay engaged in learning activities) or *cognitive*, related to their ability to solve problems (poorly developed language skills or low socio-emotional skills). *Environmental demands* are situation-centred rather than person-centred. Proponents hold that special education needs “can only be defined in terms of the relationship between what a person can do and what a person must do to succeed in a given environment” (Deno, 1989 in Fredrickson and Cline 2002:8). The assumption is that a child’s current attainments reflect the nature and quality of previous learning experiences and the child will be able to learn when teaching contents and methods are adjusted to his or her individual needs and personal interests (Smajić, 2004).

### **Classification in Bosnia & Herzegovina**

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the procedure for categorisation and assessment of the competence of people with difficulties in their development is initiated by social protection services at the level of municipalities (cantons). The process can begin *ex officio* or upon the request of parents or guardians, health, education, social or other organisations aware of the condition of the person with difficulties in its psycho-physical development. The “Commission for Categorisation and Assessment of the Competence of People with Difficulties in their Development” are most commonly established in cantons, while the second instance commissions are at the level of the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This commission assesses the capacity of people with difficulties in development, under criteria that determine procedures of detection, assessment of ability, classification and registration of children and their physical and mental development. The aim is special protection, education and life-skills training.

The commission consists of six members: a clinical psychologist, a paediatrician or school physician, a neuro-psychologist, two special education teachers (one of whom specialises in work with children with mental retardation and the other specialising in work with children with speech and language difficulties) and a social worker. If a party (child or parent) is not satisfied with the finding of the commission in the first instance, they can address the second instance that reviews the findings and passes the final decision. In accordance with the *Law on Amendments to the*

*Law on Child Welfare* in the Republic of Srpska, these children are placed in a special protection category in comparison to other categories of children. These children acquire the right to a supplementary welfare allowance regardless of their financial status and the order of birth.

## **Regular and special schooling**

Different approaches to the issue of regular and special schooling in Bosnia and Herzegovina exist (UNESCO, United Nations Teacher Project of Development, 2002, Human Development Report, 2003). Education for the majority of children with special needs still takes place in special schools or special classrooms within regular schools. Placing groups of children together who are thought to have similar needs results in their segregation from other pupils their age, which can be stigmatising and can restrict access to important education opportunities. By contrast, inclusion demands that schools change by adapting curricula, methods, materials and procedures to become more responsive to children.

According to the new *Overall Law on Primary and Secondary Education*, special classrooms previously attended by children with special needs will gradually decrease in number as those children will be included in the regular inclusive education system. Special schools and institutions have so far been independent and separated from the regular education system while following a special curriculum. Some schools will still have special classrooms to be attended by children with moderate mental retardation, as well as children with combined difficulties who encounter special difficulties in following the curricular content offered by the school. Children with average intellectual abilities who also have visual impairments (blind and low vision), hearing impairments and motor impairments require individually adapted programmes, but children with mental retardation attend the school according to a special programme. Children with severe mental retardation may not be included in any kind of education. Since the law does not consider these children as “educable” but “trainable”, these children have been placed, often for their entire lives, in large institutions (asylums). However, it is foreseen that the number of these institutions will decrease due to the redirection of children with special needs into regular education settings.

## **Inclusive education**

Inclusive education is one of the key elements of education reform that will enable all children to attend regular schools, notwithstanding their

physical, intellectual, social, emotional and other characteristics. Administrators and teachers should receive the training and help they need to make this the best option. Furthermore, early identification and intervention, curriculum-based assessment, ongoing assessment of a pupil's progress and programme effectiveness, and strong partnerships with parents are the prerequisites for the success of all children in a regular education environment. The inclusion option signifies the end of segregating organisation of special education, but not the end of necessary supports and services that must be provided in integrated classrooms.

Every child has unique characteristics, interests and learning needs and therefore if the right to education is to mean anything, education systems should be designed and education programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs. (UNESCO, 1994:8)

Inclusion enriches experiences and humanity and offers opportunities of decision-making and responsibility to every person equally. It helps children from regular classrooms to develop understanding towards pupil diversity, promoting mutual respect and friendship. Not every child learns, grows and develops at the same speed and in the same manner, nor does every child need the same approach. Being aware of these issues as well as of current trends in special needs education, authorities at the national and federal government levels – with the support from NGOs and the international community – initiated discussions aimed at making schools more effective in terms of the numbers of pupils completing school and the support of those who encounter difficulties during schooling.

Smajic (2004) states that even though inclusion, from the perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina, might be considered idealistic and unrealistic, it certainly has full justification as an advanced perspective for the future, “a perspective that does not claim special conditions for ‘special persons’”. Research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has shown that a great number of children attending regular primary schools will need support while participating in regular classroom activities (Human Development Report, Country Report, Programme for Finnish Co-operation in the Education Sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2003-2006).

Some cantons and the Brčko District have already made legal provisions that acknowledge inclusive education principles. In addition, there are several agencies engaged in securing better approaches to education by children of differing abilities. The Sarajevo University introduced postgraduate studies on inclusive education – a pilot project which supports the inclusion of children with lesser mental handicaps into the first and

second forms of primary schools. Sixteen municipalities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina undertook training for the education of consultants, linguistic trainers and teachers for primary schools to introduce inclusive education (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004). Positive examples of inclusive education exist in several schools throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, but these still represent a rather small percentage in comparison with all children who need to be included. In regular schools, one can clearly speak about the lack of good school management as well as about the lack of readiness of teachers and school staff to accept children with cognitive disabilities (mental retardation), motor difficulties, visual and hearing impairments. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the understanding that children with special needs should attend special schools is still a controversial issue. This area requires hard work and serious approaches to the process of raising public awareness and changing attitudes. The concept of special education should be seen as an integral part of an education system that offers the same educational and social opportunities for all children who attend schools all over the country without regard for their ethnicity, gender or ability level. Such a system ensures the responsive environment necessary for optimal development of the pupil with considerations to individual differences.

International regulations and documents (Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, Salamanca Statement, 1994) state that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. The inclusive approach to education was promoted in the form of different education projects and programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the training of special education teachers of tomorrow who will be responsible for providing adequate and quality support for all children with special needs attending the regular schools.

### **Facilitators and barriers of teaching/learning in inclusive classrooms**

In the current context, facilitators of the teaching-learning process and inclusion of children with special needs include individually tailored programmes, competent staff and teams of experts (psychologists, pedagogues, special education teachers, speech therapists, social workers and teachers). Other facilitators are a positive socio-emotional climate in the school and classroom and sufficient equipment and materials in the school and classroom. A meaningful curriculum is another positive element that will allow inclusive education to succeed. Education of teaching staff for all



categories of difficulties and impairments is essential. To date, the education of regular teachers does not consist of even general knowledge about children with special needs. Education and motivation of parents as partners will help support teachers and classrooms. Inclusion of persons with special needs in different school activities and understanding and encouraging the potential of pupils with special needs are other facilitators of inclusive education. Financial support for the schools is essential. Support by the local community in implementing inclusion in social and other events in the school are also important. International agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the child help to encourage inclusive education implementation. NGOs and associations working on inclusion are also essential. In addition, the co-ordination of social, education and health providers (*i.e.* centres of social care and protection, health centres, centres for consultation and guidance for parents and children) helps inclusive education to succeed.

In general, there remains an insufficient awareness about inclusion, including the ways in which inclusion should be practised. Children with special needs are still not accepted by other children and their parents. Some parents may have prejudices related to the fear that the presence of children with special needs in the regular classroom could negatively influence the development of their own children. Such opinions can negatively affect the co-operation between the school and parents, consequently preventing children from inclusion. However, experience shows that parents of children in the regular classroom and children themselves can become more interested in inclusion of children with special needs when the nature and purpose of inclusion are explained to them.

Since inclusion signifies that support from both special and regular teachers is needed in an integrated classroom, all teachers should be prepared for inclusion during their studies, preventing many problems and misunderstandings concerning support for children with special needs. In addition, financial support pertaining to this issue is currently minimal and insufficient. In this regard, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still suffering from the consequences of the war (unemployment, low taxes, low budgets, etc.). Lesser-equipped schools lack materials for supporting the teaching/learning process of children with special needs. A team approach to these issues is not evident and negative attitudes remain. Furthermore, the “Commission of Assessment of Abilities of Children with Special Needs” lacks support. Many children included in regular schools do not have the necessary documentation, such as the results of assessment procedures and expert opinions. Even though this procedure has traditionally been seen as somewhat negative due to the diagnosing and consequent labelling of

children, the assessment procedure and opinions of the team of experts give necessary information about the child and help to organise the work with the child.

The curriculum, pedagogy and examinations can all create barriers as well. Persons with special needs are still often segregated in separate institutions and distanced from their families. Efforts have been made to end segregation, but the necessary supports and services that must be provided in inclusive classrooms should be continued. In general, the adaptation of schools and pedagogies is still incomplete as there is only a small professional staff and many are inadequately prepared for work with these children. The curricula on the national and school level are inappropriate for children with special education needs. A large number of pupils in a classroom can also create difficulties in providing an individual approach. In addition, schools are not physically prepared for children with special needs and architectural barriers remain a problem for children with motor difficulties.

Outside of schools, many institutions that were giving support to children with special needs and children living in poor conditions, children without parents, abused and neglected children, have been poorly functioning since the war or have closed. Some have been repaired and equipped thanks to donations by NGOs. However, many NGOs have since redirected funds to other regions of the world.

## **Projects of non-governmental organisations**

In 1996 after the war, various humanitarian organisations undertook projects to introduce the idea of inclusive education into Bosnia and Herzegovina. Non-governmental organisations have an important role in implementing modern European standards of education and in working with marginalised groups of children such as children with special needs. However, promising results from different projects conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF, Red Barnet, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and *Médecins du Monde* as well as by “*Duga*” (Rainbow) encouraged people to make additional efforts, introduce and represent the idea of inclusion in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the support of experts in the field of special education. *Duga* has been implementing a project called “Schooling adapted to children with special needs”. 1 708 students have been enrolled in 70 first grade classes in 16 primary schools. This project is a successful model for inclusion of all children in regular schools and can be considered to be the origin of expanded interest in inclusive education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (results of research done by

the *Duga* project will be presented in the statistics and indicators section below).

In order to support new education trends such as the inclusion of pupils with special needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a group of experts from UNOPS, headquartered in Sarajevo from 1998/99, started the project “Integration, one possible experiment in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. The central aim was to include some children with special needs in regular kindergartens and in the lower grades, grades 1-3, of primary school (UNDP, Print-Project, 1999). However, gaining approval for the integration of children with special needs in regular kindergartens and schools encountered many obstacles in relation to cantonal ministries of education because this project required approval and additional resources for the employment of a special education teacher. However, the approval was granted by the cantonal ministries which assumed that children with special needs, especially slow learners, might be educated in regular educational settings according to regular curricula adapted according to individual needs. Other internationally supported projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina advocate and work on education inclusion and provision of proper education support for children with special needs in the regular education system. Specific interest in support and implementation of such projects was shown by UNESCO, UNICEF and Teacher Education and Professional Development (TEPD) and their programmes have influenced the awareness of pedagogues, special educators and parents.

These efforts resulted in positive outcomes related to the issue of inclusive education. However, when external financial and logistical support for projects has ended, local authorities have failed to continue supporting inclusive education due to a lack of finances.

### **Parents as partners in the process of inclusion of children with special needs**

According to the *Human Development Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2003), insufficient inclusion of parents in all trends and activities of primary schooling is one of the current problems. Schools still serve only those pupils who can adapt to the present education system, rather than adapting the system to the needs of pupils. Partnerships with parents and other members of local communities would be a significant step in ensuring that schools overcome this limitation and work to serve all children.

In recent research, parents of 55 organisations of pre-school education and 175 primary schools assessed their attitudes as significant partners in the process of inclusion. Parents influence their children's attitudes through their own outlooks. Thus if the parents have positive attitudes towards children with special needs, it is assumed that their children will have the same attitudes towards their peers or other children with special needs.

Another important influence of parents is in the encouragement of education for their own children. This is particularly true at the pre-school level. Pre-school organisations are mostly attended by children whose parents are well-educated (secondary school, college, university). In a survey of 1 123 parents of pre-school children, 53% had attended secondary school, 14% attended college and another 30% finished university and less than 2% of parents had no school or had only attended primary school. In another study of 4 292 parents of children in primary school, approximately the same pattern holds: 58% of parents attended secondary school, 10% college and 23% university. Only two parents had no education, 44 had an incomplete education and 314 had just a primary education (This data is from the aforementioned *Duga* study).

Larger towns have private kindergartens, attended mostly by the children of relatively affluent parents since these kindergartens have fees that are not affordable for all parents. Society is not offering opportunities to the numerous children of poor parents at the same levels. All children need pre-school education, which is of great importance for their general development, socialisation, knowledge and skills. Children whose parents are less educated, unemployed or with a low socio-economic status do not have the opportunity to attend pre-school organisations. These children might also be considered to be children with special needs.

## Statistics and indicators

The position of persons with special needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the current definitions of difficulties in psychical and physical development, is defined by the *Rulebook on Detection, Assessment, Classification and Evidencing Children and Young People with Psychic and Physical Disturbances in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. The following rights of these persons are specifically mentioned in the rulebook: the right to an appropriate education; the right to professional qualification and employment; and the right to different kinds of social care. Internationally

comparable categorisations of children with special needs which are not included in the rulebook are the following: children with behavioural difficulties, autistic children, children suffering from ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), children with learning difficulties, children with difficulties in reading and writing, children with chronic diseases and talented/gifted children. For the time being, all of the categories of children mentioned above are included in the schooling system, both special and regular ones (depending on the readiness of the school to accept and support children with special needs), as well as by the system of social care.

According to the data from the Federal Institution of Statistics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are currently around 6 119 children with special needs. The placement of these children rose slightly from 1 403 in 1998 to 1 488 in 2002. However, a considerable number of children with special needs remain who have no opportunity to fulfil their needs and enjoy their rights. A report from the Republic Institute of Statistics (2004) shows the following data from the year 2001 regarding persons with special needs in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina: children with visual impairments 143; children with hearing impairments 119; children with speech and language difficulties 92; children with motor impairments 197; children with mental retardation 870; children with behavioural difficulties 84; children with combined difficulties 300 and psychically ill children 135.

The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has three institutes for care of people with difficulties in physical and mental development located in Pazaric, Drin and Bakovici. Together they accommodate 1 067 people, 52 of whom are children. In the Republic of Srpska, there are homes for people with difficulties in physical and mental development in Prijedor and Jakeš. The number of institutionalised children with difficulties in their development, according to the report of the Public Fund for Child Welfare of Republic of Srpska is 845. The information from the Brcko District states that there are four registered cases of severe mental retardation and three cases of profound mental retardation. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the total number of children placed in institutions that take care of people with special needs stands at 46. In these institutions, a specific problem for children with special needs is separation from their parents. This problem occurred during the war and so far there has been no agreement on the method of return of children to the areas where their parents and relatives live (National Action Plan for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2002-2010).

## Education services and statistics based on research by *Duga* and UNICEF

As mentioned earlier, one particularly successful project in Bosnia was funded by UNICEF and implemented by a local organisation called *Duga*, which has worked on the inclusion of children but also on detection, recognition and provision of treatment for children with special needs. In addition, much of the research in Bosnia and Herzegovina to identify the number of children with special education needs has been conducted by *Duga*. This research embraced 16 primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a sample that included 1 772 pupils attending first grades in 2001/2002 school year and 195 pupils with special needs in the second grade in the 2002/2003 school year. 35% of these pupils followed a regular curriculum and 59% followed an adjusted curriculum. 6% of pupils attended special classrooms.

Some of the latest research of *Duga* and UNICEF from the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 school years included 30% of pre-schools and 30% of primary schools throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the intention of investigating the attitudes of teachers, caretakers, pedagogues and parents with respect to inclusive education. Random sampling procedures were used for the purpose of this research. It embraced an equal number of schools and pre-school organisations in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka and Mostar, including 55 preschool organisations and 175 primary schools. This research intended to include all educators (teachers, pedagogues, caretakers) from the selected schools. 15 000 questionnaires were printed out for parents of pre-school and school age children, caretakers, primary school teachers, pedagogues in pre-school organisations and schools, principals in primary schools and preschool organisations. Below are some of the results obtained from this research.

### *Pre-school education*

From 55 selected organisations of pre-school education, 4 940 questionnaires were returned completed. 651 children (13.17%) were recorded as having special education needs (students who were tested by the Categorisation Commission) and 793 (16.05%) have special education needs according to their caregivers' opinions.

The results of this research show that there are differences among the regions covered by this research in relation to the nature of difficulty as well as to the type of assessment. Of the total number of 4 960 questionnaires, 1 444 or 29.23% related to children with special needs. The greatest

percentage of children with special needs is found in the region of Tuzla (19.94%). The reason for such results could be that the region of Tuzla, both during and after the war, accepted a great number of refugees, including children coming from all other areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Children were from different backgrounds, many had no parents, were wounded or were returnees from abroad. A smaller percentage of children with special needs (around 3.94%) was found in Sarajevo, in the Banja Luka region (3.81%) and in the Mostar region (1.54%). None of the children attending pre-school organisations in the region of Sarajevo had registered or diagnosed special needs. This does not mean that there are no children with special needs but that there are no commissions for categorisation of children. All of the children are attending regular pre-school institutions. Caregivers and administrators have announced a larger percentage of children with psycho-physical difficulties than the number being officially categorised.

In pre-school institutions, the number of children with psycho-physical difficulties as assessed by caregivers and administrators was 793 (16.05%). Those children had special needs of various natures and came from different areas around Sarajevo. In Sarajevo, the total number of children with diverse special needs attending regular pre-school is 195 (3.95%), as identified by caregivers and administrators. Overall, there are 1 444 children with special needs attending pre-school institutions.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) focuses on the key areas of reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina such as: democratisation, legislation, education and the economy. The mission of OSCE to Bosnia and Herzegovina covers the entire territory. The following information was gleaned from regional OSCE centres located in Banja Luka, Mostar, Sarajevo and Tuzla. Schools in some areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina have children with special needs whose diagnoses are confirmed either by official documentation (issued by the Commissions for Categorisation and Assessment of the Competence of People with Difficulties in their Development) or by the classroom teacher (who may not be sufficiently competent to identify special education needs children). If the child attends a special school, he or she has been documented as having disabilities. These data are reflected in the following tables.

**Table 1.1 Preschool age children with psycho-physical difficulties according to caregivers' assessment (A) or documentation (D)**

	Banja Luka		Regional OSCE Centres				Tuzla		Total	
	A	D	Mostar	A	D	Sarajevo	A	D	A	D
Cognitive Difficulties	5	6	2	8	25	0	14	26	46	40
Speech And Language Difficulties	29	5	3	1	6	0	282	257	320	263
Visual Impairments	13	6	2	2	10	0	32	28	57	36
Hearing Impairments	0	1	0	2	5	0	9	8	14	11
Chronic Diseases And Motor Impairments	2	2	2	1	17	0	7	4	28	7
Multiple Difficulties	3	1	5	2	25	0	2	1	35	4
Behavioural Difficulties	7	3	4	7	3	0	17	16	31	26
Epilepsy	0	2	0	0	4	0	6	4	10	6
Educationally Deprived Children	5	0	1	1	3	0	19	14	28	15
Abused Children	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Auto-aggressive Behaviour and Suicide Attempts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Children With PTSD	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
Returnee Children	2	6	4	5	38	0	4	27	48	38
Children From Minority Groups	2	4	2	4	15	0	0	1	19	9
Children From Incomplete Families	34	50	7	11	44	0	70	133	155	194
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>651</b>
In percentage of total school population	2.06%	1.74%	0.65%	0.89%	3.95%	0.00%	9.39%	10.55%	16.05%	13.18%

*Source:* Information supplied by regional OSCE centres in Banja, Luka, Mostar, Sarajevo and Tuzla

The number of children with special needs is greatest in the region of Tuzla (9.39%). Children with vision difficulties (57) were the most numerous, followed by children with mental retardation (46), speech and language difficulties (32) and chronic diseases and bodily impairments (28). None of the children were identified as abused or neglected, but considerable numbers of children were recognised as educationally deprived



(28). Another 31 children were identified as children with behavioural difficulties. From the data above, one can conclude that higher numbers of children are identified by caregivers and administrators as having special needs, compared to the number of children with documented special needs. One interpretation of the data is that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have proper services for prevention, early detection and intervention that can introduce treatment at an earlier stage.

### **Primary schools**

According to data obtained by questionnaires from 175 primary schools, the number of children with documented special needs is 10 152. The number of children with special needs recognised by teachers or administrators is far greater (14 092).

**Table 1.2 Number of pupils in primary schools according to assessment by teacher/administrator (A) and according to documentation (D)**

	Regional OSCE Centres									
	Banja Luka		Mostar		Sarajevo		Tuzla		Total	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
Cognitive Difficulties	201	109	132	11	306	67	504	329	1143	516
Speech and Language Difficulties	225	86	146	128	309	113	474	282	1154	609
Visual Impairments	96	236	143	150	124	82	369	268	732	736
Hearing Impairments	17	77	12	24	28	17	83	45	140	163
Chronic Diseases And Motor Impairments	66	79	65	32	129	68	209	197	469	376
Multiple Difficulties	51	22	31	14	37	23	122	112	241	171
Behavioural Difficulties	116	34	168	31	263	28	558	103	1 105	196
Epilepsy	9	34	13	4	39	29	45	58	106	125
Educationally Deprived Children	174	48	135	35	428	16	623	133	1 360	232
Abused Children	7	4	8	0	12	1	48	13	75	18
Auto-aggressive Behaviour and Suicide Attempts	1	0	0	0	3	1	13	25	17	26
Children With PTSD	34	11	14	0	204	1	375	105	627	117
Returnee Children	342	105	140	75	527	313	889	438	1 898	931
Children From Minority Groups	94	1 150	44	16	163	124	345	238	646	1 528
Children From Incomplete Families	817	1 097	495	229	1 182	1 410	1 885	1 672	4 379	4 408
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 250</b>	<b>3 092</b>	<b>1 546</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>3 754</b>	<b>2 293</b>	<b>6 542</b>	<b>4 018</b>	<b>14 092</b>	<b>10 152</b>
In percentage of total school population	8.71	11.97	9.11	4.41	13.44	8.21	12.18	7.48	11.32	8.16
Total students in primary education	25 827		16 969		27 927		53 719		124 442	

*Source:* Data gathered from official questionnaires sent to 175 primary schools

Again, official documentation results differ from those obtained by assessment from teachers and administrators. It is possible that teachers are

more sensitive to less visible difficulties, possibly due to lasting direct contact with children, in comparison to experts responsible for official categorisation of children whose contact with children is limited.

In addition, data differed across regions. In the Sarajevo region the number of children with special needs is high 3 754 (13.44%) compared to the Tuzla region 6 542 (12.17%), Mostar region 1 549 (9.11%) and in the region of Banja Luka 2 250 (8.69%). An alarming number of 623 educationally deprived children was confirmed in all regions as well as high numbers of children with behavioural difficulties (558) and 375 children with PTSD (post-traumatic-stress-disorder).

## Gifted and talented children

Around 2 237 (45.28%) gifted and talented children were found to be attending organisations for pre-school education. There are 48 622 (39.05%) children in regular primary schools who show special talents in different areas.

Table 1.3 Talented and gifted children - primary schools

	Primary Schools				
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	Total
Total Number Of Children	25 827	16 969	27 927	53 719	124 442
Sense of Practical and Manipulation Activities	376	857	1 105	2 040	4 378
Musically Talented	603	776	1 132	1 850	4 361
Art	766	904	1 368	1 996	5 034
Sports Skills	989	1 348	1 930	2 892	7 159
Talented for Social Science	480	815	1 170	1 412	3 877
Talented for Natural Science	540	862	1 341	1 608	4 351
Mathematically Talented	568	712	1 164	1 637	4 081
Talented for Technology	255	409	724	1 127	2 515
Talented for Languages	1 034	1 157	1 720	2 092	6 003
Gifted	1 036	892	2 486	2 449	6 863
Total	6 647	8 732	14 140	19 103	48 622
	25.74%	51.46%	50.63%	35.56%	39.07%

Source: *ibid*

According to this data, one can see that there are a great number of children who are talented in different areas. The talents are mostly related to the areas of sport, languages and art.

**Table 1.4 Talented and gifted children – pre-school level**

	Preschool Institutions				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
Verbal Abilities And Skills	74	98	14	126	312
Musical Talent	45	70	7	142	264
Art Creativeness	112	101	13	132	358
Sports' Abilities And Skills	105	145	27	197	474
Social Abilities And Skills	42	96	18	225	381
Manipulative Abilities And Skills	79	92	14	263	448
Total	457	602	93	1 085	2 237

*Source: ibid*

For this category of children and pupils with special needs, an educated school staff with the ability to provide adequate support is needed in addition to well-equipped schools (literature, material, laboratories). If the special needs of the child are not addressed properly, these could be reasons for behavioural difficulties.

### **Attitudes of teaching staff**

The research provided the opportunity for teaching staff to state their beliefs on the potential for success of children with special needs attending regular schools and classrooms.

Teachers' opinions showed that all children, to a certain extent, have a chance for quality education, depending on their intellectual abilities as well as the abilities of the teachers to address the special needs of these children. Those children might not be successful in reading, writing or mathematics, but they often show potential in other areas such as art, music, sport, etc. In addition, if the aims, goals and objectives of the education are adjusted to

the abilities, needs and interests of a certain child, the chance for success of every child with any kind of special need would be greater.

This research coincides with other research conducted worldwide showing that there are several factors influencing the acceptance and success of the child in the regular classroom. The attitudes of teachers are a factor in determining whether or not the child is going to succeed in attending regular classes. For example, negative attitudes might come from a lack of information about the characteristics of children with special needs, their weaknesses and their strengths. Other research on attitudes of staff towards children with special needs (Stephens and Braub, 1980) pointed to three variables in determining the acceptance of children with special needs: the teacher's belief that he or she is able to teach and support such a child; the belief that a child with special needs is able to become a valuable and contributing member of society; and the belief that regular schools should integrate children with special needs.

The attitudes of persons involved in the education process (teachers, caregivers, administrators, pedagogues, etc.) as well as those of the child and the children's environment (children without special needs, the parents of children and local community members, etc.) are the most significant influences since these persons directly determine the future of the child. The following tables give information about the education level of those persons working with children with special education needs.

### *Staff in the organisations of primary education*

**Table 1.5 Level of education of teaching staff (caregivers) in pre-school institutions**

Level Of Education	Regional OSCE Centres				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
Secondary School	63 24.05%	4 7.27%	13 20.63%	35 18.72%	115 17.67%
College	169 64.50%	44 80.00%	47 74.60%	134 71.66%	394 72.69%
University	30 11.45%	7 12.73%	3 4.76%	18 9.63%	58 9.64%
Total	262	55	63	187	567

Source: *ibid*

The majority of teachers have completed a post-secondary school (two years of study) education. A number of teachers (58) had a university degree.

**Table 1.6 Do pre-school teachers have any education about the field of special education during their regular studies?**

	Regional OSCE Centres				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
With training	67 25,6%	13 23,6%	18 28,6%	7 38%	1 29.81%
Without training	195 74,4%	42 76,4%	45 71,4%	116 62%	3 70.19%
Total	262	55	63	187	567

Source: *ibid*

Only 169 teachers (29.81%) answered that they had received education in special needs education during their regular studies. Another 398 (70.19%) did not receive any information on people with special needs or respective teaching methods.

60% of preschool teachers indicated that they teach children with special needs in their regular classes. They explained that their work with a child with special needs included the following activities: conversation, individual work (motivation, support in the socialisation process or communicating with other children), organisation of activities with other children, motivation through play, adjusting tasks, co-operation with relevant experts and parents and planning research activities. While working with children, the teachers had support provided by a principal, colleagues, pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists and special educators.

*Regular primary school teachers – level of education*

Table 1.7 Level of education of primary school teachers

Level of education	Regional OSCE Centres				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
Secondary School	186	53	108	179	526
	18.39%	10.31%	14.17%	13.52%	14.57%
College	607	311	445	844	2207
	60.03%	60.50%	58.39%	63.79%	61.14%
University	218	150	209	300	877
	21.56%	29.18%	27.42%	22.67%	24.29%
Total	1 011	514	762	1 323	3 610

Source: *ibid*

The data on teachers' qualifications were of great importance for the interpretation of other data collected. The level of education directly correlates with the amount and the quality of information that teachers learn during their studies.

Table 1.8 Did teachers have any training on special education during their regular studies?

	Regional OSCE Centres				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
YES	348	163	307	413	1231
	33.82%	32.53%	39.87%	31.08%	33.92%
NO	681	338	463	916	2398
	66.18%	67.47%	60.13%	68.92%	66.08%
TOTAL	1029	501	770	1329	3629

Source: *ibid*

Results show that basic knowledge in the field of special needs education is not prevalent, with only minor exceptions around the Sarajevo region. During their academic education, almost 66% of teachers in regions other than Sarajevo did not receive any specific training.

**Table 1.9 Did teachers have an opportunity to attend upgrading programmes on special needs education?**

	Regional OSCE Centres				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
Yes	349	205	277	389	1 220
	33.79%	33.94%	35.70%	28.81%	32.42%
No	684	399	499	961	2543
	66.21%	66.06%	64.30%	71.19%	67.58%
Total	1 033	604	776	1 350	3 763

Source: *ibid*

Only 1 220 teachers (32.42%) answered that they had the opportunity to attend specific programmes to upgrade their knowledge of special education. Almost 68% were not involved in such programmes.

**Table 1.10 Teachers with and without children with special education needs in classrooms**

	Regional OSCE Centres				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
With	643	294	527	805	2 269
	68.77%	59.15%	69.89%	60.75%	64.63%
Without	292	203	227	520	1 242
	31.23%	40.85%	30.11%	39.25%	35.37%
Total	935	497	754	1 325	3 511

Source: *ibid*

The majority of teachers indicated that they have children with special needs in the classroom. However, it may be difficult to deduce any clear conclusions from data collected in this way since the questionnaire for teachers did not precisely define the term “children with special needs”. While commenting on children, teachers mentioned different terms such as “poor imagination skills”, “poor psycho-motor skills”, “learning



difficulties”, “inability to follow what is taught”, “difficulties in writing”, “severe difficulty”, “child from the special classroom”, “handicap”, etc. It was obvious that teachers also include children with learning difficulties under the term “children with special needs”.

Teachers explained that working with children with special needs includes individual work with children (683); additional work (512); giving more attention to children (501); adjusted curriculum (432); additional hours (196); individualised approach (108); lessening the requirements and adjusting the criteria of evaluation (102); additional efforts and conversation (97); additional explanations or appraisals (80); adjusted (easier) tasks (71); involving the parents (70); mutual support of pupils (12); music therapy, painting, etc. (11); the same characteristics of work as with other children (10); granting the marks (10); continuous supervision (10); help from an assistant (1); and use of special material (1).

### Support offered to teachers working with children with special needs

This question inquired as to the scope and modalities of expert support to teachers working with children with special needs: special educators, speech therapists, pedagogues, psychologists and other professionals. For unknown reasons, this question was answered by only 75% of teachers within the study.

Table 1.11 Support offered to teachers working with children with special needs

	Regional OSCE Centres				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
Yes	429	109	326	475	1 420
	50.53%	47.03%	77.25%	46.16%	52.51%
No	42	2	9	5	12
	49.47%	52.97	22.75%	53.84%	47.79%
Total	849	404	422	1 029	2 704

Source: *ibid*

The table above shows that teachers from Sarajevo received significant support (70%), compared with other regions where lesser support was offered – Tuzla (46%) and Mostar (50%).

Table 1.12 Experts offering support to teachers

	Regional OSCE Centres				Total
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	
Pedagogues	351 57.92%	33 38.82%	115 41.82%	350 54.77%	849 52.90%
Special educators	136 22.44%	17 20.00%	85 30.91%	182 28.48%	420 21.17%
Psychologists	48 7.92%	12 14.12%	11 4.00%	14 2.19%	85 5.30%
Principals	23 3.63%	0 0.00%	8 2.91%	42 6.57%	73 4.55%
Parents	22 3.63%	23 27.06%	29 10.55%	27 4.23%	101 6.29%
Colleagues	26 4.29%	0 0.00%	27 9.82%	24 3.76%	77 4.80%
Total	606	85	275	639	1 605

Source: *ibid*

As shown here, pedagogues are the most common type of expert offering support to teachers. Special educators are next in prevalence, followed by psychologists. Other community members also support the teacher. Parents are most active in Sarajevo.

Table 1.13 What level of education is most adequate for the inclusion of children with special needs?

	Responses of parents of children in pre-schools					Responses of parents of children in primary schools				
	Regional OSCE Centres					Regional OSCE Centres				
	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	Total	Banja Luka	Mostar	Sarajevo	Tuzla	Total
Preschool education	198	176	145	218	737	617	250	520	841	2 228
	49.50%	52.69%	45.31%	40.98%	46.47%	38.06%	29.69%	40.63%	38.86%	37.72%
Primary schools	131	108	99	175	513	654	433	506	856	2 449
	32.75%	32.34%	30.94%	32.89%	32.35%	40.35%	51.43%	39.53%	39.56%	41.46%
Secondary schools	71	50	76	139	336	350	159	254	467	1 230
	17.75%	14.97%	23.75%	26.13%	21.19%	21.59%	18.88%	19.84%	21.58%	20.82%
Total	400	334	320	532	1 586	1 621	842	1 280	2 164	5 907

Source: *ibid*

The majority of parents stated that pre-school education is the level at which children with special needs can be successfully included. Parents of children attending primary schools stated that children with special needs could successfully be included at the primary school level (2 449). Representation of such opinions was the greatest in the Tuzla region (856).

### Situation in the Tuzla canton

The biggest number of children with special needs was found in the region of Tuzla. A considerable number of refugees have found a temporary home in this region. Many children who were suffering due to war (children with emotional disturbances, post-traumatic stress disorder, children without parents, neglected and abused children, children who have experienced the most negative and difficult situations of the war, etc.) have found a home in and around Tuzla. Those children were enrolled in neighbouring schools – a type of inclusion on a small scale. However, schools were unprepared without adequate material, equipment or training and therefore many children received education inadequate to their needs, abilities and interests. In addition, teachers were in a difficult position because they were ill-

prepared to address the needs of children with special needs in a proper manner or to offer equal attention to the other children in the classroom at the same time.

**Table 1.14 Overall numbers of children with special needs (regular schools only)**

	Total number of pupils	Sensory motor difficulties	Mental retardation	Other difficulties	Total
Primary schools	53 590	213	180	75	469
Secondary schools	25 201	132	17	31	181
University		0	0	0	0
Total	78 791	345	197	106	650

*Source: ibid*

A considerable number of children with special needs have been found in primary schools (469), fewer children with special needs have been found at secondary-school level (181) and no young people with special needs attend university level.

As mentioned earlier, the number of children with special needs attending special schools was not included in the tables above. These institutions educate children with mild, moderate and severe mental retardation and children with combined difficulties. While working with these children, teachers use different methods, ways of work and materials. Recently lectures have been used less, giving more priority to individual work, work in pairs and group work. Teaching content is very often subject to individualisation and adaptation according to abilities and overall characteristics of pupils. The main principle used in teaching is the principle of concretisation and individualisation. In recent years, these kinds of institutions have been criticised by different international and local non-governmental organisations, mostly because of their segregating nature. However, these institutions might be useful if organised in a proper way (*i.e.* in the form of resource centres or consultation and guidance services, etc.).

## School organisation

The *Law on Primary School Education* (Article 31) states that “Primary schools shall organise education according to the curriculum prescribed by the Ministry, which is in accordance with the national curricula valid for

Bosnia and Herzegovina (standardised curricula), with suggestions given by the Institution of Pedagogy”. School has to be based on the principle of quality education and success for all. The curriculum must be accurately targeted at the students. Goals of the school system should be based on assumptions concerning the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the provisions of skills and abilities. The education programme should consist of everyday living skills as well as academic subjects (mathematics, languages, etc.). The school year lasts 38 working weeks, divided into classification periods. The teaching process is organised on the basis of five days per week and a school hour lasts 45 minutes.

The *Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which took effect in July 2003, introduced obligatory nine-year primary education (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004). The education process in Bosnia and Herzegovina includes nearly 610 000 pupils and students. About 367 000 pupils attend 1 836 primary schools. More than two thirds are in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (66.9%), 2% in the Brčko District and the remaining 31% belong to the Republic of Srpska (RS). In addition, about 173 000 pupils attend 295 secondary schools (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004). Secondary education is not obligatory.

Pre-school education does not have the same status as primary education. The character of financing and monitoring of pre-school institutions shows that these schools are social programmes more than formal education programmes. The pre-school education budget is often at symbolic levels used only for *ad hoc* annual interventions. The overall number of pre-school institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina is less than 200, including just 4.5% of pre-school age children. The absence of pre-school institutions in rural areas is of particular concern, as is a lack of private initiatives (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004).

Several estimations on net primary school enrolment rates range from 93% to 98%, though the average enrolment rate is considered to be 85%. Problems include insufficient inclusion of children from vulnerable groups in primary education, such as the Roma population, girls in some rural areas, refugees and displaced persons (including children who left school during the war and who have not returned to the education process). Other problems of primary education are the small size of schools, widely varying teacher to pupil ratios and inadequate material provisions for teachers. In addition, outdated learning methodologies as well as inadequate education for teachers are also significant issues.

The enrolment rate for secondary school is 72%. However, the enrolment rate for poorer children is as low as 57%. The ratio between general and vocational secondary schools is 20 to 80 and secondary vocational schools are thought to be overly specialised (Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004). Seven universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina include 95 higher education institutions with 70 000 full-time students. Five universities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bihać, Mostar East University and Mostar West University) include 64 faculties and also academies and colleges. The enrolment rate is 25% of persons of university age.

### **Implementing inclusion: a model regular primary school in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Below is a detailed description of one model primary school that has already opened its doors to children with special needs. This is a unique example of a school entirely dedicated to the mission of inclusion.

“S.H.” is a regular primary school located in the suburban area of Tuzla, which was inhabited by refugees from the area of Zvornik, Bratunac, Vlasenica, Srebrenica, and Bijeljina during and after the war. Due to the arrival of refugees in the area near the “S.H.” school, the number of pupils suddenly increased from 400 pupils before the war to over 1 500 pupils. Consequently, the number of pupils per class has increased. However, difficult conditions for work were caused not just by the increased number of pupils, but also by the low socio-economic status of parents and the low level of parental education. Children were not accustomed to working, learning or interacting with one another. The teachers noticed that many children were having difficulties in following educational activities. The reasons varied from mild mental retardation, short attention spans or hyperactivity, to inappropriate living conditions due to poverty and different emotional difficulties caused by war-related stress (over 300 children lost one or both parents during the war).

After their categorisation, many children were recommended to continue schooling in a special primary school, located in the centre of Tuzla city quite far from “S.H.” primary school. But, due to the location of the school and the low incomes of the parents who could not pay for transportation from home to school, the attendance of these children at school was questioned. As the option to attend the special school seemed unrealistic, the choice was between quitting school altogether or continuing at the neighbouring “S.H.” primary school. The parents, teachers and school authorities chose to include these children and that was the first time a

regular primary school opened its doors to children with special needs. Since then, the “S.H.” school is working on restructuring many school features (policies, physical infrastructure and teaching strategies) in order to create a better place to grow and thrive for all children. In spite of the many difficulties the school was facing due to the war and the post-war situation, school authorities were, from the very beginning, working on conducting interactive learning and integration of children with special needs in regular classrooms. The new strategies built on partnerships with parents and worked towards supporting children’s independence. Together with parents and pupils, the school succeeded in establishing a developmental plan for the future which would improve the school and help to implement European standards in schooling for all children.

All children with special needs that are attending this school are included in regular classroom activities. These children have been diagnosed as children with mild mental retardation, Down’s syndrome and other combined difficulties. In order to monitor improvements of these children, a process of re-categorisation is conducted every second year. The diagnoses are approved after each re-categorisation and the child is usually assigned their schoolwork according to a reduced curriculum (“special programme”).

Today the “S.H.” primary school is educating 17 children with special needs from grades 2-8. Five children with special needs are now in the first grade and they are being monitored in order to see whether or not they are able to follow regular educational activities. Full inclusion is represented in the lower grades, from 1-4. In the higher grades (from 5-8), children are partially included. The reason for “semi-inclusion” lies in the difference between the curriculum for regular school and the curriculum for special schools. The difference is in the exclusion of children with special needs from such subjects as physics, chemistry, biology, geography and history. The subject “Nature and science”, usually taken in lower grades, replaces these courses and includes information from all of the above-mentioned subjects without going deeply into the subject. Other subjects like mathematics, language, music, sports, art and crafts are followed by all students.

Classrooms including children with special needs are provided with an extra teacher, who supports and helps children with special needs while the other teacher works with other children in the classroom. Classrooms are not well equipped since the economy of the entire country influences the finances that are at the disposal of the school. However, when entering the school, one can see that the walls are covered by children’s art, craftworks and models ensuring a warm and stimulating climate. The specific

classroom (as well as the majority of other classrooms in the school) also offers a friendly and motivating atmosphere with walls covered with drawings, pictures and photos. Teaching materials are placed in the classroom so that children have easy access to them. Tables are organised in small groups all around the classroom so that nobody is excluded and all pupils have an opportunity to look at each other. Apart from the efforts made to ensure quality education as much as possible in the given context, great attention is paid to the process of socialisation of children with special needs. The process of socialisation has shown the greatest improvement, especially when it comes to children with hyperactivity.

## Pedagogy

Deciding *what* to teach each unique child is rarely straightforward. Deciding *how* to teach, in order to provide children with special needs with meaningful and useful learning experiences, is equally complex. Teachers have a variety of choices, depending on the pupil, to encourage future success in personal, academic and vocational pursuits. Depending on how teachers begin to operate and implement the curriculum, they can create several learning opportunities (Smajić, 2004).

So far, all special schools and the majority of regular schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina employ the same means of presenting educational content to children with special needs – either through special programmes which are completely different from the regular programme or by reduced versions of the regular curricula. However, these answers to teaching content and style put the quality of education of these children into question, since there are no special educators within regular school teams to give expert advice and input necessary in the creation of programmes for children with special needs.

The underlying philosophy of a *holistic, inclusive perspective* (currently represented within education reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina), leads one away from teaching isolated skills according to prescribed curricula and towards learning while engaged in purposeful, real-life projects and activities, as students interacting and co-operating with each other. Individual education programmes make sense in this context in that they provide a vehicle for pupils to learn to better understand, adapt and use the best of their abilities.



An important part of the work of regular and special education teachers is the adaptation of the general (national) curriculum to the needs, abilities and interests of the particular child (Smajić, 2004). Children with special education needs should have concrete material to be adequately supported in a regular classroom. According to Smajic, it is important to know that pupils learn using different strategies, activities, media and methods. Some can master generalisation through different learning situations, while others may learn the same things through observation and experimentation (visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learners).

Different persons employ different learning strategies and techniques for their self-development. Some pupils may prefer studying in a group while others pupils would rather learn individually. Some schools employ interactive learning, which could be considered a new trend in the teaching/learning process where the child is the centre of attention. Interactive learning is not just a methodological approach, but also a new way of thinking about teaching being a dynamic process characterised by continuous change. The focus is on the child and the provision of conditions for the child to grow and thrive in school.

Regular school activities, regardless of the inherent diversity of backgrounds, learning speed, styles, interests and needs of pupils in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still organised in accordance with a standardised curriculum. The pre-defined curriculum usually causes teachers to start with a pre-defined teaching content. It is essential to recognise that this kind of standardised curriculum does not evolve from or relate to pupils' lives and the world around them. The current education reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina tries to contribute to inclusive education.

## Curriculum

According to the *Human Development Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina*, the curriculum and classes are still strictly divided into subjects, making it difficult to integrate teaching content. Also, the existing curriculum does not include much practical knowledge based on real-life requirements. There are many other examples of how pupils are unprepared for life outside the classroom. Even when learning a profession, pupils only have access to theoretical knowledge with little practical experience.

According to the document *Didactic Milestones* (2003), the curriculum in primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina should follow the principles

of providing equal opportunities, inclusion and quality education. As a result of learning according to such a curriculum, the pupils shall develop different abilities; emotional awareness; acquire self-confidence, self-esteem, optimism and responsibility; understand, interpret and use the concepts related to numerical and special structures; be aware of their national, cultural and other traditions and values; learn to express themselves through different creative activities; learn languages; know how to take care of themselves and others; and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary in the acquisition of an independent and quality life.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the primary school curriculum includes the following obligatory subjects: “mother tongue”, a foreign language, mathematics, social studies, science and technology, sport, music and art. The curriculum for secondary school includes: languages (mother tongue and a foreign language), social studies (history, geography, sociology, psychology, philosophy and logics, democracy), mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, information technology, culture, health, music, art and sport.

According to Smajić, because of the shortcomings of a standardised “lockstep curriculum”, greater attention to a more holistic perspective on learning is gaining attention and acceptance in general education. Recognising the pupil as the centre of learning is one of the common elements that tend to emerge in the holistic perspective. There is little or no focus on re-mediating deficits and weaknesses, which are addressed or compensated for as children become excited about learning and engaging in purposeful projects and real-life activities.

A holistic perspective to a curriculum, one of the future aims of the Bosnia and Herzegovina education reform, recognises that the information to be learned must take into account the dynamic nature of the knowledge needed to successfully live and work in a community. Identifying the information to be learned, used and maintained must continue to be meaningful and make sense to the pupil (considering the child’s background of experiences, interests and understanding). Subjects concerning important issues for the geographical area where the child is living should be represented and this information should be connected with actual questions, interests and everyday problems.

Within a holistic perspective, the teacher is viewed as a facilitator of pupils who become actively involved in the process of learning information that is meaningful and of interest to them, rather than the teacher being the dispenser of “the curriculum” (a predefined,

discrete, unchanging set of facts and information) (Smith, 1986, p.36).

Instead of an exhaustive emphasis upon purely academic skills (the actual practise in Bosnia and Herzegovina), the education programme should be built in terms of achieving basic mental and social needs. Skills in managing daily life could also assist children in avoiding undesirable situations that result from the fast and significant changes in society that are currently affecting Bosnia and Herzegovina. Developing communication skills in order to interact successfully with society, including training in skills that are necessary for everyday living, can help children to acquire useful knowledge (Smajić, 2004).

### **Individual education programme**

An individual education programme (IEP) is an essential tool in the education of children with special needs, especially for inclusion. An IEP is a written programme – a working document that results from an assessment of the strengths and needs of an individual pupil and describes the special education programme and services.

The individual education programme is based on a thorough assessment of the pupil's strengths, interests and needs. It identifies specific goals and expectations and explains how the special education programme will help to achieve the goals and expectations set out in the plan. Special education programmes and services are being modified by continuous assessment.

The pupil's individual education programme is developed, implemented and monitored in a collaborative manner (Smajić, 2004). According to Mustačić and Vicić (1996), an individual education programme should reflect the basic characteristics of the national or district's curriculum but the curriculum should be adjusted to the individual characteristics of the child. In addition, the IEP should allow for didactical adjustment and adjustment of each curricular subject and include a diversity of specific methods, materials and strategies. Psychological and methodological focus is needed, as well as a connection between curricular subjects and real life, concretisation, systematisation and operation of curricular subjects and socialisation and motivation of the child with special needs.

The scope in which the child is going to be involved in regular school activities and subjects should be defined and long-term (annual) and short-term aims, goals and objectives should be outlined. Individual support services and the objective criteria, ways and methods of education work and evaluation should also be determined. Persons responsible for the creation,

implementation, evaluation and revision of the curricular features should also be identified (Mustać and Vicić, 1996).

One of the future aims for all schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to begin working on the implementation of important practical goals such as the introduction of IEPs as well as a general policy of including all children with special needs in schools.

## Teacher training

Teachers are educated over two to four years at the faculties and academies of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Teachers who are going to work with children with special needs are educated for four years at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation at the University of Tuzla. A graduate diploma is granted in one of the fields of special education: visual impairment; hearing impairment, motor impairment, mental retardation, speech and language difficulties, and behavioural difficulties.

Special education is not adequately represented in the professional upgrading of regular teachers. Teachers who have attended seminars or conferences regarding special education and inclusion gain only scant knowledge about the subject. Teachers in regular schools feel that they do not have enough knowledge and skills to make their own decisions about opportunities for each individual child. This is a major problem in the school that practises inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Teachers, apart from their responsibilities in relation to education of children *without* special needs, are now taking over the responsibilities for the education of children with special needs as well. Frosting (1980) states that one can “appreciate those teachers who, without effort and in a friendly way, accept new tasks and responsibilities that result from the inclusive policies”. Affleck, *et al.* stated in 1973 that regular teachers in integrative education ought to have the following competencies: to be able to work together as members of team; to be able to perform individual and group assessments; to implement different programmes and activities in addressing goals; and to be able to evaluate pupil achievements.

Lewis (1974) thought that teachers should be additionally educated in order to be able to give adequate support to children with special needs in regular classrooms. Their education should broaden their knowledge about the characteristics of children with special education needs so to be able to

address the needs of each child in the classroom. Education should also help to develop positive attitudes towards children with special needs, which will not be characterised by compassion but by acceptance of human diversity.

Upgrading courses for teachers could be organised during regular graduate study or teachers training studies through additional education content pertaining to children with special needs and their characteristics. Another option is to offer additional courses in special needs education after graduate study or during the process of permanent qualification and upgrading in the field of special education. Programmes for teachers' upgrading should focus on the goals of special education, thus making teachers capable of recognising difficulties in different areas (cognition, behaviour, speech, psycho-motor development, psychology and the sociology of development).

Today in Bosnia and Herzegovina, only a very small number of special needs educators of different profiles are employed in regular schools, adding one more barrier to inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools. Regular teachers, at this point, and without co-operation from special educators, cannot provide adequate support for children with special needs attending regular schools.

### ***Training of specialists***

Tuzla University is the only university in Bosnia and Herzegovina offering higher education in the field of special needs education. Founded in 1993 during the war, with the support of Zagreb University, the Faculty of Defectology teaches traditional Eastern European Defectology. In the aftermath of the Dayton Agreement which formally ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, institutional capacity-building efforts are now aiming to adopt international principles, following a general trend in Eastern European universities after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As one of the results of the efforts to catch up with international trends in education and to promote the humanity and acceptance immediately after the establishment at the Faculty of Defectology, the staff expressed a common opinion about the necessity of changing the name of the institution. Today the "Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation", consists of three departments: (1) logopedics (speech therapy) and surdoaudiology (hearing impairments); (2) education and rehabilitation (oligofrenology/mental retardation, somathopedics/motor difficulties and tifology/ visual impairments) and (3) behavioural difficulties.

## Conclusion

Essential steps in education reform have been made in the past three years (2001-2004). The trend towards increased support for the development of inclusive education and meaningful curricula are encouraging. Yet many elements are missing in the reform process. It should meet the principles of education for all, human rights and democracy.

Special attention has to be paid to:

- Provision of conditions for attending primary school to all school children to the greatest extent possible through provision of a greater public investment in education, with a special emphasis on poor regions and on students who are educated in difficult conditions. Special attention should be given to institutional building and the development of teaching material.
- Inclusion of at least 20% of children in pre-school education. It is also necessary to develop alternative forms of care for children, especially outside of large urban centres.
- Modernisation of the education system (curricula, teacher training, education management).
- Quality assurance in accordance with European and international trends.
- Enhancement of teacher training.
- Development of new methods of measuring student performance.
- Establishment of an information system to measure trends in school enrolment and monitoring the status of minorities in the education process.
- Inclusion of young people in health and prevention programmes through health education.
- Training of teachers, psychologists, pedagogues and other professionals.
- Organisation of educational, cultural and recreational activities so that students spend their free time in co-operation with parents and the local community.

- Providing support to parents and strengthening the role of the family in order to create an environment for a safe and stable child development.

In recent years, there has been considerable emphasis on how to include all pupils with special needs in the social life of the society or classroom, but less attention has been given to how those pupils actively participate or effectively learn in inclusive settings (Lipsky and Gartner, 1989). Bosnia and Herzegovina has just begun to explore the questions raised in relation to inclusive education and has not only improved practices, but also identified other questions which will form an integral role in transforming the learning/teaching practice in the school. These questions are, however, open-ended. There are no definite or easy answers and they will need to be continually revisited as one measure of quality of life.

## Chapter 2 – Bulgaria

The National Report on “Education Policies for at Risk Students and those with Disabilities of Bulgaria” describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as reform efforts which are underway. This specific area of education has been fundamentally changed by the education reform initiated by the *Public Education Act Reform* in 2003/2004 and significant progress has been made towards the integration of children with special education needs into the mainstream school system. The concepts of integration and inclusion are central issues and attention is paid to barriers and problems of inclusion and equity in education, to parents’ participation and other support services. The report emphasises the importance of continued expansion of pilot programmes in inclusive education to affect mainstream education.





## Introduction

Important changes have occurred in the education system of the Republic of Bulgaria in the last few years, moving towards the inclusion of children with special education needs, children from other excluded groups such as minorities and the reduction of school-leavers. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and subsequently ratified by 192 countries, including Bulgaria, asserts the right of every child to education on an equal-opportunity basis (Article 28). The convention recommends governments to undertake a systematic analysis of their laws, policies and practices in order to assess their education systems with respect to children with special needs. The Bulgarian Government is striving to meet the requirements of the Convention to prohibit all forms of discrimination in access to education. In the last few years, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) has also been synchronising legislation with the requirements of the European Union, thereby improving education standards and working towards a quality education system.

Principles connected with the implementation of education for children with special needs are also formulated in the “UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities” (1993), which serve as a basis for changes in education policy of disabled children and which have already been implemented in Bulgaria. Especially important is Rule 6: the education for persons with disabilities should form an integral part of national education planning, curriculum development and school organisation. The “Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education” (1994) endorses the implementation of inclusive education for children with special education needs. The new challenges for the Bulgarian education system are to grant access to mainstream schools to children with special education needs, both children with disabilities and other disadvantaged children, accommodating them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of educating every child according to their unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, actively seeking out children who have never enrolled or who have left school. In 2003-2004, MoES made legislative changes that guarantee equal access to education and participation of all children in the national education system. Further efforts are now required to implement policies within this framework, taking into account Bulgarian educational and cultural traditions as well as current economic and social conditions.

## Overview of the school system and education reform priorities in Bulgaria

Since the 2003/2004 school year, children in all areas of Bulgaria attend at least one year of preparatory schooling either in local kindergartens or in primary school. Compulsory schooling ranges between grades 1-8, which is also called primary school. Grades 1-4 are called junior grades. Grades 5-8 are called middle or pre-secondary grades. Recent steep declines in birth rates will result in falling primary school enrolment. Up to 31% fewer children will be in grades 1-4 and 23% fewer in grades 5-8 by 2006/2007. The *Public Education Act* of 1991 uses the term comprehensive schooling for grades 1-12, secondary for grades 9-12 and specialised secondary for grades 8-12. Vocational technical schools can include grades 8 or 9 through 12 or 13, with two, three or four year courses.

In the last few years, many more students have been enrolling in higher education. The numbers more than doubled between 1990 and 2000. The *Higher Education Act*, adopted in 1993 and most recently amended in 2005, outlines the main policy directions in higher education. These include the introduction of a three-level degree system (Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees), increased adaptation to labour market conditions, adherence to European standards, innovation in teaching and learning methods including lifelong-learning practices and increasing the scope of academic autonomy. New schemes of funding higher education institutions including student support, research activities, business initiatives and private funding are also under development.

Current priorities for the ministry include raising the quality of education, personal development, cultural integration through encouraging artistic talents, religious education, teaching of at least two foreign languages, developing a greater variety of Bulgarian language courses and the introduction of some new syllabi. The ministry has also developed legislation related to alterations in the *Public Education Act*, on the level of schooling and general education minimums. State education requirements have been developed in different school subjects and new syllabi are available in all subjects for grades 1, 2 and 9-12. Secondary education is acquired after the completion of grade 12 and the successful passing of two state matriculation exams – one on the Bulgarian language and literature and the second on a subject chosen by the pupil. For the acquisition of vocational education in addition to the state matriculation exams, the pupils have to pass two state exams in vocational qualification in accordance with the state education requirements. The Bulgarian system is also striving to meet European standards concerning health education, civic education,

ecological education and information technology. Plans to improve the system of pre-service and in-service teacher training are also in place.

With reference to special needs education, the priority is to provide access to education for all children, implement inclusive education of children with special education needs at all school levels and to improve legislation on enrolment in special schools. Legislative changes connected with the implementation of inclusive education for children with special education needs have been passed. In addition, matriculation exams have been developed which are identical in all cases except for students with intellectual disabilities in special schools. Also related to inclusion, recent legislation and programmes aim to integrate Roma children into the education process.

## Legal framework

National education policy, pursuant to the *Public Education Act*, is managed by the highest executive body of Bulgaria, the Council of Ministers, which oversees the management of the education system (kindergartens, schools, and degree-granting institutions) by the Ministry of Education and Science. The ministry also performs other functions such as co-ordination and planning; including determination of the main policy recommendations for implementing the “Education for All” plan. There are 28 regional education inspectorates, also directly under the purview of the ministry and these manage activities and training for all types of kindergartens and schools.

Three laws provide the legal framework for education in Bulgaria: the *Public Education Act* (1991, the last amendment in 2002) and implementing regulations; the *Law of the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and Syllabus* (1999, the last amendment in 2002) and the *Vocational Education and Training Act* (1999, the last amendment in 2002). These last two laws include vocational training in professional schools in Bulgaria, including for students with special education needs.

### Public Education Act reform (2003-2004)

Recent reform, in 2003 and 2004, of the *Public Education Act* calls for the preparation of children for school one year before their admission to the first grade, a year that becomes compulsory and is free of charge. This change is especially beneficial for children with special needs and children

from Roma and Turkish minorities as pre-school education allows them to adjust to a school environment and to learn the Bulgarian language if necessary. Directors of kindergartens, mainstream schools and vocational schools are obliged to accept children with special education needs. Placing children in special kindergartens and schools should be done only after trying out all other possibilities. Other amendments of the *Public Education Act* relieve children with special education needs from meeting mainstream state education requirements. They are not obliged to repeat classes but may pass on to the next grade with an individual programme for education and development. Children with severe disorders and multiple disorders (considered “non-educable” before these reforms) will be educated according to individual programmes in special schools. Children with special education needs should also receive vocational training.

Teams for ascertainment in the regional inspectorates of education, to ascertain the education needs of children with special education needs in support of inclusive education implementation will also be created under the *Public Education Act* reforms. However, a variety of other duties will also be assumed. The team will collect information on children with special education needs from departments for child protection and regional health centres, municipal education departments, kindergartens and schools, orphanages and special homes for intellectually impaired children. This will happen at the end of each school year and will include information about school leavers. This information can help to direct students to schools with resource centres where possible. These teams will also carry out consultations for parents or guardians on the education options for their children, recommend assistant teachers to the directors of kindergartens and schools and act as resources for assistance to teachers and others on inclusive education. Lastly, these ascertainment teams will present a report, on an annual basis, to the Ministry of Education and Science which will include an analysis of the status of inclusive education.

Teams of support specialists will also be created directly in kindergartens, schools with inclusive education and in special schools. This team, including special pedagogues or resource teachers, psychologists or pedagogical advisors, speech and language therapists or visual rehabilitators and a classroom teacher, assesses the education needs of the child, supervises the child’s development and creates individual programmes for further training. Also, the team consults with parents and teachers on education problems arising out of the education process. The changes to the *Public Education Act* also define the competencies and functions of the resource teacher in schools with inclusive education. The resource teacher should have a high degree of education – Bachelor or Master of special pedagogy or another specialty with a professional teacher qualification and

the additional qualification of special pedagogy. This teacher works in a team, giving assistance to the other teachers in the school. The teacher can also work individually with the pupil or with a group of pupils with special education needs taken out of their main class and, on occasion, with parents. The changes in the *Public Education Act* further state that resource centres should be created for assisting the inclusive education processes, both independently and in special schools.

Pupils with special education needs who have not been able to meet general education requirements for a given grade in school will also have the right, under the *Public Education Act*, to continue their education in individual programmes. Pupils with special education needs educated through individual programmes obtain certificates for completing a grade, upon which are written the results from the individual programmes. Pupils finishing the twelfth grade get a certificate for completing grammar school. Up to two children with special education needs can be admitted to one group in kindergartens or classes in primary schools. The number of children in a group or class where there are children with special education needs is a minimum of 12 for a group and 16 for a class. In mainstream schools, classes for pupils with hearing impairment and for intellectually impaired pupils can also be opened.

## **Policy review focusing on special groups**

In Bulgaria, the medical model of disability identification was applied in the past, focusing on the disturbances, damages or deficits incurred on the physical, mental or sensory development of the child. Children were also classified into different groups according to their disabilities and their education took place in special training programmes by trained teachers with specific training methods and approaches. At present, the education process of disabled children in schools is beginning to move towards the social model taking into account the child's potential for learning as well as various environmental influences. The term "children with special education needs", which includes all children with disorders and disabilities, has come into usage, at least in the education system. Public opinion has begun to evolve over the last few years regarding the necessity of both altering the current system of special education and introducing the system of inclusive education. More and more parents of disabled children would like their children to be educated and to play together with other children.

As mentioned in the introduction, Bulgaria has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which underlines the rights of *all* children to education with the aim of achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development. The Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education proposes the policy of inclusive education in schools, stating that inclusive education systems are marked by greater efficiency and are able to assist vulnerable children to a greater extent, unlike education systems that exclude or isolate children because of their disabilities, ethnic affiliations or gender. The policy of the Ministry of Education and Science is that there are no children who cannot be educated, all children are to be educated irrespective of the degree and type of their impairment and all children have the right to equal access in education. Therefore, every child with special education needs has the right to access to education in mainstream kindergartens and schools. Every child is a unique person with their own qualities, interests, capabilities and education needs and every child with special education needs has the right to be educated according to individual programmes appropriate to their capabilities and needs. Mainstream kindergartens and schools where children with special education needs are also educated create a tolerant society and ensure education for all.

The term “integration” is used for all attempts to avoid a segregated and isolated education for pupils with disabilities. Several key measures are to be taken to ensure integration. These include the adoption of a new, financially supported policy of integration, assuring additional services rendered by qualified specialists and resource teachers, creation of supporting environments, including proper architectural surroundings, equipment, technical support and syllabi, early intervention programmes, individual education programmes and involvement of parents as partners in the education process. Moreover, additional efforts should be taken in the training of teachers in mainstream schools to accept children with disabilities. These are necessary in order to achieve advances in enrolments and achievement.

The individual programme for children with special education needs in mainstream and special schools includes identification and basic information about children and their parents. Team assessments provide further information on health, psychological processes and the level of intellectual development, character and behaviour, speech and language development and communication capabilities, knowledge, interests, skills and habits of the child and areas where they express themselves the best and information on their social environment – family, friends and school. Additionally, basic aims and tasks of education are also included as are special methods—such as visual, practical, verbal and therapeutic methods. Assessments of the

individual programme will include progress in self-care skills, general motor development, speech-language and communicative skills, cognitive skills and other educational achievements.

With the introduction of inclusive education, the existing network of special schools will need to be transformed into a modern system with a new approach. Special schools should be considered only after all other possibilities for education in mainstream classes have been exhausted or when a child cannot adapt to this environment. While special schools will still exist in Bulgaria, they are gradually assuming new roles and functions: outlining the admission requirements for special kindergartens and special schools for children with severe disabilities or multiple disorders (such children have not been previously educated); using a child-centred approach in the educational environment; and elaborating individual education programmes, as described above, for children who cannot be educated according to the general syllabus of the special schools.

There are several projects of inclusive education in Bulgaria already in place, organised by the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as by various NGOs. For example, children with hearing impairment are educated in several mainstream schools and perform additional work with hearing and speech therapists in no less than eight separate locations. Another interesting project is carried out in a vocational school in Russe: six classes of intellectually impaired children are trained in cooking and tailoring. There are also practices of inclusive education of visually impaired children in several mainstream schools in which children attend mainstream courses and are additionally assisted by specially trained teachers for visual rehabilitation.

### **National plan for integration of children with special education needs**

The Council of Ministers, in December 2003, adopted the “National Plan for Integration of Children with Special Education Needs”. The period of action was from 2004-2007 and the creation of the appropriate support network for implementation of this plan has begun. Furthermore, the ministry has also created a Department for Education and Cultural Integration that consists of two sections. One deals with the integration of children with special education needs and the second deals with the cultural integration of minorities. This department is responsible for the required courses on ecological and health education for EU standards, the implementation of inclusive education and education integration of children from ethnic minorities and at risk children. The Ministry of Education and Science has also created a Consultancy Council on Education of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities, within which representatives from the



state and non-governmental organisations take part in programmes for education integration of children from ethnic minorities. A total of 680 students with special education needs and 130 assistant teachers are involved in these efforts.

The “National Plan for Integration of Children with Special Education Needs” addressed towards children with physical, sensory, intellectual, speech and language or multiple disorders outlines the framework for implementation of inclusive education in Bulgaria. The plan applies to the education system as a whole, not just pre-school, primary and universities, but also regional inspectorates of education, departments for child protection at municipal level, the health system, the social-policy system, local municipal authorities, parents and NGOs. Specifically, the plan:

- Recommends inclusive education for children and pupils with special education needs in kindergartens and in all type of schools.
- Outlines responsibilities of state and municipal bodies to provide the necessary resources in all kindergartens and schools where children with special needs are educated.
- Suggests methods for assessment and planning for individual cases of inclusive education and recommends responsibilities for the development and implementation of programmes for inclusive education.
- Proposes methods for adaptation of the school to become a supporting environment that includes accessible architecture and proper accommodation and materials in kindergartens and schools where children and pupils with special education needs are educated.

The national plan defines inclusive education as a process in which all children, irrespective of their special needs, are included in the general education process. Their success will be possible with the establishment and development of a supporting environment. The integration process includes activities such as: legislative changes, finding resources for implementation, improving attitudes towards children with special needs, changing teaching methodologies and increasing participation of parents and the public.

### ***Objectives and activities***

The overall objective of the national plan is the implementation of inclusive education of children with special education needs into the education system of Bulgaria. Planned activities include the creation of a national public council and regional public councils for inclusive education

which will co-ordinate, manage and assess implementation of the plan. This group will organise regular working meetings between different national institutions – Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, State Agency for Child Protection, Agency for Social Support, NGOs and any local branches of these organisations at the municipalities, regional administrations, kindergartens and school directors and others. Also, periodical reports for the fulfilment of the national plan will also be published. Changes in legislation will also need to be undertaken in order to further the development of a system of inclusive education.

Of primary importance in implementing a successful system is the identification of children with special education needs in different regions of the country, all children from birth to the age of 18 in all municipalities and the eventual implementation of early intervention programmes. Towards this goal, a database for children with special education needs will be created and the regional inspectorates of education will collect information on children with special education needs. The development of a register of children and students with special education needs would be carried out if sufficient funding were available. Monitoring of the condition of homes for children and young people with mental retardation in order to include these children in education in school is also important.

Creation of teams for ascertainment in the regional education inspectorates will provide clear outlines of the education needs of children and the resource supports they need for their education and for the development of inclusive education as a whole. This will include children educated in special kindergartens and schools in order to prepare for their integration into the general education environment. Realisation of psychological support and consultations with parents when making decisions about the education of their child—in a special kindergarten or mainstream school will also be provided. The teams will also create individual education plans for inclusive education in kindergartens and schools. Establishment of resource centres in special kindergartens and schools to support inclusive education and early intervention programmes will increase chances of success for children and pupils with special education needs.

Training of experts, including pedagogical staff, psychologists, municipal administrators, and kindergarten and school directors will be necessary as well as the addition of lectures on inclusive education in the syllabus of teacher-training universities. Preparation of the kindergarten and school staff for accepting and supporting inclusive education, training of trainers and seminars at the regional and national level will allow for the dissemination of information about how to succeed in developing an

inclusive education system. Appointment of assistant teachers and additional subsidiary personnel is also necessary. Education and seminars on the rights of the child for doctors of general medicine and for social service employees encouraging implementation of the social approach about disorders and disabilities cannot be overlooked.

Popularisation of the National Plan in the society at large through the media, national and regional forums and with parents (both those with and without children with special education needs) is also essential. Other important practical concerns are the adaptation of architectural surroundings and the availability of equipment in kindergartens and schools; this could include technical equipment for inclusive education of children and pupils with special education needs. Finally, funding sources for inclusive education is also essential to the implementation of the national plan.

### **At risk students and school leavers**

The Bulgarian education system faces a problem in the consistently high numbers of pupils who leave school or who do not enrol. These children are considered children “at risk”, a term that can include children living on the street or without parental or adult care, children who are victims of violence or are subjected to trafficking. Many children leaving school are from the Roma minority and/or from poor families. Some at risk children are educated in schools for children with deviant behaviour while others are in special homes. Decreased enrolments of children and young people have varied social and environmental causes: *Social-economic factors* include the remoteness of small villages from schools; lack of priority for school before other obligations (*i.e.* the child may work at a family business or other job); lack of parental interest in the education of their children; social isolation of Roma children due to language barriers; a high level of poverty; lack of textbooks, school materials or even clothing, due to heavy family financial burdens; and migration of parents due to the poor economy. *Health factors* can also lead to degradation in the intellectual or physical state of the children or health problems that make education difficult. *Pedagogical and school environment factors* also play a role; these can include the dislike of the school environment by young people; non-motivating methods of teaching; difficulties in learning the State education requirements and lack of proper architectural environment and access barriers for the children with physical disorders.

Since the number of school-leavers tends to increase in later years of schooling, a lack of interest towards the education process and decreased motivation for taking part in secondary school are of particular concern. The challenges of the social crises in the last 10-15 years as well the rapid

development of the market economy have not been met by the education environment. The low status of the teaching profession and the lack of mechanisms for active, creative participation of teachers in innovations led to undemanding and impractical coursework that will not prepare students for work life. The lack of education of Roma children related to low social status and comparatively low education background of Roma parents and the absence of qualification among education authorities in dealing with the Roma groups also were not addressed. Table 2.1 gives the overall number of students leaving school and those leaving for abroad in the period 2000-2003.

**Table 2.1 School leavers in Bulgaria**

Year	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Mainstream school population	1 074 946	1046 477	1 043 432
Left school	30 690	28 000	31 006
Left for abroad	2 967	3 281	3 572

*Source:* National Statistic Institute.

Reduction of the number of school leavers is one of the main priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science. Training in professions that are appropriate to the labour market, increasing the number of professions for which training is available and allowing vocational education after grade VI are changes that have been introduced. Admittance with preference and without entrance examination into vocational schools for children from orphanages as well as for children with disabilities and disorders (up to five children per class) could also assist in addressing this issue. Furthermore, equal access to education is being assured in remote and mountainous regions through the restructuring of the school network. Finally, improving school management through school guardianship and other civil society institutions connected with education and developing a system for alternative forms of education will also be essential in increasing accountability and offering greater school choice.

MoES has created Centres for Education Services and Qualification that function in twenty-eight regions of the country. Their activities include: informational services to schools; ensuring conditions for support of good teaching practices and student projects; encouraging new ideas for the development of the school environment; intermediation and help in solving different problems in the school municipality; organisation of seminars,

education and qualification courses for teachers and other persons working in education; assisting the process of communication in the school municipality; working with pupils in danger of leaving school; professional orientation and consultation for pupils and their parents. Work with school leavers in most of the Centres at this stage is mainly through carrying out inquiries, evaluation of the reasons for leaving school and acquainting the teachers in schools with these study results. Usually these investigations are qualitative and only in a few cases do they have a quantitative character. Few of the centres have begun to work with children with special education needs.

In January 2004, MoES passed a “Strategy for Educational Integration for Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities” aiming to integrate Roma children and pupils. Parents now have the right to select the school where their child will enrol, which gives the Roma parents the possibility to enrol their children outside of Roma districts. Furthermore, in the 2003/2004 school year, teacher assistants were introduced in the preparatory group, preparatory class and first grade in kindergarten and schools. The main duty of the teacher assistant is to help the adaptation of Roma and Turkish pupils in their integration into the educational process and to mediate in their communication with other children. The assistant also facilitates communication between the teachers and the Roma parents.

## **Statistics and indicators**

The statistics below show the main educational data available related to children in all levels of schooling, by type of disability and numbers of special schools. These statistics include children from three years of age to grades XII (18-19 years). There are slightly fewer schools in 2002/2003 than there were in 2000/2001, a total of 139 instead of 152. The number of children in separate schools has only slightly diminished however, from 17 518 to 17 312.

Table 2.2 Children enrolled in separate schools for special needs 2000-2003

Special Schools	Number of schools			Number of children		
	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
1. Intellectually impaired children	74	74	72	9 733	9 744	9 384
2. Children with hearing impairment	3	3	3	627	626	647
3. Children with visual impairment	2	2	2	317	327	331
4. Children with multiple disorders	1	1	1	46	48	46
5. Children with speech & language disorders	3	3	2	150	180	89
6. Logopedy Centres	2	2	2	-	-	-
7. Children with chronic diseases	28	25	23	3 284	3 352	4 007
8. Hospitalised Children	2	2	7	524	482	486
9. Children with deviant behaviour	32	30	27	2 837	2 716	2 322
Overall number	147	142	139	17 518	17 475	17 312

*Source:* The data in Table 2.2 are collected in October 2003 from the regional inspectorates in Bulgaria.

The number of students included in kindergartens, schools and vocational schools as of the fall of 2003 is 1 249, of whom 29% of students had an intellectual impairment, 25% had cerebral palsy and 21% hearing impairments. Another 14% had visual impairments and 9% had other disabilities.

Table 2.3 Children and pupils with special education needs included in kindergartens, schools and vocational schools in 2003

Hearing impairment	Visual impairment	Intellectual impairment	Cerebral palsy	Multiple disorders	Others	Overall number
264	172	368	307	25	113	1 249
21%	14%	29%	25%	2%	9%	100%

*Source:* The data in Table 2.3 are collected in October 2003 from the regional inspectorates in Bulgaria.

## School organisation, pedagogy and curriculum

### Current system of education for children with special education needs

The system of special education in Bulgaria has a long history, starting with the establishment of the first school for deaf children in 1888 by the German specialist in surdpedagogy, Ferdinand Urbich. The approach in most Eastern European countries towards disabled children was dominated by the science of defectology until only very recently. Developed in the USSR in the 1920s, defectology, which concerns both the theory and treatment of disability, has been a discipline unlike any in the West. The name itself clearly reflects certain attitudes -- a person with a disability has defects that need to be addressed -- and emphasises the discipline's medical approach to the disabled individual imposing the categorisation of children, in contrast with the social approach that focuses on the individual's environment and needs. Defectology in Bulgaria defined a separate approach towards the socialisation and education of disabled children in schools apart from those for other children, which resulted in the creation of a broad network of special kindergartens and special schools; the greatest number being created in the 1960s and 1970s. The system was designed with the best of intentions: to train children with various problems in their learning, health or behaviour and to secure the best possible training, rehabilitation, correction and compensation of the disturbance or disability. However, this system isolated disabled children, both from other children and the society as a whole, and deprived them from the possibility of being educated with their peers and interacting with their families.

From 2001-2004, the number of special schools gradually decreased, due to the reforms carried out by MoES, which implement the integration process of disabled children into mainstream schools. Today, the system of special schools includes schools for children with chronic diseases, hospitalised children and children with behavioural disorders. MoES directly manages, administratively and financially, the special schools, considered 'state schools' in Bulgaria, meaning they are not under local or regional government but under the direct authority of MoES. Municipalities, on the other hand, finance special kindergartens.

In special schools, defectologists teach students, while in special schools and in some mainstream schools psychologists, speech and language therapists and special pedagogues can also teach or provide therapy for students. In mainstream schools with more than 500 pupils, there are also pedagogical advisors. At present, a team for ascertainment, as described above, determines the education needs of the disabled child and where they will be schooled. This team of specialists, a psychologist, speech and

language therapist, special educational teacher, mainstream teacher and a doctor (medical psychiatrist or neurologist) is formed in the Regional Inspectorate for Education in each of the 28 regional towns in Bulgaria. The team evaluates the education needs of the disabled child and offers the parents, who are included in the ascertainment process, choices in education for their child in a mainstream or a special school.

The overall number of children included in the education system of Bulgaria is presented in Table 2.4. The number of children in the special schools is compared with the children in mainstream schools; about 1.6% of all children are trained in special schools.

**Table 2.4 Children educated in primary and secondary schools in Bulgaria**

	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Year			
Mainstream schools	1 074 946	1 046 477	1 043 432
Special schools	17 518	17 475	17 312
Percent of children in special schools	1.62	1.67	1.66

*Source:* The data in Table 2.4 are collected from the National Statistic Institute and the regional inspectorates in Bulgaria.

### ***Schools and resource centres for intellectually impaired children***

Children with different levels of intellectual impairment can be educated in special schools for intellectually impaired children according to a special education curriculum and syllabus. For those children who cannot fulfil the necessary requirements of this syllabus, individual programmes are developed. MoES has created a new curriculum and syllabus, more in line with that of mainstream schools, for the first grade of special schools for intellectually impaired children; curricula and syllabi for the grades II through VIII are in development as of December 2004.

Professional training is offered in special schools for intellectually impaired children including for culinary arts, tailoring, floriculture, upholstery, herb collection and other skills. Children with intellectual disabilities are educated eight years in the special school (until the VIII grade) and two years in special vocational training. Vocational training classes for intellectually impaired children have been formed at both special schools and at vocational schools. Additionally, there are occasionally separate classes for intellectually impaired children in regular schools throughout the country. Some reforms are planned for the network of special schools for intellectually impaired children: the number of special schools



will be reduced and the special schools will be transformed into mainstream ones.

### ***Schools and resource centres for visually impaired children***

Children with different levels of visual impairment, including children who are blind, are educated in schools for visually impaired children. Criterion for acceptance in such schools is extremely low vision or blindness (the sight visus<sup>2</sup> from 0.0 till 0.2.) There are two such schools, one in Sofia and one in Varna, where children are educated through secondary education (I through XII grade). In these schools, classes for children with multiple disorders are taught as well. The education in such schools is carried out according to the mainstream syllabus with the addition of training in special subjects like mobility, orientation, Braille and computers. In these schools, there is a preparatory year for six-year-old children.

There is also a special resource service for support of visually impaired children who are educated in mainstream and vocational schools; the first to provide support for inclusive education in the mainstream schools. Special teachers for visually impaired children who work in these schools educate pre-school age children, pupils from kindergartens and mainstream schools. For those children who cannot fulfil the necessary requirements of the syllabus, individual programmes are implemented. The number of children in one class is from eight to twelve pupils, though classes for children with multiple disorders are smaller, with just four to six students. These are the classes for which, in the 1990s, education of children with multiple disorders was first introduced; up to that period, children with multiple disorders were not educated in schools.

### ***Schools and resource centres for hearing impaired children***

There are three schools for hearing impaired children in Bulgaria, which teach children with hearing loss of a minimum of 30 decibels, with the agreement of parents. School extends from pre-school to the XII grade. From VIII-XII grade, vocational classes are formed with topics such as culinary arts, tailoring and upholstery. Classes for children with multiple disabilities can also be taught. The education in schools for children with hearing disabilities is carried out with the mainstream syllabus as well as with training in special subjects like speech and language development, articulation, musical stimulation and computers. The emphasis in the teaching is laid upon speech and hearing rehabilitation and communication;

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<sup>2</sup> Visus – medical determination of blindness. From 0.0 to 0.2 – blindness. Children which have visus under 1.0 are considered to have low visus.

sign language is also used. The method of total communication has not been introduced at pre-school age as it is more important to continue to stimulate the development of speech and language of children with hearing disabilities if possible. Sound amplifying equipment and individual hearing devices are also used in the training of children with hearing impairments. The number of children in one class is from eight to twelve pupils while the number of children with multiple disorders in one class is four to six. There are special resource services for support of hearing-impaired children in Sofia and Plovdiv who are educated in mainstream and vocational schools.

### ***Schools and centres for therapy of children with language and speech disorders***

There are special kindergartens for children with communication disorders from the ages of 3-7 years. In these kindergartens, in preparation for school, the speech and language of children are corrected. There are also two schools, with I to IV grade classes, for correction of speech and language disorders (developmental dysphasia, dyslexia, stuttering, educational difficulties). In Bulgaria, speech therapy for children with communicational disorders can also be inclusive, so children do not lose touch with families and their social environment. In kindergartens and primary schools, children who have disorders in their speech are taught in general educational courses and, in addition, their difficulties are addressed and corrected with speech and language therapy. Language and speech rehabilitation is offered to children with slight speech problems as well as to aphasic, dyslexic and dysgraphic children. (Children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian are not subjected to therapy; ethnic affiliation is not considered determining and logopedic specialists do not treat the lack of mastery of the Bulgarian language.)

## **Principles of education – curricula and achievement measures**

General education in Bulgarian schools is carried out through the study of different subjects grouped in the following educational fields: Bulgarian language and literature; foreign languages; mathematics, informatics and information technologies; social sciences, civic education and religion; natural sciences and ecology; arts; way of life and technologies; and physical culture and sports. The Bulgarian education system aims to teach basic foundations of knowledge; the respect for universal values and national virtues and culture; encourage personal development; artistic, spiritual, physical and social development and a healthy way of life; and to provide possibilities for lifelong learning. The educational fields correspond to the goals of general educational training; with options for synergy

between the different study subjects. There are not significant differences between the distribution of educational subjects by hours and educational time between special and mainstream schools in many instances. In first grade, overall hours of courses differ only slightly and courses offerings are almost identical. However, foreign language starts at grade II in mainstream schools, while pupils with intellectual impairment do not study foreign language till VIII grade.

Mainstream schools are not accessible to wheelchairs, with the exception of three schools in Sofia, which were equipped with elevators in 2004 after the legislation changes introduced for inclusive education.

## Teacher training

In Bulgaria, teachers for all levels, preschool, primary and secondary school teachers are educated in universities and colleges obtaining Bachelors and Masters Degrees. Preschool teachers can also obtain the degree of specialist in colleges. While currently only some mainstream teachers have additional coursework related to children and pupils with special education needs in several specialties at the Sofia University *St. Kliment Ohridski*, the National Plan suggests additional education for *all* schoolteachers for work with these students. The Ministry of Education and Science has informed all teacher training programmes in different forms of higher education to include in their curriculum additional courses for teachers of children with special education needs.

Teachers who work with visually impaired children are educated in the Sofia University as “resource teachers” on inclusive education for children with visual impairment. Psychologists, special pedagogues and speech and language therapists obtain Bachelors and Masters Degrees in 11 universities throughout Bulgaria. Teachers who work in special schools should have received Bachelors (or Masters) degrees in special pedagogy (formerly called defectology), a discipline dating from the middle of the 1960s, or degrees in a particular teaching discipline with additional qualification in special pedagogy.

Masters Programmes in special pedagogy called “Preparation of Assistant teachers for Children with Special Education needs”, prepare preschool teachers, primary teachers and subject teachers. The programme, which has 340 hours over three semesters, includes education on: legislation for children and persons with special education needs; basic functions of the resource teacher; models of inclusive education; creation of an individual

educational plan; formation of verbal communicative competency; teamwork; pedagogical/psychological identification in mainstream school; specific communication skills; work with families and parents; design and elaboration of didactic materials; social skills and social realisation of children; work in non-formal groups; management of classroom activities; modern information technologies; data-analysis methods. The teacher-trainees also have three practicums on positive interpersonal relationships; language and stylistic skills; and skills for working in a multicultural environment. There are also modules on pedagogy for education of intellectually impaired children, speech and hearing rehabilitation and pedagogy for education of visually impaired children. Speech and language therapy can be part of special pedagogy or can exist as an independent specialty. The following optional specialties, of which two must be chosen, are also in the curriculum: braille; sign language; macaton; and work in a multimedia environment. Other optional topics are: information technologies; collection and systematisation of empirical data and art therapy.

## Conclusion

With the passage of the changes to the Public Education Act in 2003-2004, many elements of reform of special education in Bulgaria have been outlined and legally endorsed. The next step will require efforts in implementation of the resource teams and other forms of support in mainstream schools required for successful education of children with special needs. Bulgaria has also undertaken examination of the situation of at risk children and passed plans for their integration into mainstream school systems. The addition of a compulsory preparatory year of schooling is also a major step forward for all groups of students, but perhaps particularly for those in need of additional support, for greater possibility of success in primary school. The continued expansion of pilot programmes in inclusive education and sharing of experiences with special schools and other mainstream schools can further illustrate positive steps in development of education for children with special needs.

## Chapter 3 – Croatia

The National Report on ‘Education Policies for at risk Students and those with Disabilities’ of Croatia describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as reform efforts underway. Whereas integration of children with special education needs is being well established in Croatian education law and policy, *e.g.* by the National Strategy of Unique Policy towards Disabled Persons 2002–2006, authors stress the importance of substantial increase of resources to put inclusive integration into action. As all other reports presented in this book, this account covers the following sections: a short overview of the education system followed by chapters describing the legal framework policies focusing on special groups, statistics and indicators, and the current situation of teacher training, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. The concepts of integration and inclusion are central issues, and attention is paid to barriers and problems of inclusion and equity in education, to parents’ participation and other support services. The report also describes new strategies and policy development for disabled and at risk children. A special section relates to research undertaken in Croatia over the last 20 years with respect to individualised approaches, integration and inclusion of children with special needs.



## Introduction

The treatment of persons with developmental difficulties has passed through a variety of phases throughout history, ranging from outright discrimination, to charity and finally to recognition and provision of education, both worldwide and in Croatia. The main form of special-needs education has traditionally been schooling in special schools, where specialists teach children with developmental difficulties separately from other children. This treatment has mirrored that of the community at large, regarding children with disabilities as “different” or “special”. Such “special” education could also include vocational training, but students very rarely managed to complete higher education or become employed (Rački, 1997). Educational isolation continued until the beginning of the 1970s when people with special education needs in the economically more advanced nations gradually started to be treated on an equal basis with other citizens, a trend that the Republic of Croatia has now begun to follow. Persons with special needs have thus gradually been granted the opportunity to access equal education and training to develop to their full potential. Educational isolation in special schools is being replaced by a policy of inclusion.

Governmental school systems started to be established in developed countries during the nineteenth century; compulsory schooling required that private primary schools and, later, secondary schools, become state-sponsored public schools. In parallel, schools for special needs students were also established. From 1918 to 1974, only minor changes in the Croatian education system were undertaken, extending the length of compulsory schooling. A significant reform occurred in 1974, after which “special education” was made an intrinsic part of the entire school system. In 1980, students with difficulties began to be included in regular schools. Since then, the education of pupils with developmental difficulties has been an integral part of the school system in the Republic of Croatia.

As per the Pre-school Education Act (Official Gazette No. 97), pre-school, which is not compulsory, can begin at the age of six months and lasts until the child starts primary school (at the age of six or seven years). In accordance with Article 65 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, primary school is the only level of school that is both compulsory and free of charge. The Constitution of the Republic Croatia requires teaching to be conducted in the Croatian language with the Latin alphabet. Teaching is organised in classes whereby the pupils in grades I-IV have a class-teacher

and those in grades V-VIII have specialised teachers for each school subject. Subject teaching for I-V graders is also available in foreign language and for art and music. Compulsory primary schooling lasts eight years for children from the ages of 6-15 years. The obligation to attend primary school extends up to the class the pupil starts before they turn 15 years of age; although a pupil is not deprived of his or her right to continue primary schooling after this age. Secondary schooling, upon completion of primary school, includes formal education of pupils between 15 and 19 years of age, as well as adult-education programmes. Secondary schooling is not compulsory and, as per the Constitution, it is available to all under equal conditions. University or higher education is a part of lifelong education; there are 85 public institutions of higher education. Some indicators have shown that about 65-70% of those who have completed secondary schooling are enrolled in institutions of higher education.

## Legislative framework

The enactment of legal provisions in 1980 began the process of integration of children with developmental difficulties into regular schools in the Republic of Croatia, since then, an integral part of the school system. Education of children with developmental difficulties in Croatia has not been regulated by any special act, but it has been incorporated into the Act on Pre-school Education (Official Gazette, No. 10/97), Act on Primary Education (Official Gazette, No. 69/03) and Act on Secondary Education (Official Gazette, No. 69/03). Croatian legislation tried to regulate integration as holistically as possible, efforts that have been, to a large degree, successful; the state has assured that all children have the right to be educated and trained.

At the pre-school level, in the Republic of Croatia, education of children with developmental difficulties has been regulated by the following acts: Act on Pre-school Education (Official Gazette, No. 10/97, Articles 6, 15, 17, 20, 24 and 50); the Decision on the Element of Criteria: Specific Needs of Children with Developmental Handicaps (Official Gazette, No. 47/87); Regulations on Special Requirements and Criteria of Realisation of Programmes for Pre-school Education, (Official Gazette, 1997, Articles 6 and 7); Regulations on the Management of Budgetary Funds and Criteria of Co-financing Programmes for Pre-school Education (The Croatian Ministry of Education and Sports Bulletin, No. 13/97, Articles 2, 3 and 8). Children with special needs in pre-school are included in adjusted curricula in mainstream schools, in special educational groups in mainstream school or



in special educational institutions as defined in Article 17, Item 2, of the Act on Pre-school Education:

The type and the degree of child's developmental handicap, as well as the need for suitable conditions for nursing, education and protection of children with a developmental handicap, shall be established, upon the proposal of the primary health protection physician, by the professional committee organised in accordance with the law that has arranged the relations within the social care area.

Therefore, an adjusted pre-school curriculum is established based on findings and opinions of the professional committee, which is organised in compliance with the law and which arranges social care and establishes the types and the degrees of developmental delays. This professional committee functions in accordance with the Regulations on the Composition and Method of the Body of Experts in the Procedure of Actualisation of Claims upon Social Care (Official Gazette, No. 38/98).

At the primary school level, the following documents regulate the education of children with special needs: Act on Primary Education (Official Gazette, No. 69/03, Articles 60-61); Regulations on Enrolment of Children in Primary School (Official Gazette, No. 13/1991); Regulations on Primary Education of Children with Developmental Handicaps (Official Gazette, no. 23/91); Regulations on Number of Schoolchildren in Classes (Official Gazette, No. 74/99); and Regulations on Qualifications and Pedagogical-Psychological Education of Teachers and Expert Collaborators in Primary Education system (Official Gazette, No. 47/96). The majority of schoolchildren with developmental delays are integrated into regular classes with, at most, three schoolchildren with special needs in a class. As per the Regulations on the Number of Schoolchildren in the Class, a class with one child with special needs can have a maximum of 28 schoolchildren; a class with two such children can have 26 pupils, while a class that includes three schoolchildren with special needs can have only 24 total pupils. Regulations establish the appropriate level of schooling according to the level of developmental handicap, integrating children with minor difficulties in regular classes, or into "partial integration" or attached classes if they have moderate difficulties. Children with major difficulties, according to the Regulations on Primary Education of Schoolchildren with Developmental Handicaps may attend special educational institutions. Education of children with special needs incur additional financial expenses, which are entirely borne by the state, through the Ministry in charge (usually the Ministry of Education, at times also the Ministry of Social Care). The resources for additional expenses for the teaching materials and aids, for transportation

and co-financing of food for all pupils with special needs in special classrooms and special educational institutions are also borne by the state.

The secondary school system has been divided into several types whereby the programmes for secondary school education are taught in grammar schools and programmes for achieving secondary vocational training (including both three- and four-year programmes) in vocational and art schools. Programmes for semi-skilled employment (lower qualification), as well as programmes for training and skill improvement are also, for the most part, realised in vocational schools, but sometimes also in other institutions, such as in special schools, meeting the conditions as regulated by law.

By and after the age of 21, pupils with severe and profound mental retardation and those with the presence of combined disorders, one of which is intellectual impairment, can continue training after primary school in manufacturing activities. Other pupils continue their education in the secondary school system. Secondary education for children with developmental difficulties is regulated by: The Act on Secondary Education (Official Gazette, No. 19/92 and 27/93), Article 22; The Regulations on Secondary Education of Schoolchildren with Difficulties and Major Developmental Handicaps (Official Gazette, No. 86/92); Teaching plans and curricula for education of pupils with developmental difficulties and major developmental handicaps (The Croatian Ministry of Education and Sports Bulletin, special issue, No. 4, Zagreb 1996). Students are enrolled in secondary schools on the basis of the Decision on Elements and Criteria for Selection of Candidates for Enrolment in the First Grade of Secondary School for that particular school year as suggested by the Minister of Science, Education and Sports in compliance with the Law on Secondary Education. In the Decision, besides general criteria for all students, additional criteria are established for the enrolment of all schoolchildren within secondary school. Direct enrolment of schoolchildren with developmental difficulties in educational and training programmes acceptable for them is one praiseworthy element of this law. Direct enrolment is effected on the basis of: the decision made by the competent Office for Education and Sports, whereby a schoolchild effects his or her claim upon an appropriate form of education in primary school, the decision made by authorities in charge, whereby claims upon social care are effected and other prescribed documents establishing a programme suitable for the abilities and needs of the schoolchild; including the opinion of the Service for Vocational Guidance at the Employment Office.

According to the regulations of the Act on Secondary Education:

The education of pupils with developmental difficulties is organised with implementation of individualised treatment in secondary schools, either in regular classes or in special classes and educational groups. Pupils with major developmental handicaps are educated in special institutions. These special institutions, curricula, conditions, method and procedure of enrolment and education of pupils with developmental difficulties are prescribed by the Minister of Education. (Official Gazette, No. 69/03 – partial text)

The Regulations on secondary education of school children with difficulties and major developmental difficulties (Official Gazette, No. 86/92) establish the education of schoolchildren with developmental handicaps in secondary schools. They stipulate that secondary education of children with developmental difficulties is carried out in secondary schools (grammar schools, vocational schools, art schools and special institutions) depending on the type and the degree of a handicap. Education of schoolchildren with developmental difficulties is carried out in mainstream secondary schools according to total or partial integration. Total integration is achieved by placing pupils with developmental handicaps in a class within the secondary school, according to regular or an adjusted curriculum with individualised treatment, additional help from a special teacher or collaborator and/or an organised prolonged professional treatment. (Up to three pupils with developmental handicaps can be included in a regular class and the class should have no more than 30 pupils.) Partial integration in a regular secondary school is in special “attached” classes or in training groups with 6-15 pupils according to an adjusted or special plan or curriculum, with an additional special teacher’s assistance and/or by an organised prolonged professional treatment. The plan of the network of secondary education determines which schools within which total or partial integration are carried out. Total and partial integration are also very important as they enable children and youth with special needs to remain in the family environment whenever possible.

Furthermore, the Regulations stipulate that, for pupils with motor impairments, or for chronically ill pupils who cannot attend school, assistance at home or in the health institution can be provided. Schoolteachers and expert collaborators provide assistance. If, during secondary education, there occurs a change in the pupil’s psycho-physical condition that hampers mastery of the curriculum he or she is following, an ascertainment is carried out to determine the psycho-physical condition and suitable education and training in conformity with regulations from retirement-disability insurance and social welfare. (Unfortunately, during the implementation of this, in practice, there have been a range of

problems.) The classes in special educational institutions have 7-15 pupils and vocational training groups from 5-10.

The Regulations prescribe the obligation of special educational institutions to monitor, in co-operation with centres for social care, the progress of socialisation of pupils with developmental difficulties after the completion of their education. Although not yet prescribed, it would also be desirable to perform such monitoring of pupils with special needs with regard to their employment, since there is an obvious lack of connection between vocational training and labour-market needs, resulting in a very high percentage of unemployed persons with developmental difficulties.

## **Policy review focusing on special groups**

While considerable effort has been expended in creating the legislative framework discussed above, it is a fact that the legal provisions have been, for different practical reasons, not entirely implemented. First, there are problems related to scarce financial resources, insufficient understanding of the social and educational environment, lack of interaction and co-operation with other government systems, and inadequate respect of the need for a multi-disciplinary approach in the work with students with special needs. A number of organisational and other developments will have to take place for the successful implementation of educational integration in practice. Croatia has been trying to achieve higher standards through the National Strategy of Unique Policy towards Disabled Persons 2002 to 2006<sup>3</sup>, in which a systematic policy related to persons with disabilities has been developed for the first time. An integral part of this document is the realisation plan, according to which, the achievement of 12 measures and 31 activities in the educational field has been foreseen for the period 2002-2006 that will contribute to the improvement of educational integration.

### **Ascertainment of education preparedness and special needs**

The Act on Primary Education (Official Gazette, No. 69/03) includes an obligation of testing in order to establish the child's psycho-physical status before starting primary schooling; this applies to all children. State administrative offices nominate special commissions at the county-level to conduct the testing and assess the child's psychological and developmental

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<sup>3</sup> The resolution of the Croatian Parliament as to acceptance of the National strategy of the unique policy towards disabled persons was passed at their 25<sup>th</sup> meeting on 4 October 2002.

psycho-physical status, in particular regarding their readiness for school. In some special circumstances (*i.e.* physical underdevelopment), regulated legally in advance, the child may be released from the obligation to start primary schooling in that school year. In the case that parents, tutors or guardians fail to respect the obligations stated above, legal action can be brought against them; a possibility that has considerably decreased the number of non-enrolled children.

The type and degree of developmental handicap in children and young people are established by two committees: the first is within the competence of Education and Sports, to establish the appropriate type of education; the other is within the competence of Social Care for effectuation of any social claims.

For all children (not only for those showing developmental difficulties or children at risk) who are entering the first grade of primary school a procedure of establishing their psycho-physical condition and their readiness for school is being conducted and it is in the charge of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. Members of the committee are a doctor of school medicine, a pedagogue or psychologist, a special teacher and a teacher (Regulations on Enrolling Children in Primary Schools, Official Gazette, No. 13/91). This committee functions during the entire year since disorders in some children can occur or be discovered during school. If the committee establishes that there are certain difficulties in a child because of which he or she will not be able to cope with the regular curriculum, the child will be referred to additional special medical examinations. On the basis of that examination, a suitable form of education will be determined for the child or, if it proves necessary, the child will be sent for pedagogical observation. The pedagogical observation can last a maximum of three months and is performed in compliance with the prescribed programme (*i.e. an Individual Education plan and programme*). Based on the pedagogical observation, if performed, and the committee's opinion on the type and the degree of a developmental handicap and the suggested form of education for the schoolchild determined in accordance with the Regulations on Primary Education of Pupils with Developmental Handicaps (Official Gazette, no. 23/91), the county Offices for Education and Sports, or the Office of the City of Zagreb, which have jurisdiction of education, shall make the decision on a suitable form of education for a particular schoolchild. This decision is an official document against which the parents or the school, in compliance with the Act on General Administrative Procedure, can submit a complaint to the Appeal (second-instance) Committee at the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. They can also bring legal action in the Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia for a secondary decision.

The type and the degree of developmental handicap can also be established by a professional committee that functions in accordance with the Regulations on the Composition and the Method of Work of the Body of Experts in the Procedure of Actualisation of Claims upon the Social Care (Official Gazette, No. 38/98), but only for the needs of actualisation of claims upon social care. It does not determine the suitable form of education. Since forming of this opinion implies a rather comprehensive procedure, the committees within the competence of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports can use all medical and other documentation (not older than six months) submitted to them for the decision on the claim for social care.

### **Integration and inclusion of school children with special needs**

Integration is a transitional concept and process. By changing social relations, through scientific efforts and implementation of prerequisite conditions for educational and broader social integration, the term “integration” may then become no longer valid as a conceptual term and objective process. Once a normal process, there is no more need to talk of inclusion of children with developmental difficulties in a regular education in their school and of social integration. It will be something natural for all children, including for those with developmental difficulties. That is a phenomenon of the foreseeable future. (Stančić, *et al.*, 1982, pp 4-5).

Integration of schoolchildren with developmental difficulties in the regular education system has been supported for more than 20 years by the legal provisions of the Republic of Croatia. Recently Croatia has also been using the term “inclusion” which is gradually replacing the term “integration”, whereas the expression “schoolchildren with developmental difficulties” is being replaced by “pupils with special needs”. Educational integration should be perceived as one form of broader social integration (Stančić, 2001). Inclusion, in the first place, implies offering equal opportunities to all, as well as maximal flexibility in meeting the specific educational and broader social needs of all schoolchildren (Kiš-Glavaš, 2001). Inclusion, in the educational process, is not only a question of inclusion of pupils with developmental difficulties, but of *all* schoolchildren who are, in some way, different, and who require adjustment of teaching methods and techniques, individualised programmes, adjusted contents and communication techniques. The specific quality of inclusion comes from the meeting of special needs involving not only the individual with special needs but society as a whole, especially the local community where the individual lives. One could further conclude that if the needs of an individual are met, then such an individual may no longer be considered a

person with special needs. The achievement of that goal is the basic idea of inclusion.

As pointed out by Kiš-Glavaš (2001), the philosophy of inclusion leads to the use of the term “children with special needs”, implying all children with different needs, the most frequently mentioned groups being: gifted and talented children, children with developmental difficulties, and members of various religious, national, cultural or racial groups. Some persons with developmental difficulties find this term inappropriate, since these needs are not “special” but are only ordinary human needs. In Croatia at present, only integration has been achieved. Through educational integration, Croatia may also learn about the advantages of diversity, adjustments, criteria, methods and techniques that could improve the Croatian school system as a whole. Integration difficulties and successes have been analysed from different points of view by numerous Croatian experts and their research will be explored further below.

Legal regulations assuring the right for schooling in regular classes are still, unfortunately, followed by inadequate school practice (large classes with too many pupils) lack of professional education and rehabilitation support, inadequate competence of teachers, other pupils and their parents, etc.), that results in the integration results being worse than expected. However, conditions already created in some areas, including direct assistance and support rendered to pupils by special education and rehabilitation experts, “resource rooms”, individualised approaches, adjusted curricula (programmes), rehabilitation implementation and extra work with pupils, suggest that better results in educational integration in the Republic of Croatia can be expected in the future. Although mere amendments of regulations and legislation are inherently insufficient for the implementation of an inclusive system, they have contributed to the following developments in practice:

*Extended reach of services:* There are about 13 000 registered children and adolescents with developmental difficulties in Croatia; of this total number, 10 000 children are in mainstream and 3 000 are in special educational settings; 40 % of children who are in regular schools attend school part-time and 60% are in the full-time integration. In addition, professionals are certain that there are more children who need professional help in our regular schools, but they are not registered (Kiš-Glavaš, 2001).

*Resource centres:* In special institutions for education of children with developmental difficulties, mobile services have been developed, the main task of which is to provide help to schoolchildren, thus changing the aim of special institutions from education of schoolchildren with special needs towards offering support to children, teachers, parents and others in the

integration process. For example, the Educational Institution *Vinko Bek* within the school year 2003/04 monitored 141 integrated pupils, blind and those suffering from amblyopia, in regular pre-school, primary and secondary schools and an additional 35 pupils attended primary school within the institution itself.

*Examples of secondary-level inclusion:* Some good examples from secondary school level in some smaller environments (*e.g.* within the counties of Dubrovnik-Neretva and Osijek-Baranja) have shown that inclusive education is feasible if the school administration and teachers prove to be interested and if flexibility in implementation is allowed and supported by the relevant authorities. In this way pupils can attend a special programme for semi-skilled qualification for certain occupations in classes with their peers at the regular secondary school level.

## **Research in Croatia on individualised approaches, integration and inclusion**

Levandovski and Radovančić (1987) studied the individualised approach in work with schoolchildren with developmental difficulties during integrated education, distinct from lecture-style teaching that presumes all pupils to be at average capability. Broadly speaking, the regular school system still looks at classes in a homogenised way, using this levelling approach in working with pupils as well. While not analysing the background of such an approach, the authors identify two groups of problems. First, classes are too large, with a demanding, comprehensive curricula, insufficient school equipment and inadequate organisational forms of educational work reducing the possibility of individualisation to a minimum. Second, there is inadequate orientation, qualification and competence of teachers to be able to face individual differences and to cope with them.

Professional support related to education and rehabilitation which is being offered to integrated schoolchildren is still insufficient, since schools employ an inadequate number of expert collaborators (pedagogues, psychologists, special education and rehabilitation experts) and different institutions are unfortunately unwilling to venture outside of their strict competencies, so it is hard to conduct multidisciplinary work (Ružić, 2003). However some additional financial and other support of the integration and satisfaction of special needs of children is being offered by numerous non-governmental organisations at the state and local levels. These are also associations of persons with special needs, their parents, experts and numerous volunteers.



Recent research has also recently looked into attitudes of various stakeholders of the education system related to inclusion.

*Teachers' attitudes:* Some results of recent comprehensive research on determinants and possibilities of attitude changes of regular teachers towards children with learning disabilities and their integration into regular primary and secondary schools are very optimistic. Attitudes of teachers are relatively positive; teachers are aware of integration advantages for children with learning disabilities and believe that it is possible to meet numerous objective assumptions for integration in schools. Teachers point to a very strong need for education-rehabilitation support and additional education and express positive standpoints towards partial forms of integration; they are also relatively familiar with some basic characteristics of children with learning disabilities. However, there are still some negative attitudes among teachers, primarily in relation to some possible negative effects of integration for teachers themselves, such as their additional workload and commitments and potential for lowering of class results (Ljubić, 2002; Kiš-Glavaš, 1999).

*Childrens' attitudes:* The research of Ms. Pinoza-Kukurin (1995), on a sample of 371 schoolchildren without developmental difficulties showed a positive attitude of these pupils as to the acceptance of blind pupils and those with amblyopia. Žic and Igrić (1998) also examined assessments reported by children with learning disabilities concerning their relation with peers. There was a considerable statistical difference between the two studies; the children with learning disabilities complained of isolation, loneliness and exposure to verbal mocking. At the same time, children with learning disabilities very rarely find themselves to be “stupid”, they think they do not fight too much and they more often think the other children do not like them. Testing of their peers in the same classes, by application of sociometry, have clearly shown that the children with learning disabilities are not accepted in the class, *i.e.* their peers are frequently reluctant to study and sit with them.

*Parents' attitudes:* Fulgosi-Masnjak (1989) examined viewpoints of parents whose children *without* developmental difficulties attended classes in which children with mild mental retardation were integrated and found that their attitudes were close to neutral. Kobeščak (1997), investigated attitudes of parents of children *with and without* difficulties as to the educational integration of children with visual impairments, finding that: parents accepted integration on the whole and considered it a positive way of education for children with visual impairments. However, it also turned out that, in parents' opinion, children with visual impairment could have an adverse effect on the environment and school success of other

schoolchildren. The research suggested the necessity of more systematic efforts related to informing and educating parents.

## Career guidance

Each schoolchild who has been officially registered as a child with developmental difficulties in primary school is sent to the Vocational Guidance Service in the regional Employment Bureau for a career-choice consultation before the end of the eighth grade, thereby establishing an educational programme suitable for the skills, abilities, needs and motivations of a schoolchild. This procedure involves a team including a pedagogue, a psychologist and a doctor of occupational medicine. Unfortunately, in practice, a number of oversights impede success in this procedure such as a lack of co-ordination between the service systems (primary school, secondary school, Employment Bureau, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and Institute of Education). Furthermore, many stakeholders are still not aware of options, so that informing schoolchildren, parents and even primary school teachers about secondary school possibilities (curricula, occupations, models of vocational training within each educational profile) should be intensified.

In the advisory procedure, all schoolchildren undergo group testing of their cognitive and psycho-motor abilities. However there are drawbacks to group testing, such as time limits and the need to read and write all answers, and there is usually only one opinion about the suitable programme for that particular child whereas multiple proposals would be desirable. Furthermore, this process is based more on the pre-existing vocational-training possibilities than on the interest and abilities of a child. In addition, children with developmental delays are usually offered very few occupations. There is often not a systematic solution of the problem in the case that the child, parents or school are not satisfied with the suggested advice (except for the possibility of a second-instance decision by the Croatian Employment Bureau).

The problems indicated above could be solved by promoting better functioning of these services or through the establishment of a Career Choice Centre, the plan and programme of which would have to be flexible and subject to change. Special attention should be given to the following: *Full-year availability of assessment services*: these teams should, in addition to special education-rehabilitation teachers, also include primary and secondary school expert collaborators; *Analytical tasks of team*: teams would have to develop (or have available) detailed analyses of job positions, as well as information on supply and demand for particular jobs in the labour market (both actual and on a long-term basis), based on which they

would then propose school enrolment plans for particular educational profiles at the local community level. *Awareness raising*: Preparing advertising and educational materials and assuring their continuous accessibility through all media. *Lectures and presentations*: in primary schools for all schoolchildren and parents of one to two generations (e. g. two final classes levels of primary school), and *Individual testing*: The testing procedure should be modernised to respect differences between individuals and assessing their special needs using detailed information from primary schools for children with developmental difficulties (such as the expert opinion made by school for each such child).

### Public needs and children at risk

Enrolment priority in pre-school-institutions, determined by the local authorities or by the state, is given to several categories of children including children in difficult circumstances, such as children with parents who were victims or invalids of the recent war, children from families with three or more children, children showing developmental difficulties, children from one-parent families, foster children, children in the year before starting primary school, as well as children with unemployed parents or those whose parents are provided a children's allowance. The following programmes can be considered public needs and receive priority in funding: programmes for children with developmental difficulties and gifted children; programmes for pre-school children of Croatian citizens abroad; programmes for pre-school aged children belonging to ethnical and national communities or minorities and pre-schools. Some additional public needs in the primary school system can be determined by the local and regional municipal self-management units and in that way prolonged or whole-day stay for the pupils from grades 1-3 or 1-4 of primary school can be implemented.

The term “children and youth at risk” in Croatia is used as a universal term for children and young people with problems during childhood and adolescence and varied forms of behaviour and personality disorders (Bašić, 2000, p. 32). Estimates indicate that children and young people participate in the education system at decreased rates according to levels of risk factors: at low-risk 50% may attend school, at medium-risk 25% and those at high risk around 15% while only 10% of students at very high risk are likely to attend classes. Social scientists and other experts studying risk and protective factors have been, in recent years, trying to find an answer to the question as to why some children, despite obvious risk factors, do not develop risk behaviour, while others in the same or similar circumstances do, thus suffering long-term negative consequences. Within the last fifteen years, research and monitoring of this phenomenon has been conducted, but data

are unable to determine causal risk factors (Bašić, 2000). Risk factors may be classified into five groups with regard to the social context including: individual, family, peer, school and community risk factors. Analogously, it is possible to group positive factors as well with regard to these basic social context levels. The development of a child's resistance as a result of an interaction between risk and protective factors and their relative balance is of particular importance and the role of school is one of the key factors in developing this resistance.

The war in Croatia affected the development of around 400 000 children, of which some 50 000 were directly exposed to war calamities, 303 children were killed, 74 died of mine explosions, 1 280 were wounded, 4 455 lost one of their parents, 131 lost both parents, 900 children have no conclusive evidence of what happened to their parents, 185 000 children were exiled, out of which 11 951 are still today living as refugees (Ajduković, 2002, p. 162). These facts caused the Government of the Republic Croatia to start co-ordinated action, forming the Commissions of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for Behaviour Disorder Prevention and Drug Abuse Prevention, as well as the Children's Council. Moreover, the National Strategy for Drug Abuse Prevention (based on which each school in the Republic of Croatia works out its own prevention plan), as well as National Plan of Activities for Children with a comprehensive and interdisciplinary character, with an emphasis on education have been established. Unfortunately, there are still considerable problems related to the mental health care system in Croatia, which is not sufficiently developed and therefore unable to treat all children.

Some of the results obtained by research in Health Behaviour in School-aged Children 2001/2002<sup>4</sup> (Kuzman, Pejnović Franelić, Pavić Šimetin, Hemen, 2004), as carried out by the Croatian Public Health Institute<sup>5</sup> are described below:

- Economics is a significant risk factor, 43% of families are in a poor financial situation and another 43% have average financial means, just 14% can be considered to have good financial status.

<sup>4</sup> The following countries and regions took part in the 2001/2002 research: Austria, Italy, Russian Federation, Belgium (Flemish), Israel, Slovakia, Belgium (French), Canada, Slovenia, The Czech Republic, Republic of Latvia, the USA, Denmark, Lithuania, Scotland, England, Hungary, Spain, Estonia, Macedonia, Sweden, Finland, Malta, Switzerland, France, Germany, Ukraine, Greece, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Greenland, Norway, Wales, Croatia, Poland, Ireland, Portugal.

<sup>5</sup> This study included a sample of 4 397 children aged 11, 13 and 15, some 1 500 in each age group (from that figure 2 180 boys and 2 217 girls)

- A high percentage of children, 89%, live with both parents (Croatia takes the fifth place in this statistic), 3% live in restructured families and 7% with one. Both male and female children prove to have better communication with their mothers; in communication with fathers, boys are more successful, that difference increasing with age (such that boys become more able to communicate with fathers and girls less so).
- Alcohol proves to be the first addiction possibility with which children come into contact; at the age of 15 every fourth boy drinks beer at least once a week, every fifth boy drinks wine once a week and every seventh drinks some other drink; for girls, 12% drink wine or strong drinks weekly or even more frequently and 7% drink beer weekly or more frequently; 30% of children at the age of 15 smoke either regularly or occasionally; children in Croatia on average first try marihuana at the age of 16.
- In the school year 2001/2002, one out of every four boys and one out of every five girls was exposed to violence by their peers, whereas one out of every three boys and one out of every five girls were themselves violent towards others; indicating that Croatia is in the 25<sup>th</sup> place (from 36 countries participating in the research project) concerning frequency of violent and aggressive behaviours.
- At 15 years of age, 23.2% of boys and 9.7% of girls prove to be sexually active (Croatia is in 35 place in this study) and 25% of sexually active fifteen-year-olds practices sex without protection against pregnancy.
- 34% of boys and 29% girls spend four and more hours a day watching TV during weekdays and 56% of boys and 52% girls do so at the weekend.
- School success of Croatian pupils is high, Croatia taking the second or third place on the list of countries participating in the research, schoolchildren spend a lot of time studying, meaning they study far beyond the average (the fifth place).
- Croatia has more pupils who *do not* like school than it is the case in other countries; just 26% of girls aged 11 said they were very fond of school compared to 17% of boys the same age. However these rates drop even further to just 9% for girls and 5% for boys aged 13 and at age 15, only 6% of girls and the same percentage of boys say they are very fond of school.

- Schoolchildren burdened by school tasks are less satisfied with their lives, have more health disturbances and feel less healthy.

Some of the results listed above suggest the need of a significant change in the approach towards children and young people towards a model of potential development and, as already proven in practice, the best results may be achieved by mutual action of governmental and non-governmental organisations. One way to implement assistance would be through financial and organisational support, by the state to non-governmental organisations through the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports from the resources realised from the lottery, intended for different programmes of primary prevention and early intervention each year.

## Statistics and indicators

Terminology on disabilities, which can illustrate underlying perspectives, is indispensable for assisting in communication and maintaining precision in correspondence and publications. Unfortunately, in the Republic of Croatia there is no unique definition of persons with developmental difficulties. Different government systems use different concepts, which sometimes results in practical problems. For example, the social welfare system uses the term “physically or mentally damaged persons”, the education system uses the term “children and youths with developmental difficulties” and the system of social security and employment uses the term “disabled persons”.

The World Health Organisation introduced the classification and definitions of damages, invalidity and handicap (1980, 1997 and 2001). According to this classification system, damage is any kind of loss or deviation from normal psychical, physiological or anatomic structure or function. Invalidity is any kind of limitation or lack of ability for certain activities in a way or rate that is considered normal. A handicap is a drawback for an individual, which results from damage or invalidity and that restrains the individual or renders impossible the fulfilment of her or his natural role in society. The last version of this classification (World Health Organisation, 2001) sees the functioning of an individual and invalidity as results of physical or mental states of the person, as well as social and physical surroundings. Invalidity is not a hallmark of a person, but various factors that are created by social surroundings.

The legal provisions mentioned in the above section of this report refer to the type and the degree of handicaps determined by the “Orientation-list

of the kinds and degrees of developmental difficulties” as per Attachment I to the Ordinances on Primary Education of Children with Developmental Difficulties (Official Gazette, No. 23/91). According to that list, the kinds of handicaps are as follows:

- Visual impairments: blindness and amblyopia.
- Hearing impairments: deafness and defective hearing.
- Impairments in speech-vocal communication and specific learning difficulties. This could indicate that speech communication is difficult or not possible at all. This category also includes specific learning difficulties in one of the following fields: reading (dyslexia, alexia); writing (dysgraphia, agraphia); and/or calculation (dyscalculia, acalculia).
- Physical disability (motor impairments) including: locomotor, system lesion, central nervous system impairment, peripheral nervous system impairment and impairments caused due to chronic diseases of other bodily systems.
- Mental retardation, which can be mild (IQ 50-69), moderate (IQ 35-49), severe (IQ 20-34) or very severe and profound mental retardation (IQ 0-20).
- Behavioural disorders caused by organic factors or progressive psycho-pathological conditions.
- Autism.
- The presence of several kinds and degrees of developmental handicap.

The orientation list has been adopted from competent world institutions. However, the practice and experience in Croatia, so far, as well as a range of scientific investigations, have pointed out the need and urgency of the revision both of the existing list and ordinances.

## **Data on persons with disabilities for Croatia**

World Health Organisation estimates have shown that about 10% of a given population is affected by some health impairment that limits or changes their abilities at different periods of their lives. Using this estimation, there would be approximately 445 000 persons with disabilities in Croatia. There are no exact figures related to the precise number of persons with disabilities in Croatia, only data as to the number of such persons who realise some of their rights in particular segments of society.

Based on such data, one cannot get complete insight into these problems as, with good reason, it is feared that some persons might not be included in any database (Znaor, Janičar, Kiš-Glavaš, 2003). However, within the last two years, considerable progress concerning the establishment of a database about persons with disabilities has been made. During the last census, some sections for disabled persons were included in the census document. As per this data gathered by the State Bureau of Statistics for Croatia, there were 429 421 disabled persons (9.6% of the entire population), including 183 524 women registered in the Republic of Croatia in 2001.

**Table 3.1 Population of all inhabitants and of inhabitants with disabilities in Croatia according to gender and age, Census 2001**

	Gender	Age					Age unknown
		Total	0-9	10-19	20-29	30 and more	
Number of inhabitants	Total	4 437 460	486 050	567 190	600 128	2 764 787	19 305
	M	2 135 900	248 992	289 851	304 405	1 283 887	8 765
	F	2 301 560	237 058	277 339	295 723	1 480 900	10 540
Disabled persons	Total	429 421	3 553	7 467	15 594	401 550	1 257
	M	245 937	1 976	4 451	11 884	227 011	615
	F	183 524	1 577	3 016	3 750	174 539	642

Source: State Bureau of Statistics

Upon the initiative of the Croatian Union of Associations of Physically Handicapped Persons, the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia passed, in their session on 5 July 2001, the Act on a Croatian Register about Disabled Persons (Official Gazette No. 64/01). On that occasion, it was legally stipulated that the Register would be managed by the Croatian Institute of Public Health based on the kind of physical and/or mental impairment, information to be submitted by the primary health protection doctor, specialist, expert commissions within the school system, the government and local authorities in charge, as well as the Croatian Retirement Insurance Institute. A database concerning all disabled persons, which will serve as the basis for preparing statistical indicators, will be established through the implementation of this Act, which will enable policy planning, the creation of programmes to the benefit of disabled persons, planning of the required resources, as well as passing of regulations and other measures related to education, social care, employment and health. As it is presently impossible to collect data from different sources in Croatia, the currently available data as listed below may have differences and cannot always be compared due to varying data collection methodologies.



## Data on pre-school, primary and secondary school children with developmental difficulties

Below are figures from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics related to the number of educational institutions, children, pupils and teachers at the beginning of school years 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003. Data obtained from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in 2003, shows that, at the compulsory level, there are 897 school institutions (main schools) in the Republic of Croatia and approximately 1 270 regional schools. There are 23 schools that have special classes for children with developmental difficulties and 17 special schools for children with developmental difficulties. In addition, there are another 17 institutions registered within the health and social care system conducting education of children with developmental difficulties as well as other activities.

Table 3.2 Number of education institutions, children, pupils and teachers at the beginning of school years 2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2002/2003

	Kindergartens	Primary schools	Secondary schools	Institutions of higher education
NSKO and ISCED 97 level	0	1 and 2	3	5
<i>Educational Institutions</i>				
2000/2001	1 036	2 141	634	93
2001/2002	1 051	2 134	645	96
2002/2003	1 067	2 139	650	102
<i>Students enrolled</i>				
2000/2001	86 202	405 686	195 120	96 798
2001/2002	87 592	400 100	195 000	100 297
2002/2003	89 197	395 702	196 147	107 911
<i>Teachers</i>				
2000/2001	6 374	27 147	19 325	no data available
2001/2002	6 566	27 502	19 718	no data available
2002/2003	6 783	27 905	19 733	no data available

Source: State Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, Statistical Information 2003, pp. 64-66

The most recent data about children or pupils with developmental difficulties available from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in the Republic of Croatia are described in the following tables (Ružić, 2003). Table 3.3 shows that pre-school education included around 1 500 children

with developmental difficulties integrated into regular pre-school programmes and 773 children within special programmes.

**Table 3.3 Pre-school programmes for children with developmental difficulties in the school year 2000/2001**

Children with developmental difficulties	Number of institutions	Number of children
1. Integration into regular programmes	no data available	1 500
2. Regular pre-school institutions with special programmes	14	114
3. Special educational institutions co-financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	4	472
4. Special educational institutions fully financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	5	100
5. Special educational institutions funded by the Ministry of Health and Social Care	5	87
Total of rows 2 through 5 only	28	773

*Source:* Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia Edita Ružić, M. Sc., senior advisor (2003.): *Provedba zakonskih odredaba o odgoju i obrazovanju djece i mladeži s posebnim potrebama*, Zbornik radova s okruglog stola: "Odgoj, obrazovanje i rehabilitacija djece i mladih s posebnim potrebama", Zagreb, državni zavod za zaštitu obitelji, materinstva i mladeži, Povjerenstvo Vlade RH za osobe s invaliditetom, str. 9. - 26.

**Table 3.4 Pre-school expert collaborators within the school year 2000/2001**

	Pedagogues	Psychologists	Special education-rehabilitation experts	Highly qualified nurses	Total
Total number	191	87	48	166	492
Ratio of expert to student	1:451	1:991	1:1 796	1:519	

*Source: ibid*

Primary education included about 7 800 schoolchildren with developmental difficulties integrated in regular classes and 3 936 pupils included in special programmes:

**Table 3.5 Primary school pupils in the school year 2000/2001**

Primary schools	Number of schools	Number of children
1. Integration in regular classes	No figures available	7 800
2. Regular primary schools with special classes	24	732
3. Special educational institutions co-financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	16	2 227
4. Special educational institutions financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	12	977
Total (Rows 2-4 only)	52	3 936

*Source: ibid*

In the school year 2000/2001 there were 826 expert collaborators employed in primary schools.

**Table 3.6 Primary school expert collaborators in the school year 2000/2001**

	Pedagogues	Psychologists	Other collaborators
Total number	497.12	133.7	195.12
Per pupil	831.5	3 091.5	2 214.90

*Source: ibid*

Note: Calculations are based on working hours of one expert.

Secondary education included about 600 pupils with developmental difficulties integrated in regular classes and 1 850 pupils included in special programmes.

**Table 3.7 Secondary school pupils with developmental difficulties in the school year 2000/2001**

Secondary schools	Number of schools	Number of children
1. Integration in regular classes	No data available	600
2. Regular secondary schools with special classes	20	626
3. Special educational institutions co-financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	5	634
4. Special educational institutions financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	9	590
Total 2. – 4.	34	1 850

*Source: ibid*

In the school year 2000/2001 there were 300 expert collaborators employed in secondary schools.

**Table 3.8 Secondary school expert collaborators in the school year 2000/2001**

Secondary school	Pedagoques	Psychologists	Educators - rehabilitators	Total
Total number	2 313	652	44	3 009
Per pupil	82 818	2 938,2	2 214,9	

*Source: ibid*

### **Data about students with developmental difficulties in higher education**

In 85 institutions of higher education (universities, faculties, academies, university departments and teachers' schools of professional higher education, polytechnics and accredited schools of professional higher education) available data related to inclusion of disabled students show that 254 disabled students have been studying in the institutions of higher education in the Republic of Croatia in the academic year 2003/2004; in the year 2002/2003 there were 104 such students, and just 91 students in the year 2001/2002 and 24 in 2000/01.

In the Criteria for Distribution of Places for graduate study students in halls of residence within the student centres in the Republic of Croatia for each academic year, it is stated that students with disabilities from categories 1-5 (measuring the level of severity of a difficulty) have direct admission to halls of residence; 53 students were approved such accommodation in the 2003/2004 school year. In addition, 50 scholarships were awarded in accordance with the Regulations on Allocation of Government Scholarships and Aids to Graduate and Post-Graduate Students and Post-Doctoral Candidates. As per Decision on Partial Compensation of Transportation Costs to Students with Developmental Difficulties each student is allowed travel allowance coming to 500 Kuna a month; 87 students receive this allowance. Three institutions of higher education have been fully adapted and six are partly adapted for disabled persons. At the Faculty of Philosophy there is a computer science classroom intended for blind students and those suffering from amblyopia.

## School organisation

### Overview of special education provision

Special education is conducted in certain special educational groups within regular kindergartens and schools or in special educational institutions that have courses from pre-school to secondary.

Pre-school education of children with developmental difficulties is performed in regular kindergartens by complete integration or according to an adjusted programme, or by partial integration also with an adjusted or special programme. Pre-school education of children with developmental difficulties also takes place in special educational institutions, with adjusted programme or special programmes. Primary education of children with developmental difficulties is carried out in either mainstream primary schools or in special educational institutions. In mainstream primary schools, students can be totally integrated according to a regular curriculum with individual plans or an adjusted curriculum. Students with special needs may also be partially integrated in regular schools, in attached classes, or according to an adjusted or special curriculum. Other students may also be in special educational institutions according to a regular curriculum, an adjusted curriculum or a special curriculum. Secondary education of children with developmental difficulties is carried out in both regular and special secondary schools. In regular secondary schools, students are either *totally* integrated into regular classes (with a regular curriculum with individualisation or an adjusted curriculum) or they are *partially* integrated into attached classes (with an adjusted or special curriculum). Other students are also in special secondary schools where they may be educated according to a regular curriculum or an adjusted or special curriculum.

More and more special educational groups are now being organised within regular kindergartens. Even a superficial analysis suggests that it is less expensive to create conditions for the implementation of inclusive programmes for children with developmental difficulties, rather than paying high costs for the accommodation of such children in special educational institutions, not to mention the professional and pedagogical justification for this type of education. Unfortunately, the space available in schools for children with special needs, even in pre-school education, does not yet meet demand. While a priority for enrolment of children with special needs in kindergartens had been determined in the Act on Pre-school Education, this is still insufficiently applied. Pre-school age children with mild disabilities are, at times, included in regular educational groups in examples of complete integration. There, kindergarten teachers and expert collaborators (special education teachers; mainly speech pathologists, psychologists,

pedagogues) work with them following adjusted programmes. Partial integration in special educational groups and special educational institutions is another option, including adjusted or special programmes implemented for the appropriate type and degree of disability, taught by special education teachers or special education-rehabilitation experts.

At the primary level, according to the Regulations on Education of Schoolchildren with Developmental Handicaps, suitable forms of education for schoolchildren with developmental handicaps have been established. Schoolchildren with *minor developmental difficulties* are, as a rule, normally included in regular classes; they deal with general curricula successfully with the help of individualised plans or curricula adjusted to their capabilities. For schoolchildren with sensory and motor impairments (visual, hearing and physical) who are fully integrated in regular classes, prolonged professional treatment is organised for groups of six to ten pupils at the end of regular school day. Pupils with *minor mental retardation and without major developmental handicaps* are educated by the system of partial integration in special classes of 5-9 pupils, depending on the type and degree of developmental difficulties, where they master Croatian language, mathematics and science, at the same time having art, music, technical and physical education in regular classes, according to the adjusted curricula.

In compliance with the Regulations on Primary Education of Schoolchildren with Developmental Handicaps, primary education of children showing *major developmental difficulties* is carried out in special educational institutions, health institutions and in judicial and social care institutions. However, as already pointed out, creating conditions for the implementation of curricula for children with special needs where they already live is positive for many reasons, in place of expensive accommodation in special educational institutions. For this reason, special classes for children with major developmental difficulties are being developed in regular primary schools. These children can successfully learn with special curricula. For those schoolchildren who, because of illness, cannot attend school for a longer period, teaching at home is also organised. The teachers and expert collaborators from the school that the child attends carry out the teaching. Teaching for children who are hospitalised for longer periods (for example, in oncologic, psychiatric and other departments) is also organised and carried out by teachers and expert collaborators from the nearest primary schools.

Special institutions are not un-integrated institutions; as a rule, the organisation of education in these institutions is in line with that in regular schools. Four different kinds of education in special institutions include: (1) education intended for pupils where only social integration is possible; (2) education for pupils who are able to go through vocational programmes for

work in a protected environment; (3) education intended for pupils who can master programmes through which they will be able to have a job in open employment settings; and (4) education of pupils who can master regular education programmes, but with an individual approach, by means of adjusted teaching aids and methods.

## General school organisation

The majority of schools are organised in two shifts (70.5%), teaching in one single shift accounts for 23.5% and work in three shifts for 8 %. Primary schools vary significantly in terms of size<sup>6</sup>. The school year lasts from September 1 to August 31 for 175 school days; the Ministry in charge regulates the timing and duration of school holidays for pupils each year.

Pre-school education includes programmes of education, health protection, nutrition and social care for five to ten hours a day, in accordance with the developmental characteristics and needs of children, as well as social, cultural, religious and other family requirements. Pre-school education institutions can be established by the Republic of Croatia, local management and self-management units (communities and towns), individuals or legal entities or by religious organisations. The founder of a pre-school institution provides funding required for the establishment and normal functioning of the institution, whereas the funds for the programmes of pre-school education public needs are covered by the state budget. All programmes incorporate environmental education and addiction prevention and regular programmes additionally include some specialised teaching topics such as foreign languages, art classes, music classes, sports and so on. These programmes are being implemented within classes including, at most, 25 children. Pre-school education programmes are led by kindergarten teachers, pedagogues, psychologists, speech pathologists, special education teachers, social workers and health personnel and other experts, depending on the programme field (experts in the field of art, language, culture, sports, etc.). Funding of pre-school education in the Republic of Croatia is at the local management and self-management level (municipal or county authorities). Since the state also takes care of persons with special needs, pre-school programmes for children in special education groups or special education institutions are co-financed from the state budget, through the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

<sup>6</sup> In Croatia, 20% of schools have up to 200 pupils, 28% of schools have between 200 and 400 pupils, another 24% of schools have from 400 to 600 pupils, 20% have from 600 to 800 pupils and 8% of schools have over 800 pupils

When enrolling in primary school, the pupil is given a pupil's booklet in which progress during schooling, marks at the end of each school year and all other observations are made. Pupils in grades 5 through 8 are issued certificates with their marks at the end of each school year, these being the documents that confirm primary school completion. The pupil's success in particular school subjects and final results are evaluated in numerical marks from 1 to 5<sup>7</sup> (except in the first semester of the first grade). As a rule, enrolled pupils prove to be successful, since some 98% of pupils finish primary schooling.

After students have finished primary school, all candidates have equal opportunities to continue their education in secondary school within the available quota of a given school for students with certain achievement levels as outlined in the decision related to enrolment<sup>8</sup>. Final admission of candidates is based on their school results during primary school as well as on their abilities and interests. Pupils are enrolled in the first year of secondary schools up to the age of 17 and exceptionally, with the approval of the School Board of the particular school, up to 18 years of age. Pupils are admitted to secondary schools based on the "Decision on Elements and Criteria for the Selection of Candidates for Admission in the First Grade of Secondary Schools" for the given year as established by the Minister of Science, Education and Sports, in accordance with the Secondary School Act.

## School management

School Boards<sup>9</sup> and head teachers manage pre-school institutions and schools, in both mainstream and special systems, in the Republic of Croatia. The school board, the governing body with accompanying powers and duties, is made up of nine members including: teachers and expert collaborators elected by secret vote from the members of the Teachers' Council; parents, elected from Home-School Body; and representatives of the founders (if other than the Government). The head teacher has a position

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<sup>7</sup> In the first semester of the first grade school marks are descriptive. The numerical marks signify: 5 (excellent), 4 (very good), 3 (good), 2 (satisfactory), 1 (insufficient). In case of the mark "insufficient (1)" from one school subject to a maximum of three, the pupil has to undergo a two-term make-up exam and in case of failure in these exams they should repeat the same form. However, this rule does not apply for children with developmental difficulties, as they may pass to the next grade even with some negative marks.

<sup>8</sup> Further information on the possibility for direct enrolment of children with developmental difficulties (as per enrolment priorities) will be clarified in further text of this report.

<sup>9</sup> In pre-schools the common term is "governing council".



and a range of authorities as the administrative and pedagogical leader of the school. The school board nominates and selects the headmaster, with the previously obtained, non-binding, recommendation and approval of the Teachers' Council and the school trade union. Every person meeting the conditions prescribed for a schoolteacher with at least five years of experience in education work can be nominated. Head teachers serve for four years and may be re-elected.

Home-School Bodies are founded in each school, comprising representatives of both parents and teachers. This results in a positive relationship with the community environment in which the school functions, with the purpose of better consultation with parents, thereby engaging parents more fully in raising their children's achievement level and realisation of education goals. In order to meet the requirements of a range of conventions that Croatia has signed, and with the purpose of an active inclusion of children in school activities and making decisions, Pupils' Councils, made up of selected representatives of pupils and teachers, have also been established in secondary schools. The possible establishment of such councils in primary schools is under consideration.

School professional bodies, headed by the headmaster, include the following: class teacher (class-master), Class Council (class-master and all subject teachers of one class), Teachers' Council (all teachers of a school) and the members of the professional developmental staff who are expert collaborators. Home-School Bodies and the Pupils' Council may give their opinions and recommendations, but they cannot make formal decisions. All these bodies are responsible for respecting the rights of each particular child, including children with developmental difficulties. If the parents, during their child's schooling, are dissatisfied for any reason whatsoever, they first turn to the school professional bodies, then to the headmaster and the school board. Finally, in case no acceptable solution has been found to satisfy both parties, then both the parents and the school may submit their complaint to the inspection service of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

Expert circles in Croatia have been considering the need of concluding some kind of home-school agreement, which would clearly state the rights and obligations of both parents and schools. This has been in answer to problems faced in practice, since the expectations of parties might be unrealistic and obligations may be neglected.

Very few schools in Croatia have been adapted to the possibility of accepting children in wheelchairs and those with physical disabilities in general, since most of the school buildings are old structures with many architectural barriers. However, there are attempts to change this in the following ways: following regulations, each new school building is

supposed to be adapted to meet the needs of physically disabled pupils; in the last few years, elevators were built in co-operation with disabled persons' associations in two schools; and Croatian regulations enable civil military service in schools and more and more frequently one may meet young soldiers serving as personal assistants of pupils with developmental difficulties in schools.

## Pedagogy

Even though many teachers are aware of the fact that lecture-style teaching rarely encourages personal growth and development of schoolchildren with all the specific qualities and differences between them, many teachers in Croatian schools still chiefly use only this way of teaching today. However, collaborative learning based on the use of different ways of grouping and activities promoting a supportive social climate, where children may investigate and evaluate similarities and differences and look for ways of creative problem solving, as well as project-learning are more and more present in Croatian classrooms. Numerous associations in concordance and co-operation with the Ministry in charge and the Institution of Education of the Republic of Croatia, in addition to the already mentioned association IDEM and the association *Korak po korak* (“Step by step”) are of considerable assistance concerning education and stimulation of teachers for such forms of work. The latter has, through its two programmes, (“Step by step” intended for class teachers and “Reading and writing for critical thinking” for subject teachers) prepared and trained many teachers for the application of new forms and methods of work in their classes.

The concept of education implies gaining knowledge and skills. Knowledge refers to the adoption and generalisation of facts with the use of cognitive, experiential and psycho-motor abilities (Ivančić, Stančić, 2002). In the teaching process, didactic forms of work (methods, means, forms and procedures in accordance with average abilities of schoolchildren) implement selected curricular subject matters. This allows the creation of a certain educational, social and emotional climate and communication which promotes class interaction (Ivančić, Stančić, 2002). When schoolchildren showing developmental disturbances are included in regular education processes, most frequently, there occurs some imbalance between their developmental abilities and teaching subject-matters and/or didactic-methodical forms of work, since they have been chiefly appropriate for other “average” children. Didactic methodologies refer to the selection of

adequate work strategies and procedures of adjustment of teaching matters to apply to children with developmental difficulties.

Regulations have been focused on the assessment and meeting of individual needs of schoolchildren, so that familiarity with their differences is of exceptional importance, enabling better identification and understanding of the difficulties these pupils have been facing and facilitating choices of suitable didactic methodologies and procedures. Insufficient familiarity with the children's needs can be considered the primary reason why teachers sometimes feel discouraged while applying adjusted programmes and individualised approaches for each particular child. For that reason, regardless of which organisational form in which children with developmental difficulties are educated and trained, the education methodology in Croatia is based on the consistent application of the following principles: individualisation; active demonstration; education/life connection; concentration; socialisation and work activity; appropriate stimuli selection; selection and application of comprehension sources; the use of suitable work aids and didactic materials; and rehabilitation accessibility. Also important is adjustment (Ivančić, Stančić, 2002), which can be: perceptive (adjustment of demonstration aids, print adjustments, reading or writing space adjustment and others); cognitive (introduction to procedure, text planning, text reduction, semantic simplification of teaching matters, application of schematic reviews, graded perceptive support of the same contents and similar); speech (expressiveness adjustment, adjustment of articulation, speech adjusted and directed attention); or adjustments in requirements (related to one's learning independence, work time, the way of work and activity level). As to stimulation selection, it is important to choose optimal ways of work (in groups, pairs, or individual work with a task determined in advance); methods of work (conversation, presentation, demonstration, practical work, reading, writing); emotional-social encouragement with motivation plans (smiling, touching, nodding); flexible and positive teacher's attitude; encouraging, praising, visible forms of positive evaluation; co-operation among pupils with different forms of joint activities.

Recent comprehensive research has shown that teachers in the Republic of Croatia have relatively positive attitudes towards integration of schoolchildren with developmental difficulties in regular primary and secondary schools (Kiš-Glavaš, 1999, Ljubić, 2002) but those introducing changes in Croatian schools are primarily those teachers who have been additionally educated.

Selection of information sources, teaching aids and didactic material provides the material basis of the education process for gaining knowledge and developing abilities. The application of general and specific didactic

materials, aids and equipment (audio-visual, visual and auditory) is of exceptional importance, as well as the use of one's direct experience. Unfortunately, a lack of material is one of the main obstacles to higher-quality development of education integration or inclusion in Croatian schools. State financial resources assigned to education can cover only basic requirements, while additional, even basic, didactic materials, aids and equipment remain inaccessible to the majority of schools, teachers and pupils. Education integration in Croatia is additionally aggravated by this fact and by data that show that teachers are not sufficiently stimulated for their work with pupils with developmental difficulties.

## Curriculum

To date in Croatia, curricula have been based on the class or subject-oriented system, that being the reason that one still cannot talk about a curriculum in the Republic of Croatia, although in the last several years there have been constant changes in that direction. The curriculum defines the objectives and tasks, school subjects and teaching material, duration and basic forms of programme execution, annual and weekly number of classes for each particular school subject, as well as methodical, didactic and other conditions for their realisation.

Curricula are made at three or four different levels, as follows: the *General curriculum* is centralised, drawn up and approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and developed by expert work groups at the Institute of Education of the Republic Croatia. There are compulsory and optional components of the curriculum and there are also *regular* and *special* prescribed teaching matters for each education field at all education levels intended for schoolchildren with severe developmental difficulties. The *Executive curriculum*, or the education plan and programme, is developed by the school or group of schools in a county. This is also called an annual curriculum and includes obligatory subjects respecting local characteristics and optional subjects in accordance with interests, personnel and financial opportunities in the school. An *Operational curriculum* is prepared by a group of teachers (or just one teacher) of a school subject at the same school and is based on the above executive or annual curriculum, working out, in detail, teaching matters and selecting methods, aids and forms of work for each particular class or generation. *Lesson preparation* made by each teacher based on the above-mentioned curricula for each class, contains detailed lesson plans, methods, aids and types of work and

specifying methodical-didactic approaches and other details related to integration of schoolchildren with developmental difficulties in that class.

In addition, *Curricula for children with developmental difficulties* are developed in conformity with the conditions prescribed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the following are currently being published. Within the *pre-school education system*, there are: curricula dealing with pre-school education and care of children with autism; programme of pre-school education and care for children with intellectual disabilities; programme of pre-school education and care for children with cerebral palsy and considerable developmental delays; and programme guidance related to the care, education, protection and rehabilitation of pre-school aged children with developmental difficulties (Ministry of Culture and Education of the Republic of Croatia, Institute of Education, 1993).

Within the *primary school education* there are also: curricula dealing with education and primary schooling of children with developmental difficulties in regular schools. In addition to a curriculum there is also a programme for a special teacher or school expert collaborator; tasks of expert team members related to preparing and the realisation of programme of pedagogical observation and specific needs of children with developmental difficulties and instructions for monitoring and assessment of children with developmental difficulties in primary and secondary school. There are also instructions for drawing up adjusted programmes based upon regular programmes made by teachers conducting direct education with a child showing developmental difficulties; they are drawn up for each particular child with developmental difficulties for all teaching matters that have been found to need adjustment at the beginning of each school year (Ljubić, 1999).

## **Individual programmes**

No unique adjusted programme applies to all children with developmental difficulties. Planning, programming and work with each child should be individualised according to the child's developmental needs. However, only some schoolchildren with developmental difficulties may make progress (in all or in some school subjects) along with their peers and others only to a certain degree. There is no pupil who cannot be educated, taught or trained according to his or her individual developmental capacities. Developing and implementing adjusted programmes should determine the level of the pupil's abilities and knowledge for each particular subject; set short-term aims and annual education objectives; establish the child's special needs and the ways to meet them; determine the level of the pupil's participation in the regular programme activities; establish the duration of

individual support and objective criteria, means and methods for the evaluation of education aims; and indicate expert profiles in charge of drawing-up, realising, evaluating and possibly modifying such programmes.

Moreover, for the successful planning, programming and achievement of education goals, the child with special needs would have to be integrated in a class with teachers who have been qualified or prepared for work with such pupils and who show a positive attitude towards them. Only such teachers will be able to prepare other pupils in the class for the acceptance of a pupil who has special needs. At the same time, both teacher and pupil will require help and support of an expert collaborator, special education-rehabilitation expert.

Primary school education of children with considerable developmental disabilities, performed in special schools (Table 3.11, Table 3.12 and Table 3.13) includes: *Special curricula for children with intellectual disabilities*. Planning, programming and immediate education work with such children is being performed by the special teachers (special education-rehabilitation experts). Schoolchildren with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disabilities, those with autism or with combined major developmental difficulties are also trained in accordance with *special curricula within special school subjects* (self-care skills, communication, knowledge about environments, socialisation, creativity development, work education, physical and health education and training related to performance of tasks). Schooling of pupils with major developmental difficulties is possible until they are the age of 21. All special programmes require additional specific adjustment to each particular child and they also imply special education-rehabilitation support and possibly prolonged education procedures and rehabilitation programmes.

**Table 3.9 Curriculum for pupils with major developmental difficulties from 1- 8 grade**

School subjects	Weekly number of lessons by grade							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
Croatian language	6	6	6	5	4	4	4	4
Art	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Math	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
Science and social environment	3	3	3	3	4	5	-	-
Science	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Social environment	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Technical education	-	-	-	2	4	4	5	5
Physical and health education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total regular tuition	18	18	18	19	22	23	23	23
Optional subjects	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Extracurricular activities	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Total	21	21	21	22	26	27	27	27

*Source:* Curriculum and Programs for Education of Pupils with Developmental Difficulties in Primary and Secondary School (the Herald of the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, 4/96)

Note: Level of mild mental retardation with additional developmental difficulties.

**Table 3.10 Specific qualities of curriculum for the pupils with major developmental difficulties from 1- 8 grade**

Contents	Weekly number of lessons by grade							
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
The entire regular tuition with optional programme and extracurricular activities	21	21	21	22	26	27	27	27
Additional education-rehabilitation procedures	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3
Total possible number of weekly lessons	25	25	25	25	30	30	30	30
Rehabilitation procedures, or	Up to 12 lessons per each class							
Extended education procedure	6 to 8 lessons per each class							

*Source: ibid*

Table 3.11 Curriculum for pupils at moderate and severe intellectual disability level

School subjects	Grade and weekly number of lessons			
	age 7 - 11	age 11 - 14	age 14 - 17	age 17 - 21
Physical and health education	6	4	4	3
Work-related education	4	6	6	-
Knowledge about school and work environment	4	4	4	3
Self-care skills	3	3	3	2
Communication	4	4	4	3
Creativity development (art and music)	2	3	3	-
Socialisation	1	1	1	1
Organised free time	-	-	-	3
Training related to performance of tasks	-	-	-	12
Total	24	25	25	27
Extended education procedure	18	18	18	18
Total	42	43	43	45

Source: *ibid*

## Secondary education for students with special needs (mainstream and special schools)

Secondary education for children with developmental difficulties in mainstream schools includes two to four-year education programmes; in industry, economy, handicrafts and semi-skilled training. Now in Croatia, new programmes have been introduced for 57 occupations with a “unique model of education” for vocational training.

Programmes in special institutions generally last from three months to four years; however, if required by the type and the degree of developmental handicap, the training for gaining a semi-skilled trade or for completion of secondary education can be performed longer than legally prescribed. Courses listed here are followed by possible occupations where students would likely act as assistants : mechanical engineering, mechanical energy



production and mechanics (locksmith, tinsmith, installer of radiators and air-conditioning, or plumber); agriculture (gardener or florist); food production (miller or baker); woodworking (carpenter, fancy wooden-goods producer, parquet foorer, or cooper); textile-clothing area (tailor or knitter); civil engineering (floor-layer); leather works (shoemaker, orthopaedic shoemaker, luxury goods craftsman); graphics (bookbinder or cardboard worker); catering and tourism (cook and pastry-cook or waiter), economy and trade (administrative clerk); and other services (upholsterer, woodwork painter and house painter, car-body sprayer).

**Table 3.12 Curriculum for pupils with major developmental difficulties, for semi-skilled training**

School subjects	Year I	Year II	Year III
Croatian Language	3	3	3
Ethics And Culture	1	1	1
Politics And Economy		1	1
Mathematics	3	3	2
Physical And Health Education	2	2	2
Occupational Technology	3	3	3
Total	12	13	12
Class Circle Time	1	1	1
Religious Education/Ethics	1	1	1
Vocational Practice	14	14	21
Extended Education Procedure (Per Class Or Group)	18	18	18

*Source: ibid*

Modernisation of these curricula for children with developmental difficulties, for both mainstream and specialised schools, is necessary for the development of education integration in the Republic of Croatia. This could include uniting school subjects into education disciplines, introducing new teaching subjects and education fields of study, introducing programmes for

new occupations in accordance with labour-market needs and making and publishing rehabilitation and prevention programmes.

## Teacher training

In the Republic of Croatia there are the following types of teachers: pre-school teachers, primary school teachers (both class and subject teachers), secondary school teachers (general education subject teachers, vocational teachers, teachers of practical vocational skills and assistants, craftsmen in trade workshops and instructors in firms) and expert collaborators (education specialists such as pedagogues, psychologists, special education teachers, social workers and health staff, school librarians). There are also considerable differences in the Republic of Croatia as to education of teachers and the status of teaching institutions. Although diversity is generally to be supported, it is a disturbing fact that studies, to a large degree, concentrate on theory in particular disciplines and neglect the practical nature of teachers' jobs in primary and secondary schools.<sup>10</sup>

As a part of graduate studies there has always been a programme of pedagogical-psychological advanced training, through which specialists in any field could gain competence and the required licence for teaching in primary and secondary schools. However, within the last ten years, teachers faculties have started abandoning earlier standards of pedagogical-psychological training that were formerly required at the state level. The national standard of teachers' education as such has thus disappeared. Each teaching faculty presently has its own standard in terms of structure and duration. By abandoning the state standard, there was a radical decrease in the education sciences and teaching methodologies in the curriculum of teachers' education, to the point that in some faculties it fell below 10%.<sup>11</sup> By completing teacher-training studies and by passing teaching exams after the foreseen trainee period, highly educated specialists graduating from some non-teacher training facilities (such as engineers, jurists, economists and others) receive the necessary competence and licence enabling them to work as school teachers.

Analyses of the curricula of teachers' studies show that teachers are educated primarily for subject teaching. Even the class-teachers' study is in fact a subject-oriented study. In the teachers' education process other forms

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<sup>10</sup> The Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2002

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

of education work at schools (such as extracurricular activities, work with children showing developmental difficulties, work with gifted and talented schoolchildren, etc.) have been neglected.<sup>12</sup>

### **Pre-service training of teachers**

Pre-school teachers are presently being educated at two-year post-secondary school level. Degree exam candidates receive two-year post-secondary school qualifications which do not lead to further study. Preparation for class-teaching in primary school (grades 1-4) takes four years and includes additional sub-specialisation in subjects available in higher education institutions, depending upon availability. This study has the status of schools of *professional* higher education which means that teachers cannot go on to post-graduate scientific studies. Degree exam candidates receive university or college qualification and are also entitled to teach one (sub-specialised) school subject in primary schools.

Education of subjects for primary schools and general education subject teachers for secondary schools lasts four years at faculties and academies within one of the universities. These studies have scientific or theoretical, and not merely professional, qualities – offering graduates the possibility of further specialisation at the post-graduate Masters and doctoral level. These studies may include one or two subjects, qualifying teachers for teaching in these subjects both in primary and secondary school. Two subject studies have some different possible combinations within the approved entry quotas determined by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (not dependant on the teaching personnel vacancies in primary and secondary schools). Some faculties offer only courses for future teachers of a given subject (such as mathematics), while others some offer both teaching and scientific or art-oriented studies in a given subject.

The basic activity of teacher training schools of professional higher education and of teacher education academies is the education of future teachers. However, faculties and arts academies produce specialists of other profiles as well and a very important field of their activities is also scientific research. Some faculties and academies offer more non-teaching than teaching studies and may lack important characteristics of teacher's schools of professional higher education.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

## Training programmes for teachers intended for work with children with developmental difficulties

Data gathered from the curricula of four-year studies for class-teachers at six teacher training institutions including the Teacher Education Academy in Zagreb and Teacher's Schools of Professional Higher Education in Split, Zadar, Rijeka, Pula and Gospić four-year studies, explained below, illustrate some characteristics of graduate education in Croatia (Wagner-Jakab, 2003).

From the first year of their study onwards students have been learning about issues related to developmental difficulties or special needs through courses such as developmental psychology and pedagogical psychology which are likely to be of considerable influence on their level of knowledge and familiarity with developmental difficulties. Other courses dealing with education of schoolchildren with developmental difficulties, at the four-year teacher's training programmes are called "Special pedagogy", "Education of schoolchildren with special needs", or "Pedagogy of children with developmental difficulties". All of these are one-semester courses except for that at The Teacher's School of Professional Higher Education in Rijeka, where it lasts two semesters. These courses last for 45 lessons in Zagreb, Split, Pula, Zadar and Gospić (two lessons weekly being lectures and one seminar). In Rijeka, there are 90 lessons. Students from the Zagreb faculty fulfil their obligations through examinations in writing, in Split and Pula through oral exams, in Gospić through seminar papers and oral exams and in Rijeka by seminar papers, written reports and oral examinations. Prescribed compulsory literature in these six teacher training institutions is supplemented by contemporary sources, where special emphasis may be on the works of scientists and experts of the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation of the Zagreb University as the only higher education institution in the Republic of Croatia dealing with persons with developmental difficulties. Only one book is common to all lists of compulsory literature: *Psycho-physical Developmental Difficulties* by Ribić, K., 1991, published by Focus, Zadar.

What all teachers' study curricula have in common is that they all instruct teaching subjects through several aspects: (1) terminology, definition, ethiology, phenomenology and classification of developmental difficulties; (2) characteristics of developmental difficulties; (3) theory and practice of integrative education; (4) forms of work with schoolchildren with developmental difficulties — adjustment of curricula, teaching methods and principles, observation, evaluation and teaching technology and (5) participants in education of children with developmental difficulties — parents, teachers, experts, peers, humanitarian organisations. Curricula in Rijeka, Split and Zadar also have elements on teaching gifted and talented

pupils. Of all mentioned programmes, only Rijeka offers a course related to persons with developmental difficulties, which is carried out through two semesters and includes practical experience in the field. It would be of particular importance to introduce practical experience into all other teachers' (but also non-teacher's) studies, so that the students could gain experience in the field of work with children with developmental difficulties before they start teaching.

### **Training of mainstream teachers for work with children with developmental difficulties**

The education of mainstream subject teachers in primary and secondary schools, either through teacher's or non-teacher's studies, has unfortunately *not* included a course that would deal with education and treatment of children with developmental difficulties, teachers, before starting their practice, are therefore never introduced to this subject. This is a significant problem; especially bearing in mind the fact that such education is not systematically conducted prior to acquiring the necessary work licence (*e.g.* through the programme of pedagogical-psychological-didactical and methodological education). Research results point to the fact that there are still a number of teacher education academy trainees and regular teachers who do not consider themselves ready for education integration and who think they lack the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to work with children with developmental difficulties (Wagner-Jakab, 2003). Collaborators-pedagogues are also insufficiently qualified for work with children with developmental difficulties (through their graduate study they receive only basic information) and at the same time they are in practice very often as the most frequently represented profile of collaborators in pre-school institutions and schools.

The necessity of high-quality graduate education for teachers in this field of work, as well as the importance of continuous specialisation in practice, encouraged Professor Ljiljana Igrić to start the scientific project of the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Education and Sports in the school year 1995/1996<sup>13</sup>, called "Education of Teachers and Integration of Children with Special Needs; Teacher training programme: Education of Teachers for the Acceptance of Students with Special Needs." Seminars and workshops were conducted, for a total of 80 hours, prepared and lead by a group of experts with experience in work with children with special needs as well as psycho-

<sup>13</sup>Only in January 2004 Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Education and Sports were united in the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

therapists or socio-therapists. The education covered ten topics: (1) communication; (2) needs, motivation and behaviour; (3) differences; (4) creativity in work with children; (5) emotions and self-image; (6) crises and stress; (7) conflict management; (8) didactical and methodological aspects of work with students with learning difficulties; (9) parenthood and co-operation; and (10) work in a group and with a group. For each topic, the work consisted of a lecture to inform teachers about the topic discussed and three workshops, first aimed at understanding and communicating personal experience, then at practicing new methods and techniques and finally in producing ideas for application of new knowledge in the classroom. This was followed by evaluation and application of the new methods in daily work for the period of one month before experiences were exchanged during the next session. The programme proved to be effective in ensuing research (Kiš-Glavaš, Wagner-Jakab, 2000; Ljubić, Kiš-Glavaš, Vojnović, 2003). Today it is conducted by the Association for Rendering Professional Support to Children with Special Needs (IDEM) for primary and secondary school teachers in the Republic of Croatia, partly financed from the state budget (applications for co-financing or financing of programmes of associations as announced by the Ministry every year).

Unfortunately, although evaluated and confirmed to be effective, neither this nor any other programme is, so far, conducted systematically through state institutions as a required programme for advanced training of teachers. As education integration in Croatia has been legally required since 1980, teachers have to be prepared and educated to be able to meet the requirements of their job. One of the priority tasks of the Government of the Republic of Croatia should therefore be systematic and continuous teacher education for work in this field. It seems logical to assume that graduate studies will have to be revised in the near future, in order to bring them in line with the actual situation in the education system, creating systematically, through state institutions, the programmes of advanced teacher training.

### **Training of expert collaborators**

It is obvious that the success of education inclusion does not depend only on teachers, but it is based also on the teamwork of expert collaborators. In this respect, one should note the role of the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, the first and only Croatian institution of higher education engaged in scientific, education and professional work concerning persons with special needs. The Faculty is organised in seven departments: Vision Impairments; Hearing Impairments; Motor Disorders, Chronic Diseases and Art Therapy; Mental Retardation; Logopedics; Behavioural Disorders and General Department of Education and

Rehabilitation. Studies, which last a total of four years (eight semesters) completed by the defence of a graduate thesis, this Faculty includes the subjects of rehabilitation science, education, art therapy and other supportive therapies. The teaching material of studies in this field of education and rehabilitation in theoretical and scientific senses represents work similar to other countries in the fields of rehabilitation science, special education and other areas. In accordance with the offered programmes, this faculty produces different specialists, qualified for prevention and rehabilitation work both in the education and clinical practice who become, after graduation, special education and rehabilitation experts with an indication of their chosen sub-specialisation.

These sub-specialisations are: *Speech pathology (logopedics)* for work related to the prevention, identification, diagnosis and treatment of human communication disorders of different ethiology (origins), implying all processes and functions connected with perception and production of speech and written language, as well as forms of non-verbal communication. *Behaviour disorders* qualify students for work on prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment and subsequent care for persons with behavioural disturbances for their integration, compensation, education and/or correctional education or rehabilitation. *Rehabilitation* in the concept of a bio-psycho-social model of rehabilitation includes elements from the study of intellectual impairment, autism, visual impairments, motor disorders and chronic diseases and makes the students competent for education work, professional consultation, rehabilitation and supportive therapies.

## Conclusion

Education integration in Croatia has been well established in law and policy; only minor changes and amendments would be necessary in this regard. However, there have been certain problems in practical implementation, which will hopefully be resolved without delay. Problems discussed here primarily occur due to a lack of statistical monitoring and scarce financial, material and human resources which do not permit the reduction of the number of children per class, the employment of new specialists (especially experts in special education, rehabilitation and psychology) and prohibit better financial rewards for experts working with children with developmental difficulties. Without the necessary resources, the purchase and use of up-to-date teaching aids and equipment and the organised, systematic education of teachers and of parents and peers of children with developmental difficulties are also not possible.

It may be concluded that, in Croatia, there are already appropriate solutions available for the successful implementation of education integration, but all available resources to link these elements in an efficient system has not so far been determined nor put in place, therefore leaving some question as to what tasks in this field should be pursued in the near future.



## Chapter 4 – FYR of Macedonia

The National Report on “Education Policies for at Risk Students and those with Disabilities” of the FYR of Macedonia describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as reform efforts underway. It emphasises logistic and administrative efforts to change the current situation of education provision of children with special needs in special schools to a more integrated approach. Although the country has undergone extensive education reforms, the improvement of the situation for children with special education needs still faces various obstacles: stagnation of the economy with high unemployment rates, limited public awareness for integrative approaches in education and still scarce resources for education reform. This account covers the following sections: a short overview of the education system followed by chapters describing the legal framework, policies focusing on special groups, statistics and indicators, and the current situation of teacher training, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. The concept of integration and inclusion are central issues, and attention is paid to barriers and problems of inclusion and equity in education, parents’ participation and other support services.



## Introduction

In recent years, the FYR of Macedonia has made significant efforts towards education reform, in areas such as decentralisation and liberalisation of the education sector, attempting to improve education quality and to meet new social and economic challenges such as increasing poverty, unemployment, and social inequality.

Currently, the education system includes compulsory free education at the primary level. Secondary level education is not mandatory and some fees are paid, such as annual fees for maintenance costs. These costs are not more than EUR 20-25 per student per semester and are USED for improvement in schools (this is not the full amount of maintenance costs). Private schools are constitutionally prohibited at the primary school level but permitted at other levels. The Law for Changes and Implementation of the Law on Elementary Education increased compulsory education from eight to nine years with the addition of a one-year school-preparation course; 83.23% of children were included in one-year preparatory courses in 2002. In the school year 2003/2004, the eight grades of compulsory primary education included 232 143 students. Primary school dropout rates are low and decreasing; in 2001, the estimated rate of school leavers for primary education was just 1.42%. This rate is smaller in urban and larger in rural areas and highest for girls and minorities. Since 1999, the number of students per class has slowly decreased to 22.94 in 2004.

By law, teaching at the compulsory level must be in the student's mother tongue. Classes are, therefore, taught not only in the Macedonian language, which uses the Cyrillic alphabet, but also in languages of other communities within the FYR of Macedonia including Albanian, Serbian and Turkish. Roma and Vlach are taught as optional subjects including courses on both language and culture; however, the lack of available teachers, textbooks and materials in these languages presents a significant difficulty.

Today, 86.3% of students in grade VIII continue their education at secondary school, approximately 61.36% in vocational training programmes and 38.64% in general secondary school. Most of the secondary schools are public, but the legal framework allows for private secondary schools as well; 84.96% are in four-year secondary programmes; 14.48% in three-year secondary programmes and 0.53% are enrolled in the special secondary schools. Of the total number of enrolled students, 80% finished their studies at this level. Dropout rates are higher in the first year of three-year programmes and in vocational training. In 2003/2004, 20 053 students

graduated from secondary school. In the same year, 7 157 students or roughly one third of graduates, enrolled at the higher education level and were financed by the state. Postgraduate specialisations including Masters and PhD courses are available at two universities at present and three as of 2005/2006, a few dozen students have completed degrees to date. Representatives of minority communities still enrol at low rates in higher education; it is hoped that quotas may help to address this issue as well as the availability of instruction at the higher education level in the Albanian language. The total number of students in the school year 2002/2003, at the higher education level was 2212 (3.034) on 1000 (100 000) inhabitants. Concerning the number secondary school students in the school year 2003/2004 – 20 053 students graduated.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) administers and finances the education system, although the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy also has a role in financing pre-school education. These two ministries also co-operate in the provision of education for special needs students (in some parts: pre - schools and in the institutes).

In terms of special needs education, the FYR of Macedonia currently has a system of special schools and some associated “satellite” classes that are located elsewhere, usually within mainstream schools. Some efforts have been undertaken to implement inclusive education on a project basis in schools throughout the country. The Ministry of Education and Science oversees special schools, special institutes and special education classes in mainstream elementary schools; the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy manages other institutes for Education and Rehabilitation. In addition the Ministry of Education and Science oversees the special classes opened in hospitals. This ministry also has a shared responsibility with other ministries for education activities in the Institutes for Education and Rehabilitation (*i.e.* with education inspection, financing education staff and training, education expenditures and maintenance of education facilities). Experts in special education in the FYR of Macedonia are primarily trained defectologists. A “National Strategy for Equalising Rights in Education of Persons with Handicap in the Republic of Macedonia” has also been developed and the Education Development Strategy 2001-2010 includes some mention of special needs education as well. In addition, the “National Plan for the Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005 – 2015” was developed which includes some elements related to inclusive education.

## Legal framework

In 1999, the Assembly of the FYR of Macedonia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in so doing, committing to the implementation of this international convention in The FYR of Macedonia. “The Law Reviewing the Law on Child Protection” is currently being revised to accommodate obligations of the Convention and contains some elements related to special needs education (Article 16). The Constitution of The FYR of Macedonia determines that primary education is both compulsory and free (Article 44), meeting one of the main obligations on education in the Convention. The Constitution of the FYR of Macedonia also determines that no private institutions are permitted for compulsory primary schooling (Article 45). Another important element is that, “the representatives of the ethnic minorities have the right to education in their languages in primary and secondary education;” the Macedonian language is also required (Article 48). In addition, changes in the Law for Higher Education, concerning the right of higher education in the language of the community, were applied after some recent Constitutional changes. (This right applies only to communities representing more than 20% of the population). The Law on Elementary Education (2002) and the Internal Regulatory Act (1996) also outline important aspects of the legal framework for education of children with special education needs.

### Law for Elementary Education (2002)

According to Article 27 of the Law for Elementary Education (2002), “Elementary schools have an obligation to provide education for children with special education needs.” Students with learning difficulties and gifted children are included in this definition and should have appropriate methods and forms of work including individual or group work and inclusive teaching; schools should furthermore institute an inclusive approach. Elementary education may be conducted in “health institutions, correction homes and prisons” (Article 4). Article 5 explains “special elementary schools and classes in elementary schools shall be organised for children with physical and developmental disability, depending on the type and level of disability.” Special curricula and syllabi for pupils with mental and physical development disabilities should be available (Article 26). Furthermore, the Ministry will support the publishing of small-run textbooks for special education (Article 92). Pupils with disabilities are entitled to free transportation. If transportation cannot be provided, the pupil shall be entitled to free board and lodging in a pupils' hostel or with a family. Other elements of the law include an age limitation of the state obligation to provide education up to the end of the school year when a pupil reaches the

age of 15. However, some exceptions can be made, allowing pupils up to the age of 17 to continue elementary education (Article 51). Primary education for refugees, foreign citizens and stateless persons is also granted under this Law (Article 9), a right that has been particularly important in the recent history of the country.

This law also implements the right for education in the mother tongue as stipulated in the Constitution. While teachers should know both the language and alphabet of instruction, in classes where the instructional process is realised in a language other than Macedonian, exclusively the teachers of Macedonian language have to know the language and alphabet of instruction. The right for textbooks in the mother tongues is also regulated here (Article 83) as well as rights to documentation and record-keeping in languages other than Macedonian (in addition to also being kept in Macedonian).

### **Proposed changes in the Law for Elementary Education**

The “Law for Changes and Implementation of the Law for Elementary Education”, presented by the Ministry of Education and Science in June 2003, presents several changes related to elementary education of students with special education needs and at risk students. These suggested changes result from the need for decentralisation in the sectors of elementary and secondary education, including to meet commitments made in the Ohrid Framework Agreement<sup>14</sup> as stated here (Article 3.1): “Enhanced competencies [for local governments] will relate principally to the areas of public services, urban and rural planning, environmental protection, local economic development, culture, local finances, education, social welfare, and health care.” Article 5.2 of this agreement states that “laws that directly affect culture, use of language and education” must receive a majority of votes, “within which there must be a majority of the votes of the Representatives claiming to belong to the communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia.” (This rather elaborate phrasing was an

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<sup>14</sup> The Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed in Skopje, Macedonia on 13 August 2001, with the aim of “securing the future of Macedonia’s democracy and permitting the development of closer and more integrated relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the Euro-Atlantic community” as well as promoting “the peaceful and harmonious development of civil society while respecting the ethnic identity and the interests of all Macedonian citizens.” The Agreement includes sections on basic principles, cessation of hostilities, development of decentralised government, non-discrimination and equitable representation, special parliamentary procedures, education and use of languages and expression of identity. Constitutional and Legislative Amendments are also outlined within this document.

important result of discussions on the term “minority” in the FYR of Macedonia.)

In Article 2 of the Law on Elementary Education, terminological changes have been recommended; specifically introducing the term “children with special education needs” in place of children with particular “developmental obstacles.” Another terminological change was introduced, “representatives of the communities”, the term agreed upon within the Ohrid Framework Agreement, is the term to be used for the different ethnic groups in the country. Normative standards are introduced by the Ministry (Article 7) and teaching syllabi are prepared in accordance with model syllabi developed and approved by the Ministry. Descriptive grading for students in grades I-III has also been introduced (Article 27). Teacher qualifications may also be amended, including the possibility for a class teacher for students with physical and mental disorders from grade I-IV to be a person who has completed defectology studies (Article 32). Defectologists are also permitted to be teachers for subject teaching (grades V-VIII) in elementary schools for students with special education needs. Defectologists can also be vocational trainers.

### **Internal Regulatory Act concerning elementary education of students with developmental obstacles (1996)**

The Ministry for Education and Physical Culture (the former name of MoES) regulates special elementary education in the “Internal Regulatory Act for the Criteria and Ways of Realisation of the Elementary Education of a Student with Developmental Obstacles” (1996). Students with “developmental obstacles” who cannot be integrated in the primary school together with the other students may be included in separate classes in mainstream schools or in special primary schools (Article 2). Primary education for students with developmental obstacles can also be organised in other public institutions (*i.e.* institutes, centres, or hospitals). Students with developmental obstacles are assessed by authorised institutions. The number of students per class is also defined (Article 4); usually ranging from six to ten depending on whether classes are mixed or solely made up of students with a specific disability and according to the types of disabilities. The maximum number of students with special education needs who can be included in a mainstream class is two.

This Act also includes a reference to the process of inclusion for the first time in a legal document, outlining the need for the total number of students per class in a mainstream school to decrease by three students for each student with special needs included (Article 7).

A pupil's hostel or dormitory is organised in special pre-schools and institutes within which students are divided into "upbringing" or education groups led by an educator, which include teaching in life skills. In Article 5, the number of students with developmental obstacles in an upbringing group is defined, ranging from six to twelve students. In addition, for students with behavioural disorders or for young offenders, up to twelve students can be in one group. If a student with developmental obstacles needs to be accompanied by a parent or guardian, as certified according with the type and degree of special need, both the companion and the student have the right to free transportation to and from school (Article 6).

## **Policy review focusing on special groups**

According to the Constitution of the FYR of Macedonia, all children have a right to education. The Law on Elementary Education states that all children with special education needs, including gifted and talented children, have a right to education. Children with mental or physical disorders may be educated in special institutions or in mainstream schools, depending on the level and type of special needs. While many students remain within special schools and institutions, these numbers are decreasing. Some examples of projects on inclusive education have also been developed in the country.

Special needs education is an integral part of the "Education Development Strategy 2001-2010" prepared in June 2000 by the Ministry of Education and Science. In the second chapter "Social Challenges", there is a section on inclusion of children with special needs, within which different issues on inclusive education are elaborated. At the time of writing of this document, both "children with developmental obstacles" and "handicapped children" are terms used by the government. In this document, the estimate is that 5% of children with special education needs are integrated into mainstream schools. In addition, this publication estimates that only 20% of children with special education needs are enrolled in any form of schooling.

A "National Strategy for the Rights in Education of the Persons with Handicap in the Republic of Macedonia" has also been prepared. A working group has proposed a Programme for implementing the Draft Strategy and is working with the Commission for Education in the National Co-ordinative Body, whose members have been nominated by the Ministries and appointed by the Prime Minister including experts from universities, NGOs, and the Ministries of Health, Education and Science, Environment, Social Care and Physical Planning.



## Ascertainment of children with special needs

Certain institutions are entitled to ascertain children with developmental delays up to the age of 26 years. The issue is clarified in the legal framework of the “Internal Regulatory Act for Ascertainment of the Specific needs of Persons with Obstacles in Physical and Mental Development” (30/2000) which was approved by Ministries of Health, Education and Sciences and the Ministry of Social Care. Among other issues, this Act regulates membership on the ascertainment team, the appropriate institution to carry out the ascertainment and the manner of ascertainment.

A first step in the ascertainment process lies in “discovering and reporting persons with obstacles in physical and mental development and children born with risks.” This responsibility can be fulfilled by any of a variety of service providers such as health institutions (maternity wards, developmental advisory centres, and other primary health care institutions), institutions for social protection, institutions for child care, education institutions, and parents or guardians (Article 13). Various experts will carry out the ascertainment process depending on the perceived difficulty: ophthalmologist, otorhinolaringologue for people with vision impairments; tiflogue, surdologue for persons with impaired hearing; ornitholaringologue and logopedist for persons with speech or language difficulties; somathopedist for people with physical disabilities, neuropsychiatrist for people with intellectual impairments; defectologists for autistic children; internists or a defectologists for all chronically ill children; and any combination of the above for persons with multiple types of obstacles (Article 14). In addition, defectologists, paediatricians, physiologists or social workers should also be available, when needed, for any of the above teams. Locations for ascertainment are also determined, only a restricted set of medical centres are entitled to present ascertainment on the national level.

During the ascertainment, the specialist collects biographical data and determines special needs, such as for childcare, education, professional studies, employment, or social development and healthcare. Specific needs should be presented in accordance with the Law on Child Protection, Act for Social Care, Act for Health Care, Act for Employment and Assurance in the Case of Unemployment. Other information is related to specific health, social and psychological diagnoses, including which types of diagnostic tests were undertaken. In the course of the ascertainment, students may also be categorised under one of eight types of disabilities as defined in the second chapter of the Internal Regulatory Act for Ascertainment: persons with impaired vision; persons with impaired hearing; persons with obstacles in voice and speech; physically invalid persons; mentally retarded persons

(light, moderate, severe and profound); autistic persons; chronically ill persons; and persons with combined developmental obstacles.

Parents may decide if they will place the student in a regular or special school. Parents may also participate in the ascertainment of their children's special needs (Article 18 and 2 of the Internal Regulatory Act for the Criteria and Ways of Realising the Elementary Education of Students with Developmental Obstacles).

### ***Poverty as a cause***

A chapter on the threat of poverty in the “Education Development Strategy 2001-2010” explains many of the difficulties linked to socio-economic development currently being experienced in the FYR of Macedonia. The move towards a market economy is leading to the increasingly rapid pauperisation of certain vulnerable population groups and to social stratification. Poverty decreases the possibility of quality education and, as a result, members of vulnerable groups have been falling deeper into the vicious cycle of poverty and education difficulty. The most efficient means of providing opportunities to the youth of these disadvantaged groups is through high-quality education for all populations.

### **Inclusion and integration: past experiences and future possibilities**

Some attempts at implementing inclusion have already been made, according to the possibilities given within the legal framework. In addition, other efforts for improvement in this direction are constantly underway. One of them is project work, often conducted collaboratively with many stakeholders. The first efforts undertaken by MoES were to open special classes in mainstream schools and the implementation of a systematic approach to special education. In addition, the proposed process for further development of an inclusive education system was determined in the “Internal Regulatory Act for Criteria and Ways of Realising the Elementary Education of Students with Developmental Obstacles.

One early project in the field of special needs education was the “Modernisation of the Education of Persons with Developmental Obstacles in the Republic of Macedonia” which was undertaken from 1996-1998. The project resulted in some changes in the Law on Elementary Education. As mentioned previously, under the Law on Changes and Implementation of the Law for Primary Education, teachers for children with special needs (children with special needs in psychological development) can be a person who has completed defectologist studies. A defectologist can also be a specialist collaborator in the primary school. For pre-school education, the

“Law for Changes and Implementation of the Law for Child Protection” states that special groups with special syllabi are required. (Article 16) for children with moderate obstacles in the intellectual and physical development. Additional help and adjusted syllables is planned for the care and education of children with light obstacles in mental and physical development as well (Article 16). At the secondary education level, the Norms and Standards regulate the education of teachers who work with special needs students. This document regulates the need for special vocational exams for the professors who work with special needs students (Article 32).

Since 1998, the Ministry of Education and Science has implemented a project entitled “Inclusion of Children with Special Needs in Regular Schools”. In 2005, after five years of the project, there are 73 primary schools and 13 kindergartens where children with special needs are included. Every year more kindergartens open their doors to children with special needs, providing services to meet the needs of more children. This project began by offering seminars for teachers and specialists (psychologists and pedagogues) from mainstream schools. During the seventh year of the project (2005), a mobile service of specialists (such as the defectology-certified loopedists, tiflopedagogues or other type of specialist) was organised. This service is intended to support mainstream class teachers who have special needs students in their classes. In addition, a handbook for teachers was published and distributed to the teachers from the project. As a result of this project, some changes in the Law for Elementary Education were made. The amendments in 2002 to the “Law for Changes and Implementation of the Law for Elementary Education” includes an article requiring primary schools to provide education for children with special education needs. Special methods and forms of work and inclusion in the instructional process, as well as other forms of individual and group work are proposed (Article 25a).

Another recent project in the FYR of Macedonia, led by UNICEF, aims to de-institutionalise children with special needs through the development of community services; 24 children were taken out of institutions and placed in families (either their own or foster families). Generally, these were children with severe special needs, who were then accepted into day-care centres in their local communities. The project included “support to biological, foster and adoptive families with children with disabilities through the establishment of day care centres, protected homes, parent networks, training for staff of day care centres and training for parents.

Currently the Ministry of Education and Science is preparing a Strategic document for the period 2006-2010. One of the aspects included as an education priority in this document, part of the priority defined as

"Acquiring quality services in the Education", is the inclusion of children with special education needs in mainstream schools.

### **Parent involvement with teachers**

Parents can participate in everyday instructional activities and can be partners for the teacher and the school in general. According to the Law for Elementary Education, the school board, the key administrative body of a school, includes three representatives of the pupils' parents, appointed by the Parents' Council. This empowers the parents to participate in the process of decision-making in the school on such issues as: adopting an annual work programme for the school and the annual report; establishing the financial plan and adopting the statute of the elementary school. The school board is authorised to make decisions about complaints by pupils, parents and tutors. Parents' influence in the elementary school, especially on the inclusion of students with special needs, can also arise through the Parents' Council, which is entitled to monitor and give recommendations on the realisation of education programmes at the school. School statutes regulate the tasks, number of members, manner of selection and organisation of the parents' council.

### **Obstacles and opportunities in the development of special needs education**

While the above-mentioned projects show some examples of progress towards inclusion of children with special needs in school, many difficulties remain to be overcome. Perhaps the most significant obstacle to inclusion remains the low level of economic development of the country, with high levels of unemployment, including many long-term unemployed persons. Furthermore, the government budget has actually *decreased* education spending as a portion of the budget between 1996 and 1999. Currently, strong pressure to cut the number of employees in schools exists, which would, of course, greatly reduce the capacity to implement inclusive education with the higher demands on individual teachers and the need for additional support by specialists and teachers' assistants. Financial constraints are further evident in a lack of technical equipment and human and material resources. For example, almost no computers are in use for the education of children with special education needs. Recently, special primary schools have received a number of computers through a donation from China. However, these are ordinary computers with no other additional facilities for special needs children.

A great deal also remains to be accomplished in the understanding of different education structures for children with special needs. There is a lack of understanding of the conceptual difference between inclusion and integration of students with special needs; as evident for example, in some government documents in which “integration” and “inclusion” are used as synonyms.

Furthermore, there is very seldom assistance available for special needs children in mainstream schools. If a mainstream school is part of one of the inclusive education projects, there should be mobile defectology services available (logopedue, surdologue, etc.) Also, even in project schools, additional support is very expensive and it remains very difficult to address children's special needs. However, logopedic services for example are only available in a few primary schools in one town to date. Usually, parents are the only help for the child and for the teacher.

Other difficulties arise in the transition from class to subject teaching after the grade IV. Class teachers may be more tolerant of children with special needs, while, in subject teaching, each teacher will spend less time with a given student and therefore be less able to follow through with additional assistance. Sometimes school experts can provide support, but many are not yet trained in this field; those who do have training, defectologists, are often seen as the sole responsible party, thereby depriving children of a multi-faceted support system. One important opportunity for increasing training of non-specialist educators can be seen in the new Law for Elementary Education, which obliges educators to attend in-service training on a regular basis, providing an excellent occasion for including new approaches in elementary school education. Increased training would better enable teachers to realise inclusive education in the future.

The Law for Elementary Education (2002) contains a provision that could present obstacles to inclusion of children with special education needs. Article 51, states that students after the age of 17 years will lose the possibility to attend primary education; a student with disabilities or an at risk student could thus be prevented from completing school by this age restriction.

None of these difficulties is insurmountable but, taken together they present a series of big challenges to be met in the development of special needs education in the FYR of Macedonia.

## Statistics and indicators

The “Internal Regulatory Act for Ascertainment of the Specific needs of Persons with Obstacles in Physical and Mental Development” issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health, as mentioned above, includes definitions for persons with disabilities up to 26 years of age (Article 4):

- Blind persons or persons with impaired vision.
- Deaf persons or persons with impaired hearing.
- Persons with voice and speech impairments.
- Physically invalid persons.
- Mentally retarded persons (light, moderate, severe and profound).
- Autistic person.
- Chronically ill persons.
- Persons with combined developmental obstacles.

Part IV of this Internal Regulatory Act, describes the activities of the Centre for Social Work in the community, which keeps a record of the children and persons under the age of 26 with developmental delays and disabilities (Article 21). This Act does not include information on registration, however. The development of school registries would be welcome for all students, not just for students with special needs, as this does not presently exist for any groups of students.

Education statistics are collected by a variety of institutions including the Ministry of Education and Science through local representatives. After the recent changes in the Ministry there are no more local representatives. Their responsibilities have been temporarily taken over by the pedagogical inspectors, as well as the services at the community level. The State Statistical Office also collects some special needs education statistics. Ministry of Education data requests are disseminated to mainstream primary schools, special primary schools and institutes. The director of the institution is responsible for the validity of the data at the school level, while the local representative (pedagogical inspector) of the Ministry of Education and Science is also authorised to verify the data. Basic data have to be recorded concerning the current school year including: the total number of students and classes per grade in elementary, central and satellite schools, the place where the central school is located, and organisation of the school with the network of central and satellite schools. (The FYR of Macedonia has a

system of central schools that house the administration and are “legal entities” which also administer certain satellite schools or classes, which can vary in size from one class to an entire school). Information is also collected on the language of instruction in the different schools and for all eight grades in primary central and satellite schools and some other aspects as well. Experts in the field of special education feel that there is a lack of know-how and results in the collection of statistics.

**Table 4.1 Data from special elementary schools: gender, language, grades and total of students (school year 2003/04)**

	I – IV				V – VIII				I - VIII			
	all	f	m	class	all	f	m	class	all	f	m	class
Saint Kliment Ohridski Ses												
Strumica	13	5	8	4	29	9	20	5	42	14	28	9
Central school, Macedonian language												
Maca Ovcarova Ses												
Titov Veles	23	18	5	4	54	41	13	6	77	59	18	10
Central school, Macedonian language												
Dr Zlatan Bre,ac Kisela												
VODA, Skopje	88	68	20	9	87	57	30	10	175	125	50	19
Central school, Macedonian language												
Satellite class, Albanian language												
IDNINA SPS CAIR Skopje	62			8	116			15	178			23
Central school, Macedonian language												
Central school, Albanian Language												
<b>Total for the country</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>61</b>			

Note: Table 4.1 shows four special elementary schools for children with special education needs with enrolments of 472 students. Table 4.2 below shows that 213 children are enrolled in six institutes.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science of FYROM

Table 4.2 **Data from institutes for education and rehabilitation: total students, students by gender, total classes (2003/2004 school year)**

	I – IV				V – VIII				Totals (I – VIII)			
	all	f	M	class	all	f	m	class	all	f	m	class
BITOLA												
KOCO RACIN Institute for Rehabilitation of Children and Youth with Impaired hearing Central School, Macedonian Language,	37	21	16	6	31	22	9	5	68	43	25	11
STRUMICA												
BANJA BANSKO – STRUMICA, Central School, Macedonian language	11	4	7	2	7	3	4	4	18	7	11	6
SKOPJE –GAZI BABA												
RANKA MILANOVIC Institute for Care and Education of Children and Youth, Central School, Macedonian language	10	8	2	1	13	4	9	4	23	12	11	5
SKOPJE - KISELA VODA												
DIMITAR VLAHOV Institute for blind students, Central School, Macedonian Language	8			2	11	7	4	4	19	11	8	6
SKOPJE - CAIR												
Topansko Pole Institute for Rehabilitation of Children and Youth									59	-	-	9
Institute for Care 25 May									26	-	-	3
<b>TOTAL FOR THE COUNTRY</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>40</b>

Source: *ibid*



**Table 4.3 Students per community enrolled in special needs education in special elementary schools, special classes and institutes for education and rehabilitation (school year 2003/04)**

Bitola	126
Veles	89
Vinica	21
Gevgelija	4
Gostivar	24
Delcevo	11
Makedonska Kamenica	10
Kavadarci	19
Kicevo	6
Kocani	8
Kumanovo	63
Negotino	10
Ohrid	60
Prilep	29
Probitip	10
Sveti Nikole	5
Skopje	596
Struga	5
Strumica	62
Tetovo	55
Stip	45
Total	1 258

*Source: ibid*

In total, the data from Table 4.3, collected in a telephone survey, shows that there are 1 258 children from elementary school age with special needs enrolled in the Special Needs Primary Schools, separate classes in the regular schools and in specialised institutions. This represents a small decrease from 1998 in the number of children included in the system of Special Needs Education (1 409 children were enrolled in that year). This phenomenon is assumed to result from the inclusion of students with special needs; most are physically integrated in regular schools attending classes for children with special needs all over the country. Each year, more special needs students are integrated into mainstream classes. The number of special needs students enrolled in special classes is included in the number of special needs students presented in these statistics. It is important to note that statistics do not exist for all children with special education needs included in mainstream classes within mainstream schools. Parents may not want to send their children to the assessment. They fear that their children will be sent to special classes or special schools, which is something they prefer to avoid. Many children with special education needs included in the mainstream classes, are therefore not included in the official statistics of the ministry. Data (for special need students) collected are exclusively from special schools, classes and institutes.

Official statistics, which differ slightly from the data above in Table 4.3, show that the total number of students enrolled in special education in the Republic of Macedonia is 1 095 in 178 classes, including 663 students in special schools and 432 students in 80 attached classes in mainstream schools. Attached classes for children with developmental delays in elementary schools are available in 24 schools in 18 (of 124) municipalities. Only in one school in the country are special needs education classes a part of a mainstream school in parallel with grades 1-8. This school is organised for elementary education of children with moderate intellectual disabilities in the community where the school is situated.

**Table 4.4 Number of employees in special primary schools (school year 2003/04)**

Type of employment	Total
School directors	4
Specialist workers	11
Psychologists	3
Social workers	3
Defectologists	5
Librarian	1
Educators	95
Class Teachers	31
All Day Instruction	8
Educator In A "Day Care"	6
Subject Instruction	42
Educator In Preparatory Class	2
Educators In Hostel	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>

Source: *ibid*

**Table 4.5 Number of employees of special institutes (school year 2003/2004)**

Type of employment	Total
Directors	3
Specialists Workers	9
Pedagogue	3
Physiologist	3
Social Worker	2
Defectologist	1
Education Workers	76
Class Instruction	25
Subject Instruction	34
Educator In Preparatory Classes	2
Educator In Hostel	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>

Source: *ibid*

## School organisation, pedagogy and curriculum

### School organisation

Taking into consideration recent legal decisions, inclusion is indeed possible for children with special education needs. The public awareness campaign and the activities of NGOs, but especially the efforts of the parents have begun to introduce inclusion into a wider context of the primary education system throughout the country. These efforts are evidenced in the decrease of the number of students in special schools and institutes.

In addition, education for children with special needs is available in several special schools throughout the country. Students with visual impairments may attend *Dimitar Vlahov* Institute in Skopje. Students with hearing and speech impairments are educated in the *Kocho Racin* institute in Bitola. For students with physical impairments, another institute exists in Banja BANSKO, Strumica. There are also four special primary schools. While the Internal Regulatory Act legislates that the number of students in the class should be between six and eight, the average number of students per class is above 13. According to official statistics, there are 98 different special education classes in special schools (nine fewer than the previous year). The total number of students enrolled in special elementary schools was 663; this is 149 fewer students than in the previous year. For other children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, or for children with behavioural problems and child offenders, there are five institutes for the entire country.

In the FYR of Macedonia, there are three types of organisation concerning the primary school day. Most schools have a classical (half-day) instructional processes. In almost all cases, half-day (classical) teaching is organised for students between I to IV grades. The second type of organisation is all-day instruction when students, after finishing the regular lessons, continue to have activities with another teacher; usually they do their homework or play and the second teacher does not make any kind of assessment. Some optional, added teaching, or additional activities as well as project work can be organised after regular lessons. Parents also need to pay for lunch. The third type is an all-day teaching process when two teachers work with one class; each with his or her own shift.

Some schools have projects to remove architectural barriers for children with wheelchairs. However, this is an expensive undertaking for the Ministry of Education and Science, especially when taking into consideration the poor condition of many primary schools, which have problems in assuring basic standards for healthy and secure education environments. Given these circumstances, plans for accommodation of special needs students are likely to be considered as additional projects for the future.

## **Curricula**

The Ministry of Education and Physical Culture, Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia published “curriculum for primary education” in 1997 which, in a chapter on theoretical framework and principles discussed the principle of integration of children with developmental obstacles. Policies for students with special education needs were discussed in a section on “Primary upbringing and education of students with developmental barriers”.

In the current primary education system, special schools for students with developmental obstacles may use special curricula other than that in mainstream schools. In the Core Programme for Elementary Education, it is specified that the “basic purpose of this document is to give maximal opportunities to students with special needs”. Students with special needs can acquire appropriate skills for socialisation, the development of positive attitudes and other social values. Special attention is given to the development of life skills and vocational training.

The Bureau for Development of Education (formerly the Pedagogical Institute) has prepared some curricula for certain groups of students; for students with intellectual impairments, impaired hearing or impaired vision. The adviser for special education in the department for teaching plans and programme of the Bureau for Development of Education points out that analysing the teaching plan and programmes is priority for their work. In 2005, they expect to complete developing an evaluation of new teaching plans and programmes that will more successfully address different students' needs and possibilities. Future developments could include a more general teaching framework with greater freedom for responding to special needs, an individual approach and permanent processes of reevaluation for better assessment of and planning for education programmes.

## **Teaching materials**

In the education system, there are up to five approved books that a teacher may select from, for instruction about any one subject in any

particular grade (*i.e.* Macedonian language for grade V). But the changed textbook-publishing environment, with the constrained education budget and the competitive market of many publishers, has created more difficult conditions for small-run textbooks; especially for textbooks for students with special needs and in languages other than Macedonian. Although the need for textbooks in other minority community languages is included in Article 91 of the Law on Elementary Education, no financial support for these publications is provided, presenting a severe difficulty in schools. In previous years, though difficulties were also present, more complete coverage for textbooks for all minorities was available. Previously, some textbooks for elementary school with special needs students were used in special elementary schools and special classes in mainstream elementary schools, including: *Illustrated mathematics* for grade I to IV and *Working Notebook for Mathematics* for grades IV and V, both written by V. Gulicoska-Kalic for intellectually impaired students. A reader for students with impaired hearing, grade II, by L. Tashevska and L. Tasik was also published. Almost 30 years ago, the unique publisher for textbooks and other textual teaching materials at that time, had already published these specialised textbooks.

## Teacher training

Pre-school and primary school class teachers are trained in four-year studies at the Institute for Pedagogy, part of the Philosophical faculty of St Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. The South East University and the State University, both situated in Tetovo, have added some additional teacher-training programmes as well. Teacher training for primary school teachers differs according to the level of primary schooling for which the teacher is preparing: class teaching (grades I-IV) or subject teaching (grades V-VIII). Educators for kindergarten and class teachers are educated at the three teacher-training colleges. Subject teachers (for grades V-VIII in the primary school and in secondary school are educated at different faculties according to the subject studied, adding teacher training studies after two years of subject studies. At the faculty *Kliment Ohridski* in Skopje, pre-school and primary school teachers for class teaching are educated in three languages (Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish). In most cases, students choose teacher-training studies after two years of general studies with pedagogy as an option; they are mainstreamed in the third and fourth years to the teacher-training programme. The South Eastern European University

and the State University, both situated in Tetovo, have added some additional teacher-training programmes as well.

Specialists trained to work with students with disabilities are trained according to the discipline of defectology. They study for four years at the Institute of Defectology, also a part of the Philosophical faculty at the St Cyril's and Methodius University. Defectologists still work in special schools and institutes and are also placed in each special class attached to a mainstream school.

Regular teachers are not educated for work with children with special needs during their initial teacher-training education or have only very brief introductions to the subject. There have been some attempts, in various projects, to develop more training opportunities for mainstream classroom teachers about special needs students, but this is not yet a systematic practice. Teachers are therefore not exposed to issues related to the diverse needs of the disabled and students at risk in an education setting. At the university study programme for psychologists there is an optional subject on psychology of persons with developmental obstacles. Some innovative activities are also being conducted in higher education programmes. At the Institute of Pedagogy, where pedagogues are educated, two subjects are at the planning stage: "Psychology of children with special needs" and "Methodology of teaching children with special needs". Professors from the Institute of Psychology and from the Institute of Defectology will teach these subjects which are efforts to improve special needs education.

## Conclusion

While many challenges remain to be faced in The FYR of Macedonia regarding special needs education, several positive steps forward through project work and policy development can be noted in the last few years. The introduction of new terminology in changes to the Law on Elementary Education (2004) will introduce new thinking about just who special needs children are and can lead to better understanding for the diverse needs of respective schools. Experience within The FYR of Macedonia with attached classes in mainstream schools, a part of a systematic solution planned and financed by MoES, will continue to increase both human capital and institutional frameworks for special needs education. However, as always, continued financial and professional support needs to be assured. Two key elements that could also help to strengthen special needs education are parents' councils and school boards. The addition for a compulsory year of

school preparation in 2003/2004 also bodes well for addressing special education needs at an early age, hopefully taking into account populations from vulnerable groups as well as children with various disabilities. Other important areas to consider are: compensation for pre- school education for children at risk and special needs education plus the introduction of the new curricula and improvement of the teacher-training system (both pre-service and in-service). New directions defined in the Education Strategy 2001-2010 will improve special needs education in the future.

## Chapter 5 – Kosovo

The National Report on “Education Policies for at Risk Students and those with Disabilities” of Kosovo describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as the reform efforts which are underway. Valuable assistance was offered by the Finnish Support to the Development of the Education Sector (FSDEK) and a variety of measures to establish inclusive education were undertaken since 2002. Nevertheless, policies and a legal framework as well as institutional and administrative frameworks still need to be further developed. As is the case with all other reports presented in this book, this account covers the following sections: a short overview of the education system followed by chapters describing the legal framework policies focusing on special groups, statistics and indicators, and the current situation of teacher training, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. The concept of integration and inclusion are central issues and attention is paid to barriers and problems of inclusion and equity in education, to parents’ participation and other support services. The report also refers extensively to the *Strategic Plan for Education of Children with Special Needs in Kosovo*, a document prepared by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in 2003, which describes new strategies and policy development.





## Introduction

After World War II, Kosovo remained under the former-Yugoslavian administration, although the population at large preferred separation or independence. During the post-war years in Kosovo, the Belgrade-led education policy left a vast majority of the population illiterate<sup>15</sup>. Kosovo had just 57 120 students and of the 777 teachers, very few were Kosovars. Some further education rights were granted over the ensuing decades and in 1970 the first university in Kosovo was established. In 1980, the Kosovo education system had 358 521 students and 17 751 teachers and other education workers. However, in 1989 the Serbian government placed a military regime in Kosovo and the education system was suppressed. The population of Kosovo created a political opposition – establishing a parallel structure for education under the Ministry of Education and Culture in Immigration, (now the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) and the Albanian Teachers League of Kosovo. This difficult history of the education system was also affected by the conflict in recent years in Kosovo, during which a majority of the population was internally displaced. This made opportunities for education even more difficult to realise.

Today, the education system includes over 424 000 students and 26 000 teachers and attempts at reform have begun. However, the parallel education system, which separated Albanian Kosovars from Serbian Kosovars from 1990-1998, requires a significant effort to change. In addition, education quality stagnated without contact for over ten years, with developments in Western education theory and practice. The uncertain political status of Kosovo and historical, economic and other factors will not be easily overcome in the reform process.

### Special education system

Disabled persons of Kosovo – estimated at about 150 000 – often live in difficult circumstances, in poverty and isolation and with the social stigma attached to their condition. The special education system in the post-World War II period had four special schools for children of primary and secondary school age. However, children with impairment did not have the possibility of receiving a quality education as we think of it today. The limited

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<sup>15</sup> Strategic Plan for Education Development in Kosovo, 2002-2007, Ministry of Education Science and Technology, January 2003.

enrolment capacities of special schools, especially in rural areas, made the inclusion of the majority of disabled children impossible. Parents were not able to participate in the lives of their children if they did attend school, as schools were often isolated. The special education system therefore developed along a segregated model, with teachers or other specialists classifying the students based on their disabilities. However, at times even children with mild impairments were left entirely out of the education system. They were still considered too “disabled” for school. Consequently, there was a very low level of children with any disabilities in the education system. Today, the vast majority of children with impairments (more than 80%) still do not have access to suitable instruction in education programmes. Slow learners or children in rural regions are also left out of schools.

Governance of the special education system in Kosovo is now divided into four levels: central, regional, municipal and school-level. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) at the central level includes the responsibilities of developing legislation, determining which schools should function as resource centres and deciding on the mission of these resource centres. MEST has a policy of advancing the education of persons with special needs including through inclusive education and through the Special Education Unit. MEST should also adapt job descriptions of teachers, including those who are working with the mobile special education programme, decide on the need for other personnel and ensure the development of staff competencies and appropriate geographical coverage of resource centres and travel to all regions of Kosovo to control the quality of special education efforts. MEST has appointed certain international donors to be leading agencies for projects related to different components of the education system. For special education, the leading agency is the Finnish government programme “Finnish Support for Development of Education in Kosovo (FSDEK)”. They have the task of developing local capacity in special education and providing sustainability of the project and its outcomes. In Kosovo, there is a strong desire to provide a better education for all in partnership with international donors to meet European and world standards.

## **Legal framework**

The constitutional framework for the provisional government, issued by the Special Representative of the General Secretary of the United Nations on 15 May 2001, established a governance system in Kosovo that includes

respect of basic human rights and opposition to all forms of discrimination. Although disability is not specifically mentioned, the constitutional framework in Kosovo officially implements clauses of the United Nations Convention on Human Rights and other documents. The Kosovo government has also signed the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite the unavailability of funds to enable financial and other benefits to children with special needs, there is no lack of good intentions. The government and assembly can approve laws on the rights of persons with special needs along with plans for action that will improve conditions over time. These laws should contain the rights to health and rehabilitation and other supports that enable children with special needs to participate fully in life in the community.

The MEST has developed a legal framework for education reform, announcing a new *Law on Primary and Secondary Education (2002)* and issuing administrative instructions to regulate the functions of education institutions, including actions to provide a better education for all. These efforts will lead MEST from the preliminary stage of reform to the next stage of practical development and implementation of a new education system in Kosovo. In the academic year 2000/2001, preparation for legal and professional infrastructure was made to implement new systems of general, vocational and higher education. A new education structure was established, including decisions on education standards and development of a general curriculum of education.

In the *Law on Primary and Secondary Education*, it is recommended that MEST develop a policy on education for children with special needs that will cover the years up to the end of 2007. This policy should determine the right to special education, administrative procedures for decisions on special education, a procedure for expert evaluation, teaching curricula and pedagogies, advisory and health services for children with special needs, teaching of sign language and the Braille system, categorisation of workers (teachers, child care and day care workers), ministry-sponsored training, common municipal budget and salaries and processes for collecting funds to renovate school infrastructure. In addition, a strategic plan has been developed which is presented below.

## **Policy review focusing on special groups**

According to the *Law on Primary and Secondary Education* “the right for education is provided to *all* children”. Therefore, all children including

those who have impairments and learning difficulties have the right to attend school. Children with hearing and visual impairments, emotional and behavioural disorders, children who have difficulties learning or in communication and language should also be included in schools, although they cannot always achieve the same objectives as other students.

In 1999, many major problems were identified which highlighted the need for changes in the special education system. One was the need to integrate parallel school structures. Other difficulties related to school functioning included a lack of sufficient course subjects, an unsatisfactory level of achievement (especially in pre-school and higher education) and out-of-date teacher-training curricula that do not encourage quality in the teaching process. Teachers in special schools are not trained in teaching according to more up-to-date, disability-specific methodologies (including teaching of blind students and students with hearing impairments). Schools have poor infrastructure and education materials in terms of both quantity and quality (*i.e.* schools and classrooms, desks and chairs as well as audio-visual equipment, textbooks, teaching materials and hearing aids). Kosovo does not have many interpreters in the newly developed sign language. Diagnosis and classification of children is insufficiently implemented, in part due to a lack of experts. Transportation is often not available, even for children who have severe impairments. Students with special needs are seldom included in the process of education and limited budgets do not allow for successful implementation of special education reforms. In addition, there is no government policy for special education, nor are there research institutions for issues related to education for persons with special needs. Finally, the community lacks awareness about special education issues and the low level of economic development results in many other difficulties.

All of these problems and difficulties are converted into objectives of the MEST in the five-year development plan, partially described in part four of the strategic plan below. Achievements in this reform will also depend on the efforts of other organisations of the government of Kosovo. Moving towards a child-focused perspective for children with special needs will require the involvement of the Ministry of Health Services, the Ministry of Social Labour, relevant local and international organisations, parents, higher education institutions, the media and others. While some children may always remain out of the school system because of the difficulties in overcoming different impairments and learning disabilities, the establishment of the Kosovo government and the MEST has aided in advancing special education. The special education unit of the MEST has also completed a plan for establishing attached classrooms in all regions of Kosovo, which will function in regular schools.

## Definitions and categorisation of persons with special needs

The MEST, in co-operation with the Finnish Support for Development of Education in Kosovo (FSDEK) and some participants from organisations of persons with disabilities, has prepared a terminological dictionary regarding the definition of “disabled persons.” Children with developmental delays or hearing, speech, visual or physical impairments or emotional or behavioural disorders are all considered persons with special needs. This definition of children with special needs accommodates new perspectives on the abilities of all children to perform many activities not previously thought possible in accordance with their level of learning capacity. The term “special needs” is used in order to underline the required support needs pertaining to their rights to care and protection in order to assure their optimum development from birth to adulthood. In the Albanian language, the term most often used for people with disabilities is *syntagm*, meaning “impaired people” or “disabled people”. These terms are still used in Albania. In Kosovo, people also say “children with special needs”. Another term showing a different perspective is “persons with difficulties in development”.

Categorisation of children with special needs shall be done in the future through a diagnostic centre or by a team of specialists (including doctors, neuro-psychiatrists, psychologists, social assistants and other specialists of different areas). This centre will give the school a functional profile of the child, to be reviewed at regular intervals, including their current status and capacities, impairment level and type, developmental possibilities, limitations, strengths and weaknesses and indications for treatment. On this basis, the school would draft an individualised education programme with relevant information for the teacher.

## Inclusive education, attached classes and special education in Kosovo

In Kosovo, the education of children with special needs is being realised within the framework of an inclusive education system. Inclusion is an education philosophy according to which *all* students with disabilities have the right to participate in the education, social, recreational and professional activities of their community together with their peers. This is a new philosophy in Kosovo, demanding considerable effort to support individuals for full participation, distinct from providing segregated services for persons with impairments. Below is a brief overview of the understanding in Kosovo of these concepts with comments on recent developments.

*Inclusive Education* means providing education for children with special needs within the mainstream education system in classrooms with other

children. This model recognises that all students have the same right for support and that the education system can implement teaching methods that fulfil the needs of *all* students while respecting the distinctions between their needs related to age, gender, ethnic background, language, socio-economic background, impairments and other characteristics. In the fight against discrimination, the mainstream school has a role to play in providing education for all – creating a community in which children with special needs can feel comfortable. Mainstream inclusive schools can provide an effective education for a considerable number of students, thereby reducing expansion of the segregated education system.

*Attached classes* in mainstream schools include pilot projects on the implementation of new inclusive education programmes. Attached classrooms (at least one in each region) will develop appropriate models and procedures for inclusion in the future and will be encouraged to gradually transform into resource centres that support inclusive education. Their purpose is to advance the idea of an inclusive approach, encouraging and assisting inclusive education development in the daily activities in the classroom. Regular schools with attached classes are the main beneficiaries of the development and implementation of special education policy in Kosovo.

*Special Schools* remain participants in the process of development and policy implementation for inclusive education and are the only schools at present where a pronounced interest in inclusive education can be witnessed. Included in recent policy developments is the conversion of these schools into possible resource centres for further development of inclusive education (a model used in many developed countries, including Finland, is described further below). These schools can also provide support in the development of human resources for inclusive schools.

### **Implementing inclusive education: the role of resource centres**

Special schools will gradually be transformed into resource centres in two stages. First, in a transitional phase in which teachers in special schools are responsible for the integration of students with disabilities into regular schools. Special teachers' duties would be redefined to include: teaching in the class or special school, itinerant teaching for children with special needs in the region and development and research duties. Teachers are therefore still engaged in their classes, in contact with the daily process of education of children with special needs. Teachers can team teach, allowing for one teacher to have a day off for other research tasks, while the other teacher can teach. This model takes into consideration current competencies within the

special school and will evolve, through professional and system developments, towards a more permanent resource centre model.

In a second model, the school is divided into departments, with some teachers teaching in the resource centre and others as itinerant teachers or in the regular education process. Other experts are also involved in the teaching process. A rehabilitation group, which consists of health personnel and therapists, is engaged in healthcare and student rehabilitation. There is also a publication unit which provides teaching material. In the places where the integration of the students with visual impairments is implemented, other students with disabilities who attend special schools also attend education process in the local schools.

The concept of the “resource centre” is central to the implementation of inclusive education and policy throughout the west and in Kosovo. With the goal of establishing an effective approach toward inclusion, the resource centre should ensure that their professional functions meet the special needs of students. Resource centres should assist in organising schools to meet the needs of students with disabilities in education, carrying out assessments as well as remedial training programmes and playing a role in ensuring the medical, health and therapeutic needs of the students. Preparation of a teaching and learning model for children with special needs in the mainstream education system is essential, including in-service training for all teachers of students with special needs.

Together with parents and with other programme specialists, resource centres should prepare, monitor and support the implementation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Professional courses for students, teachers, parents, personnel and other persons in need should also be organised. Teaching materials should be developed and produced, along with learning materials that are valuable for individual students. The schools and centres should ensure they are well prepared to train personnel within the resource centre through continuing education and information sharing. Resource centres can also support research and add to the quality of activities within the centre and beyond, through conferences, seminars, publications and the Internet, as well as through co-operation with the education faculty of the university and MEST. Schools should also build a network of teachers and professionals, including groups of teachers, schools and colleagues. A special network (called “Net”) should establish expertise on impairments outside the school, including groups of experts for evaluation. The “Net” should co-ordinate in-service training, actively co-ordinate and monitor the IEP, produce materials, develop teaching methods and conduct seminars and training courses. They should also undertake awareness campaigns, research, quality control and development of the network and encourage extra-curricular activities as well as stimulate the group. The Net should



deliver information and assist overall in improving the level of special education in Kosovo. Finally, through international co-operation, the schools and centres should keep abreast of ideas from the local, national and international levels in order to develop along with neighbouring countries.

The resource centre models presented here illustrate how tools for the construction and functioning of the inclusive education system in Kosovo can work. Inclusive education without the use of resource centres creates concerns for municipalities that may already be overloaded with responsibilities. In many countries (such as Denmark and Norway), the central resource team makes varied use of the competencies that are focused within the centre to increase the capacities of teachers and the staff. Through the Internet and different departments (medical, psychological, therapeutic, etc.) resource centres have extended their bases to cover all student needs. According to the education law, MEST should develop plans and facilities for special needs education. MEST can assist in the establishment of resource centres in Kosovo by issuing government policies on how these centres will be organised.

### ***Roles of a resource centre: a Finnish model from a school from Juvaskala for children with visual impairments***

*Teaching and research:* Teachers should organise courses for students in the resource centre, compiling teaching materials and preparing the IEP for all participants. Teachers should co-operate with other educators and experts in the implementation of the course, participate in the planning of the students' transitions and in career guidance for students and prepare an assessment and other reports in the regular schools and for parents. Teachers should evaluate needs, participate in the planning and preparation of materials and, if needed, provide special support during tests. Teachers should also develop information resources for teachers in inclusive schools through the development and production of education materials for distance learning, visits for the inclusive school teachers to the resource centres and plan and utilise courses (e.g. continuous learning for adult learners).

*Co-operation, networking and information sharing:* Co-operation with other education professionals should take place both within the resource centre and throughout the students' schools and municipalities. Co-operation with school authorities, welfare authorities and hospitals should also take place regularly. Networking and co-operation with other special schools, resource centres and NGOs, school administrators, providers of supporting tools, hospitals and other services and should be included. Participation in local education, national and international information sharing efforts in the special education field is essential. Other activities may include participation

in courses and conferences as a specialist and participation in other activities within the special education field is encouraged.

*Supportive roles:* Information on assistive options and support with assistive devices, evaluation of needs and adaptation in the education environment. Organisation of transportation to the resource centre may be required. Teachers are also responsible for recording student information, travel reports, statement reports and articles on special education.

*Public Awareness:* Awareness efforts should extend to students' homes, friends and the entire community. Community awareness efforts are conducted through school visits, home visits, telephone calls and letters and through special periods of assistance at the resource centre. Lectures in the resource centre in the municipality are also held on pedagogical issues, social conditions, education possibilities and issues services for the student including medical issues.

## School organisation

### Pre-school education

In Kosovo, pre-school education can take place in kindergartens for children from nine months to six years of age. A school preparatory year is held for children aged five to six years old. The current pre-school system in Kosovo is not very well developed, lacks a formal curriculum and has many different programmes – only some of which are state-run. Some pre-school education institutions have begun to include children with special needs. As an example, in the Gjilan municipality, one educator was recently employed primarily for the education of children with special needs. In any one group of children, two children with special needs can be included, although this just is an example of inclusion, there is not a systematic inclusive strategy for children in these schools. To successfully begin inclusion of children with special needs in pre-school institutions in Kosovo, identification should be done early, in order to ensure the possibility for education and rehabilitation. For children, rehabilitation is also done in co-operation with NGOs such as “Handikos” and different other associations that represent people with special needs.

## Primary education

Possibilities for students with disabilities to attend school have increased. They can now attend courses in special schools, attached classrooms or regular classrooms. The number of attached classrooms is being increased quickly. However, a great number of students with different impairments who are not in school remains. In Kosovo, there are seven special schools: five for children with intellectual impairments, one school for children with hearing impairments and one for children with vision impairments. There is no school for children with physical or other impairments. However, “Handikos” has a programme for children with physical impairments and their families. There are two schools for children with sensory impairments (visual and hearing impairments), which are today equipped to meet European standards. However, there remains a deficit of hearing aids and other hearing assistive devices in the school for children with hearing difficulties. Unfortunately, schools for children with intellectual impairments have not had significant financial support for equipment or other materials.

All special schools have teachers who participated in training for professional development or TESFA (Towards an Effective School for All) held by FSDEK (Finnish Support to the Development of Education Sector in Kosovo) and defectologists who teach skills for students with different impairments. A number of experts are being trained as trainers or itinerant teachers. While the number of attached classes is being increased, existing resources are stretched. New trainees are now in professional development; 70 specialist teachers will be trained up until 2007 within the TESFA programme with some students receiving scholarships for Masters and Doctoral Degrees in special education studies from FSDEK in co-operation with the University of Juvaskula, Finland. Efficient use of human resources will be indispensable to continue on a positive course.

The number of attached classes, as was mentioned, is growing very quickly. Currently (15 March 2004), there are 36 classes functioning at the primary level and 11 new classes are in development with an additional eight already planned – a total of 55 classes, all at the primary level. Two of these classes are for students with hearing impairments. Two other classes are for children with multiple impairments and others are for students with intellectual impairments. Setting up attached classes is one step towards inclusion. The main goal is to give the children necessary competencies to attend regular classes with their peers. In the transitional phase, immediate support is planned for the teachers in the attached classes to be supported by teachers from special schools.

## Secondary vocational education

Unemployment and a lack of income-generating activities are fundamental problems for the majority of persons with disabilities and their families. At the same time, in Kosovo society during the transition and reconstruction period there has been a very high rate of unemployment in the general population (as high as 70%). It is assumed that persons with disabilities face the highest rate of unemployment. Vocational education is therefore a crucial issue for the incorporation of persons with disabilities into society, without which people with disabilities will not have real opportunities in the labour market. In the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, there were some professions set aside for persons with disabilities – for example persons with visual impairments were trained to work on phone switchboards as operators – but because of new technology these persons are now unemployed. Today, it is essential to find appropriate employment for these persons. In some countries, efforts in employment have paid off. For example, persons with intellectual impairments are trained to work in restaurants and persons with physical impairments or hearing impairments work with computers.

There are currently just three options for vocational education of persons with special needs in Kosovo. *Lef Nosi*, a school for persons with intellectual impairments, has 22 students. Their main concentration is on the textile industry, though the school plans to open another new option for car-washing. *Xheladin Deda* in Peja is a school for persons with hearing impairments where 15 students are training to be physiotherapists. *Nënë Tereza* in Prisen is a school for persons with hearing impairments where 28 students are learning skills such as auto-mechanics, graphic design and computer and textile skills.

It will be very important to select other fields of study for vocational education appropriate for Kosovo. Kosovo has a tradition of school-based vocational training but other models could also be appropriate. School-based training gives effective support to persons with special needs. However, instructional costs are one problem with this model. Another option is sheltered workshops which also provide support for persons with special needs and can, at times, be the only possibility for persons with moderate and severe impairments to find work. Students can also be in a combined programme, called a “sandwich” programme, in which they move from school-based vocational education to internships and back to school-based training for review. This model allows the school to keep costs down, offering theoretical education without materials or machinery and students enjoy the opportunity to try out their skills. Finally, students can also learn through work experience, as is common in Germany. For example, in this

work experience students gain theoretical work in other institutions for vocational training. Students are usually motivated by this possibility because it is practical and less theoretical (Markku Aunola, Student's Learning Material for the Development of Vocational Education and Training, 2003).

In April 2003, several experts for vocational education from Kosovo had a one-week seminar for special education chaired by a Finnish expert, during which they outlined five priority issues that should be developed at the national level for secondary vocational education: completion and approval of the law and regulations for the education of people with disabilities; terminology, approach and employment categories.; inter-ministerial co-operation; support for employment and on-going vocational training. These measures should be taken into consideration, with an understanding of the economic limitations of the education system in Kosovo, to create the strategy and policies for vocational and special education. Policies for vocational education of people with special needs should follow the same framework as the general vocational education system as well as the policy on special education, with the goal of including persons with special needs in the general system of education and in the society.

## **Statistics and indicators**

Data are not regularly compiled in Kosovo on the number of children with special needs, especially for children of school age who are *not* in the education system, even at the primary level. Information regarding the number of children with special needs in Kosovo is an important precondition for the development of education planning in the future. The Special Education Unit of MEST collects data related to children with special needs in special schools, in attached classrooms in regular schools and for inclusive classes. Data collection will be more effective through multidisciplinary co-operation, including input from health organisations, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and workers of community-based rehabilitation programmes in addition to schools.

According to the general education statistics in Kosovo during the academic year 2003/2004 about 424 000 students attended school. About 14 000 were in pre-school education, 330 000 in primary school and 80 000 students in secondary school. If we take the worldwide average of persons with special needs of 2-3%, we could conclude that there are more than

12 000 students with mild to severe impairments. There are, however, insufficient numbers of special schools and attached classrooms. This alone can be considered one obstacle to the provision of minimal conditions for educating these students.

### Students with special needs in special schools and attached classrooms

According to the Information System for Education Management (ISEM), a joint project of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the World Bank, in the academic year 2001/2002 (October 2001) Kosovo had seven special schools and seven attached classrooms in regular schools – the total therefore being 14 units with 503 students; 343 (68%) were male whereas 160 (32%) were female. In 1999, there were just four special schools and two attached special classes in regular schools that had a total of 400 students with different impairments and 60 teachers. In 2002 a new category, children with multiple impairments, was also included in the data collection. This year was also the year of the establishment of the Kosovo government and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. During the school year 2002/2003, the number of attached classrooms increased as 30 attached classrooms in 30 municipalities of Kosovo were established. In the region of Pristina, eight additional attached classrooms were opened. From the table below it is evident that participation of females increased from 32% in 2001 to 38% in 2002/2003. From 2003/2004 statistics it can be seen that the number of students has increased from just 503 in October 2001 to 1 046 students in 2003/2004. Figure 1 illustrates this increase in the number of students with special needs, by type of impairment, in schools from 2001-2004.

Table 5.1 Number of students according to gender and type of impairment (2001-2004)

	2001/2002 (October 2001)			2001/2002 (April 2002)			2002/2003			2003/2004		
	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	Total	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	Total	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	Total	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	Total
Impairment Type												
.Intellectual Impairment	221	96	317	215	92	307	320	161	481	330	192	522
Hearing Impairment	89	49	138	87	46	133	137	113	250	152	113	265
Visual Impairment	33	15	48	27	10	37	22	13	35	33	19	52
Multiple Impairment	n/a	n/a	n/a	17	24	41	12	11	33	124	83	207
Impairment Total	343	160	503	346	172	518	491	298	789	639	407	1 046

Source: Information System for Education Management (ISEM), the MEST-World Bank project

Figure 5.1 Inclusion of children with special needs qualified based on data from 2001-04

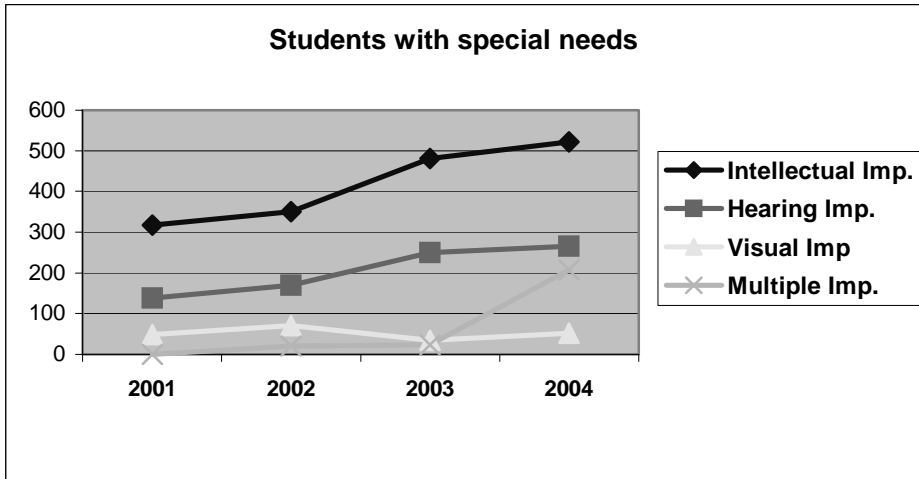


Table 5.2 illustrates that special education in Kosovo is conducted in seven special schools and in 45 attached classrooms with a total of 1 052 students in 2004. Males represent approximately 61% of the total number of students. Roughly half of students in attached classrooms have intellectual impairments.

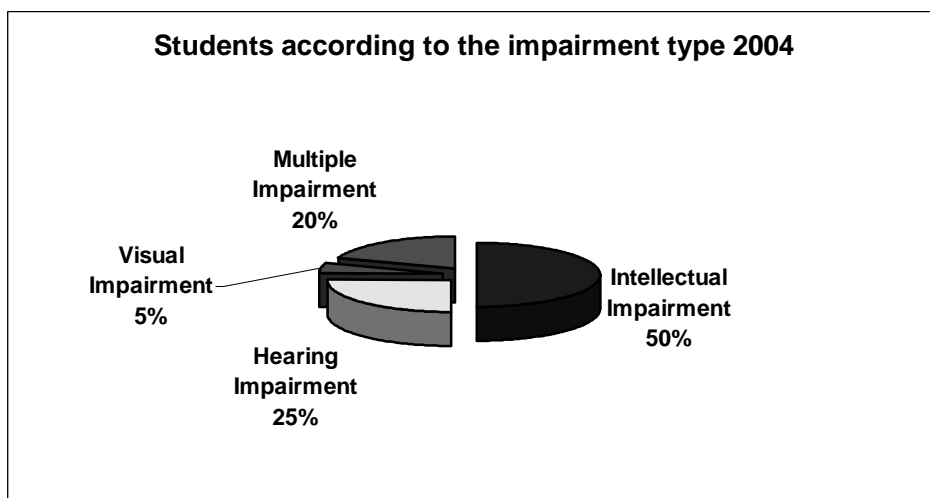
Table 5.2 Number of special schools, attached classrooms and students according to impairments (2004)

Impairment Type	Special Schools	Attached Classrooms	Students		
			male	female	total
Intellectual Impairment	5	4	330	192	522
Hearing Impairment	1	8	152	113	265
Visual Impairment	1	2	33	19	52
Multiple Impairment	0	31	124	83	207
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>1 046</b>

Source: Information System for Education Management (ISEM), the MEST-World Bank project

Figure 5.2 presents the number of students according to the type of impairments, expressed in percentages. It is seen that over 50% of children have intellectual impairments, 25% have hearing impairments, 20% have multiple impairments and 5% have visual impairments.

Figure 5.2 Students according to the type of impairment (in percentages)



### Children with special needs attending regular schools in Kosovo

Also according to the statistics of Information System for Education Management (ISEM), the MEST-World Bank project, students with special needs account for more than 2.5% of the total school population in the regular education system. However, it is important to note that impairments for these children were categorised and classified by teachers or parents and not by experts. According to these statistics, 11 878 students with special needs are in regular schools, with 1 605 in secondary schools. The table below shows the number of students with special needs from aged 7-14 years (primary cycle) that are included in regular schools in Kosovo.

Table 5.3 The number of students with special needs attending regular schools

School Cycle	male	female	Total
Pre-school	227	190	417
Primary	5 245	4 611	9 856
Secondary	956	649	1 605
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 428</b>	<b>5 450</b>	<b>11 878</b>

Source: Information System for Education Management (ISEM), the MEST-World Bank project

The table gives us a high number of students with different impairments who attend regular school. It is possible that the teachers did not categorise the children as others might: students with even very mild visual



impairments (*i.e.* with glasses) may have been included as children with visual impairments. Similarly, students who have any very mild physical impairments could be categorised as having physical impairments and slow learners are included as having intellectual impairments. It may therefore be possible to assume that these students have mild impairments and are students who can attend school regularly, without any significant difficulties, along with other students.

### **Children with special needs who *do not* attend school in the region of Pristina**

Data for children with impairments are also collected from NGOs in certain cases. However, this data is not always coherent across organisations since different methodologies are used, different categories of special needs are employed and sufficient human resources to identify and evaluate these children are lacking. However, some research has been done. According to the results from CRIC (*Centro Regionale d'Intervento per la Cooperazione*) which monitored families with disabled children in the municipality of Pristina on 8 July 2001; the organisation “Handikos” (the number of children with physical impairment); OXFAM (the number of children with hearing impairment) and through other organisations dealing with disabled persons, data have been collected on children for the region of Pristina. There were 371 children between 7-14 years of age who have no education or inadequate education, children out of the school system, as identified by these NGOs. However, data are assured only for the region of Pristina and it is possible that there are greater numbers in Pristina and elsewhere.

Table 5.4 shows the population of children with special needs from the ages 7-14 years who do *not* attend school. Because there has been no reliable population data for Kosovo since 1990, we do not have data on total numbers of children in the population as a whole. Through data collection on the number of children in the region of Pristina, general data on the percentage of children with special needs who do not attend school in the whole territory of Kosovo could eventually be deduced. In the following table, the number of children with special needs in seven municipalities of the region of Pristina is presented, with the classification based on the type of impairment. From the table, it can be seen that the number of children with physical impairments and multiple impairments is evidently larger than the number of children with visual, hearing and intellectual impairments.

**Table 5.4 The number of children with special needs in the region of Pristina, who are not enrolled in schools**

Municipality	Number of children					Total
	Hearing Impairment	Mental Impairment	Physical Impairment	Visual impairment	Multiple Impairment	
Pristinë	9	6	42	7	60	124
Podujevë	7	21	74	1	20	123
Obiliq	2	3	18		7	30
Fushë Kosovë	2	3	10		10	25
Glogovc	5	0	23		0	28
Shtime	3	0	5		6	14
Lipjan	2	2	10		13	27
Total	30	35	182	8	116	371

*Source:* This data is from several NGOs, CRIC, Handikos, OXFAM, and research of FSDEK.

## Strategic plan for education of children with disabilities

The following is a summary and overview of the *Strategic Plan for Education of Children with Special Needs in Kosovo*, a recent document establishing the vision, mission and goals of the reform process. The document was prepared by the special education unit of MEST in collaboration with international experts (FSDEK) and was approved by MEST in 2003. These goals will be met through various strategies and implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

The vision of education policy for persons with special needs is inclusion. The plan states that “students with disabilities should be integrated in regular classes instead of segregating them in special schools”. Kosovo is aware of the fact that this will be a long and difficult process, perhaps taking ten years or more. Implementation will be done based on a step-by-step approach. MEST, in co-operation with FSDEK, compiled the policies, law and education curriculum for students with special needs in Kosovo. Experts are being trained for the future of special education including on policy implementation, though few trained experts are currently in key positions. Special-school teachers are being trained as well as teachers from regular schools. Another important step in accomplishing these goals is the training of other persons who come into contact with these children, such as medical personnel, social workers and even education policy makers; all of whom could benefit from further education. Accomplishments of these past few years are just the beginning – a great deal remains to be done.

With the goal of rationalising finances and reducing the administrative staff in special primary and secondary schools with residential programmes, MEST has started the integration of children with special needs into regular schools, establishing new integrated classes in all 30 municipalities of Kosovo. The effort for developing a system for education of children with special needs will require every school to establish similar conditions and environments towards achieving the following goals:

- Goal 1: Providing education for all.
- Goal 2: Providing school space that corresponds to the needs of the children (*i.e.* with ramps and special toilets) in all schools with special classes.
- Goal 3: Achieving acceptable learning results in accordance with international standards at all levels of education.
- Goal 4: Encouraging parents and the society to support special needs education.
- Goal 5: Teacher training for special education.
- Goal 6: Adapting the school curriculum.
- Goal 7: Developing appropriate pedagogy.
- Goal 8: Informing the public about the results and difficulties in the system of education.

### **Goal 1: Providing education for all**

The Ministry of Education will work continually to enrol students in the appropriate school levels without reference to gender, ethnicity, religion or socio-economic background. Identification, diagnosis, treatment and education of children with special needs are in the long-term strategy of MEST, which has centralised special education efforts, planning to create an equal and professional approach for all and gradually integrating these children into regular education and into society. To achieve these goals in inclusive education, there is a need to pursue an equal approach in education for all students with disabilities and at all levels of education. Also necessary are approval of inclusive education legislation and a clear plan of education for all. Engaging teachers of special education will be essential for implementation. Support for early intervention in education with the help of

pre-school institutions is also required. Capacity building for staff, institutional and human resources, training for inclusive education and supporting teachers who are working in different settings will be needed to implement quality education. In addition, supporting effective research, providing equipment and appropriate space for effective learning and ensuring that education support is appropriate for all students are all necessary. Increased awareness of inclusive education in accordance with principles of human rights will help in establishing a supportive community.

It is essential that MEST has a strategy to include all marginalised children in the education system. Each student should be provided with appropriate conditions for quality learning throughout their life without consideration of their nationality, gender, religion or capability. Two steps are needed to achieve these goals. First, the incorporation of children with special needs into the education system through establishment of attached classes and second, the inclusion of children with special needs into regular classes in these schools. Within each municipality, at least one “learning class” involving approximately ten students of different ages with different disabilities shall be opened. Incorporation of children with special needs who are out of school will involve identification and categorisation based on their disability. Children with physical disabilities will attend education in one of the special classes for a half-shift of special education and half-shift of regular education. Qualified supporting special teachers with the capacity to give a functional diagnosis of the student, to verify the disability level and to put the student’s abilities into evidence should be a tool for the integration of these children into regular schools.

## **Goal 2: Providing school space that corresponds to the needs of the children**

This goal is to develop the school setting through the expansion or accommodation of school infrastructure (ramps, toilets, etc.) for students with special needs. In this process and in future phases, the priority will be the improvement of school infrastructure for special needs students. All schools, until now, have been appropriate only for non-disabled persons. To avoid barriers, existing schools should construct new annexes to adapt the schools or incorporate other solutions into older facilities. Based on evaluations in the field, more than 200 schools have been reconstructed with the support of international organisations, but only a few schools have been adapted for students with wheelchairs. Projects for improving school space are very expensive. However, some funds will likely be provided from the consolidated budget of Kosovo, other alternative resources and through donors. For instance, German Caritas donated funds for the reconstruction of

the special school “Mother Tereza” in Prishtine. In 2002, MEST invested in equipment including ramps and special toilets in 30 schools where there are special classes – one in each of the municipalities of Kosovo. As a result, there was an increase of shifts during the day from one to two, an extension of the working hours for teachers and students in the school and improvement of working conditions including learning, teaching and safety. There was also special equipment for students with hearing and visual impairments.

### **Goal 3: Achieving acceptable learning results in accordance with international standards at all levels of education**

To achieve quality in special education, there is currently preparation for curriculum improvement and the development of education standards. This is to specifically encourage the achievements of students with special needs according to level of education and type of impairment. In addition, Kosovo is currently in a development phase for the use of individual education plans. Development of a new national education curriculum, in harmony with world standards, will be undertaken for all levels and classes. These curricula will include subject fields for primary level offering resources (textbooks, technological equipment, library network, etc.) that will provide opportunities for students to be equipped with new skills and knowledge necessary for the challenges of daily life.

The special education service will co-operate with governmental and non-governmental associations and associations of persons with disabilities with the aim of sharing experiences useful in developing a new curriculum, developing standards, teacher training and training of other personnel for all activities and projects in the service of special education. The results of these efforts will be an increased number of students with special needs in the education system, increased efficiency of work placements after secondary vocational school, more graduates successfully meeting the challenges of daily life with individual creativity and avoiding inefficiencies in the education system resulting from a lack of professionalism, discrimination and even corruption.

### **Goal 4: Encouraging parents and society in general to support special education**

Schools, in order to be successful, should be supported by the community. The school should be open towards society in general and should strive for increased inclusion of parents in school decision-making. This will include the establishment of a parent council at the school,

municipality and central (MEST) level to represent the interests of parents in the education system. The current law for primary and secondary education determines the rights of parents as follows:

- Creates good co-operation between students, parents, schools, institutions and working places to ensure that their children will be educated in harmony with this law.
- A way to present complaints to the teacher, school director, municipality and to MEST regarding the quality of education.
- Creates a directory for the school staff and services; and participation in the election of the school council.

Reforms toward inclusive education are more successful when parents are invited as partners to plan education in each school. Parents also play an important role in the structuring of education goals for their children. They are the most familiar with their child's personality, capacities, difficulties and favourite activities. Parents should be invited to be involved in curriculum development at school. They should be convinced that they are a very important factor in solving the difficulties of the students and especially in contributing to the development of the individual education plan (IEP). Parents and educators should continually ask themselves "How should we prepare our children to play, work, learn independently and survive now and in the future?". Planning, modifying and applying the individual education plan will be more effective if efforts out-of-school are included as well. In other words, parents should be aware of basic methods of supporting their child's development and learning in the home environment and neighbourhood.

It is recommended that the ministry also considers the following types of parent involvement: Parent councils should be established in all vocational schools and schools with attached classes, following the proposal of the draft law for education. The MEST should consult parents for new curricula and integration efforts in regular schools. MEST should request that all vocational schools establish a teacher code of conduct presenting the name of the teacher and their contact address in case of a need for parents to contact them with questions or complaints. MEST should also develop better working and learning environments in formal institutions where the parents feel incorporated into the education of their children and recognise the educator as partner. Parents should be included in voluntary work in the classroom – performing such tasks as reading, supporting and developing materials, keeping the school environment clean or donating financial support to improve programmes. Lastly, MEST can support schools so that

they can publish information leaflets for better communication with parents and the community.

In Kosovo, support from relatives and friends is also crucial, because the formal education sector is not currently able to provide all necessary support. Case-by-case assistance is necessary to each family which includes children with impairments; families should not be left out of from society, especially from everyday social contacts with neighbours, essential for children and all members of the family. Teachers should encourage parents to provide opportunities for their children to have contact with their peers. All children, even those with serious impairments (such as children with cerebral palsy) can also take part in activities. For example, if other boys are playing football in the street, involvement could mean that the boy with a wheelchair observes the game and after each goal his role is to drop the ball. The other boys could be informed about cerebral palsy and later they can adapt an inclusive attitude and imagine how to include him in other activities. Everyday duties in daily life are also important for children's development, providing positive activities for children with special needs. Adults can also help children with impairments to have a meaningful role in the daily activities of the family.

Effective results in special education will reflect the development of the society, economy, culture, science and society. MEST will be very open toward the public, requesting support from different segments of society – parents, the private sector and experts from different public and cultural fields. This will create awareness and positive attitudes towards education for children with special needs and will mobilise efforts in education for all children with special needs in Kosovo.

### **Goal 5: Teacher training for special education**

The Finnish Group for the Support of Development of Education in Kosovo (FSDEK) has organised training within the regional service for teacher trainers in five regions of Kosovo. This is a part of the programme to increase school capacity. Training for teacher trainers began in autumn 2001 and continued up until 2004. FSDEK trained 16 regional trainers and these trainers trained more than 300 teachers during the school year 2002/2003. During these training sessions, they focused on the training of 130 other teachers as well as other personnel in the schools where there are new special courses. In order to ensure sustainability for training on inclusive education, MEST also contracted 14 trainers and paid their compensation during the past two years.

In addition, it is recommended that the ministry uphold the idea of a Faculty on Pedagogy as the institution responsible for teacher training

related to the education of children with disabilities. In addition, a pedagogic institution should develop a teaching practicum as part of the teacher-training curriculum. MEST can co-operate with special schools in order to provide practical learning for teacher trainees. Changes in the curriculum for teacher training and emphasis of the issue of children with special needs and modern learning and teaching approaches are also recommended. MEST can request support from FSDEK to be involved in teacher training in order to utilise the model TESFA-B (training for trainers) for at least one core group of local trainers, based on key municipalities for providing sustainability in the long term. Finally, MEST can support the Working Group FSDEK with the development and support of education policies, professional development for trainers and policy researchers, training in the process of school improvement and development and presentation of a working draft for this project to the minister.

## **Goal 6: Adaptation of the school curriculum**

Based on the law for primary and secondary education in Kosovo and the new curriculum framework in Kosovo, special education fulfils individual needs for children with special needs as part of the regular education system. However, the subject content and fund of hours do not correspond to the general education system and the new curriculum framework of Kosovo. An expert from special education is engaged in drafting and compiling the standards of pre-school education in Kosovo. This includes a curriculum for an inclusive policy requiring that all students in special schools, attached classes and special and integrated classes meet the same requirements of the core curriculum as students in the regular schools but based on the individual education plan.

Also, the establishment of an *Expert Working Group for Special Education* was proposed for the academic year 2003/2004 that will eventually take part in the development of both an inclusive curriculum and the special education curriculum. This group will participate in the consultation and evaluation of the expert groups for curriculum development according to subject fields. All adaptations and expansions of curricula must be defined in the IEP. There is no specific curriculum for special education, as students with special education have different needs and learning impairments. The same programme cannot be effective for all. The core of the curriculum should be modified partially. This is the reason why the special education teacher should evaluate the capacities and learning difficulties of the students and prepare individual plans. Individual education plans follow the core curriculum as much as possible, but individual objectives of learning can be modified based on the realistic possibilities for achievement of the students. Currently, planning of the subject content for



different fields has begun for inclusive subjects, professional subjects and in pre-school education. According to a draft curriculum for grades II, VII and XI, three experts from special education should take part in inclusive subjects for each grade including one expert for hearing impairments, one expert for intellectual impairments and one expert for visual impairments.

An expert for intellectual impairments will draft the programmes for prevention, as well as social and health care of children with intellectual impairments. In more advanced levels, the main goals will be to develop life and social skills, language skills, elementary mathematic concepts, knowledge of the environment, development of awareness and other musical and artistic abilities and development of health through physical activities. In this phase, students should develop learning abilities at a primary education level including reading, writing and arithmetic. In secondary school, students from this category are usually prepared for craft professions according to the needs of the labour market.

An expert for visual impairments will draft a curriculum for students with visual impairments and their integration into regular schools. Alternative forms of reading and writing, including Braille for blind students, large print textbooks and recorded books should be included. In secondary schools, students learn from content similar to that in primary school; integration of these students in the society and schools should be done through additional subjects. These can include information technology, which is the same as in regular schools, with blind students working with assistive technology and the Internet. Orientation and mobility teaches independent moving skills. For blind students, this can include learning how to use a white cane for independent movement. Housework and home economics teaches skills for daily life – cooking, dressing, practical life skills and personal hygiene. A physiotherapist has the goal of preparing students for technical professions. Massage therapy is one employment possibility after graduation. Further education in higher education is also possible. Telephone enterprise courses have the goal of preparing students for telephone call centres, especially digital ones. Technicians for wood processing, furniture fitting and basket weaving teach these particular crafts for the labour market.

An expert for hearing impairments will draft a curriculum with basic skills on speech development and sign language for students with hearing impairments. Deaf students learn from content similar to that in primary education. In secondary schools, these students will be integrated into regular schools whereas students with severe hearing impairments can continue in professional education and in further education. A number of students who develop good skills should be encouraged to continue on to

higher education. There should be no limitations as to what people with disabilities can achieve.

### ***Education plan and amount of teaching hours***

The education plan of the class should correspond to the appropriate learning environment; including ongoing reinforcement in the development of language, math and other subject skills. Often, teachers of classes for children with special needs, attached classes and special classes are not strictly following the education plan-fund of hours (shifts) as outlined by the law on primary and secondary education. In these classes, not all teachers follow the education plan and the fund of hours for regular education. Most teachers are working for the first time with students with special needs and still do not have sufficient training for education plans and fund of hours for these classes. In the law for primary and secondary education (chapter VII) it is said that students in special education should have the same number of hours in total compared with other students. The central education authority concerning special education outlines the structure of compulsory subjects and the activities in the curriculum, the maximum number of hours per week for a specific class, the minimum number of hours for basic subjects and it also gives further instructions for the individual education plan. The duration of the education year is 37 weeks, whereas the maximum number of hours per week according to the new education curriculum of Kosovo is presented in the table below:

**Table 5.5 Teaching hours per week in different grades**

	Grades								
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Teaching hours per week	20	21	23	24	25	27	29	30	30

*Source:* Education curriculum of Kosovo

Students with special needs in special schools, attached classes or regular schools follow a regular curriculum (modified as an individual education plan) and they have the same fund of hours as their peers in regular classes. The teacher is not permitted to reduce the number of hours for the student or the class. If the number of hours in these classes is reduced then the possibility for success of these students and their incorporation into regular classes is jeopardised along with the opportunity for implementing an effective inclusive policy.

The individual education plan should allow for interacting methodologies with a focus on students. Students could need more time than 45 minutes (the typical length of courses). The plans should also permit using different strategies of teaching according to the student's needs. Individual education plans are valuable for students in inclusive classes.

### ***Individual Education Plan (IEP)***

The Individual Education Plan develops a programme for the student, prepared according to his or her unique needs, to overcome barriers to learning. It specifies the objectives for students with specific needs with the input of parents, teachers and students themselves, if possible, and aims to include the student as an active learner. Individual education plans break down learning to better see changes in knowledge, life skills and social-cultural developments. It can be written in a free form or designed using certain pre-established structures. The general education framework of an IEP is based on a diagnosis and includes an individual curriculum and continual work assessment. Individual work through an IEP encourages higher achievement and success because it better meets the needs of each pupil. The main purpose of such a plan of individual learning is to encourage students with special needs to face different challenges in the learning process, developing greater self-confidence and self-esteem as outlined in the new curricula framework of Kosovo. IEPs should include mental or physical development skills, mental development (the capacity to understand abstract ideas) and social development (the skill to co-operate with the others) as components. Working plans, which can be short-term or long-term, should be appropriate to the curriculum and include elements that must be learned in the different subjects, as in mathematics, mother tongue languages, social subjects, skills and art.

## **Goal 7: Pedagogy**

Learning is a lifelong process of acquiring new knowledge, skills and habits. However, it is not always easily accessible to all. A considerable number of students will need continued teaching support and all children need to be encouraged, given hope and self-confidence. Difficulties in learning may be of various natures. The most frequent are: language and communication, such as in articulation, expression, or reading (dyslexia); difficulties with specific academic skills in writing or arithmetic (dyscalculia) and other learning difficulties in concentration or memory. All can be consequences of impairments of a physical, mental or emotional nature caused by genetic, organic or environmental factors.

### *Teaching for diverse groups*

While learning is an individual process, teaching is a collective one, with the teacher facilitating the learning process for each student. As Howard Gardner, a renowned education psychologist has said, “It is not important how clever you are, but in what subject you are clever. As human beings, we all possess skills to solve problems of various kinds”. Therefore, the question is what are the best ways for a teacher to facilitate learning in a manner that involves all students? The teacher has many roles, including as a source of information, a role model, a supervisor and organiser. Teachers instruct the student to both seek information independently and to solve problems with their help. For special education, teachers need sufficient time to teach special needs students as well as tolerance, patience, motivation and knowledge about the teaching process. Teachers have to be able to combine different teaching formats and methods which take into account the skills of students and their difficulties – thereby creating a welcoming and accessible environment. However, in many schools in Kosovo, a classic lecture style is still applied and this is now considered less effective than other methods discussed below.

Learning in co-operation is achieved when students work together, in pairs and groups, in order to collectively solve a problem. The co-operation process is a natural part of child development. Students need to help each other by sharing and supporting one another. Teachers have to create proper conditions for co-operative learning. Class co-operation is an important aspect. Characteristics include: group cohesion, interdependence, co-ordination, and teacher observation and intervention. Moreover, a sustaining environment should be carefully created which is appropriate for the student in accordance with their individual learning style. Solidarity between members of the group can be encouraged, cultivating independence, social stimulation and interaction, involving a large number of subjects. Active learning is realised if students learn in co-operation with others. Other forms of co-operation include the “jigsaw technique”, which allows students in groups to become experts on certain subjects and share their knowledge with the others in the group. The results then fit together as pieces of a puzzle. Reading in pairs allows students to interact with the text and discuss with each other, listening carefully and sharing with the class. Roundtables are another co-operation method that stimulates the student to broaden their knowledge in the process of presenting and observing a problem from different viewpoints. With a method called “predict with preliminary terms”, students create a story or describe a character based on four preliminary terms. Another method encourages students to think freely about certain issues and to create relationships between facts in “clusters”. The Venn diagram allows students to logically distinguish or find similarities in three

phenomena, concepts or histories. “I know/I want to know/I learned” is a method that takes into account prior knowledge of the student and verifies the level of knowledge acquired.

All these methods create an environment that is helpful to students who have difficulties in learning, enabling them to have multiple approaches to each activity. The realisation of these strategies enables the teacher to investigate the talents and weaknesses of each student. Furthermore, teachers taking impairments into account can modify the classroom, including the desks’ positions and group structures, to best meet the needs of each student. The teacher may also encourage students with combinations of different education methods and opportunities to freely express their thoughts. The different education formats that are mentioned above encourage active teaching and facilitate the process of learning. Also, when students co-operate with each other the teacher will have additional time to work with students individually.

### ***Teaching materials compiled by the teacher***

At present, there are still few materials for teachers, work texts for children and books that can be read by the children. Teachers mainly use materials such as lesson and exercise books that are provided by the education authorities. While these meet some requirements, teachers also need additional materials to make learning more effective. It is therefore an essential part of the teacher’s role to prepare and collect other materials that are appropriate for the students’ needs in the classroom. Teachers should adapt and produce materials on a regular basis. Other examples of teaching materials include photographs, maps, books, newspapers, magazines, calendars or even objects such as fruit to illustrate a given lesson. In addition, poetry and music can be used as mnemonic devices to learn difficult vocabulary or other subjects. Technology is welcome when possible – in the form of television, radio or video and audio cassettes – and teaching games can increase learning, either through the adaptation of traditional games or with the invention of new ones.

There are various kinds of students in all classrooms but in the special classroom the group is particularly diverse. Students cannot always use the same material because of their varied skills. Learning cannot easily be accomplished if the topics are too difficult. If tasks are too easy, students will not have a chance to improve. Therefore, the material should be of an optimal level of difficulty. The student can learn more easily if he or she is active and does things independently. The teacher can increase learning using materials that stimulate the five senses as much as possible. The following examples show how teaching materials can help children learn:

Kaltrina does not understand numeric concepts, even for numbers under ten, so she is unable to do any mathematics, no matter how simple. According to the curriculum, the teacher is supposed to teach complicated problems such as three-digit addition. The teacher notices that this does not increase Kaltrina's learning, because she needs to practice on simpler concepts first. The teacher then gives materials that are easier for her, workbooks to do things by herself, at the same time the other students are doing more complicated exercises.

In another example, during a lesson about apples, the teacher wants the students to have a more concrete experience, showing different aspects of the topic. First of all, the teachers and students talk together about apples, what products can be made and so on. Then the students sing a song about apples. The teacher brings an apple into the classroom so that the students can touch it, sense it and taste it. The next day, the students will have an excursion to a place near the school to see an apple tree.

The Kosovar Expert Group on Special Education has described good material created or collected by teachers. Good teaching material is motivating, practical, relevant, diverse and meets the real needs of the student.

One purpose of special education is to provide an education that makes the student as independent as possible. Often parents and teachers assist the student in many ways, although the children can also learn on their own. It is extremely important for children to learn skills that are needed for daily life, such as buying and cooking food and cleaning. Though there may be no material for this purpose, the teacher should use different kinds of objects to illustrate and clarify activities. For example, a teacher can teach the student to buy something in a store using different kinds of products, taking money and giving change, in order to make the issue more concrete for the student and to teach about money.

## **Goal 8: Informing the public of outcomes and the difficulties in the education system**

Education institutions should inform the public of their activities and MEST should develop and implement a plan to communicate reforms of special education in Kosovo to the general public. Information in the media – on television or radio programmes or in newspapers can eliminate prejudices towards people with special needs. Journalists can present reports on the context of children with special needs, increasing awareness and

developing public discussions. A considerable number of people, including educators, see the education of children with special needs as very important but they still think only of institutions such as special schools. Increasing public awareness, even in the professional community, about new developments in the field of children with special needs including the wide range of strategies for social and intellectual support and development is necessary. These efforts can include the Information Section and Public Relations department to work with special education workers in the Ministry of Education to inform the media about developments in this field.

All MEST staff, communal directors of education and higher officers should be offered an opportunity to attend a day-long seminar on critical thinking and new approaches in education for children with special needs. MEST and NGOs should publish pamphlets about the needs and rights of children (especially children with special needs) to deliver to parents, women's groups and family health centres – if possible with the support of organisations promoting children rights. These pamphlets should explain how parents and teachers can support the needs of disabled children, including simply by talking to them, listening to their troubles, making possible creative games and reading books for children. The MEST and NGOs should also develop materials on children's rights and alternative ways of managing problematic behaviour.

## **Recommendations**

The goal of inclusion of children with special needs in the regular system will be faced with different social, political, economic and institutional obstacles in Kosovo. The change of policy leadership every three or four years as well as the undefined political status of Kosovo will continue to influence reforms of the education system, particularly during the unification of the education system and for the inclusion of children with special needs. In all democracies, changes in government after elections or otherwise can also result in changes in policy. Integration of education systems and implementation of a legal framework in the whole of Kosovo is dependent upon certain policy developments. Based on the experience of other Eastern and Central European countries, the best way to overcome frequent discontinuity in education policy is an inclusive policy in which all involved parties contribute to the process of reforms and see themselves as stakeholders in reforms. This includes a de-politicisation of education policy in order to focus energy on having the maximum effect on public means and not pursuing specific personal or political goals. In order to include greater input, a communication plan to explain the inclusive education process to different parties is needed. A stable implementation plan, monitored by

donors, with a clear focus and evaluation mechanisms will also aid in assuring coherency and consistency.

The most important obstacle that could lead to programmes becoming untenable could be weak economic growth in Kosovo, budget constraints in the Ministry of Education, corresponding low incomes for teachers and low budgets in families. Experiences of Central and Eastern European countries show that privatisation in the economy results in high social needs in early stages. Mechanisms that could balance the possible negative influences of economic factors include a flexible strategic plan that would fit changes in the development of education, approval of reserve alternatives in the case of budget difficulties, alternative education providers such as private education, creative and practical approaches in drafting programmes for teacher training, better organisation and a more rational system (respecting, if possible, the proportion of 22 students to one teacher), financial savings through efficiency in the education system, increasing the working hours during a week (teachers can work 26 hours per week with students and would also have enough time to prepare for lessons), encouraging donations and local and international investment.

Education reform needs to be well-managed in order to achieve credibility and achieve objectives. The lack of experience in administration can slow down the process of development of any strategic plan. Schools and attached classrooms that are built or repaired should be maintained and equipped. The process of developing teaching programmes in co-ordination with the curriculum section in MEST should be continued according to the strategic plan and different programmes for teacher training (starting with FSDEK) should be enhanced and carried out in order to develop human resources. However, it often occurs that schools are built but not well maintained or equipped, or projects are not developed taking into account foreseeable problems. This presents serious obstacles in system sustainability. Therefore, it is necessary to have a conscientious plan for the development of administrative procedures including policy planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, communication, constructing and maintaining facilities, database creation and analysis, curricular development and research and continual training of education staff. It is very important that outcomes include specific time frames so that activities are finished according to plan. The timeline of implementation will be determined by the volume of work to be done, which needs to be properly assessed in order to achieve quality outcomes.

Another important factor in developing and implementing the strategic plan is the provision of necessary funds to finance the realisation of programmes and relevant projects in the education system. The education system in Kosovo is on the verge of reforms to repair damages resulting



from the World Wars and ensuing conflicts. On the other hand, the economy and budget of Kosovo has limited possibilities to fulfil the budget needs for MEST. Based on these facts, MEST, in co-operation with other structures of government, shall make the effort to find alternative funding through local and international donors. In the years 2002-2007, MEST has worked and shall continue to work for this purpose with donors on concrete projects for development of the education system.

## Conclusion

Kosovo has put into place a variety of necessary elements to establish an inclusive education system in the future. These include teacher training through the TESFA courses, attached classes throughout the country, the elaboration of the resource centre model and some data collection. Policies and a legal framework as well as institutional and administrative frameworks still need to be developed, as do stable funding sources and a commitment to special education in mainstream schools. The strategic plan as outlined above is one tool that will assist in organising these efforts in the near future. However, as mentioned previously, the economic and political environments of Kosovo also have an important influence on this process. It is hoped that continued stability and prosperity will help in the foundation and continued elaboration of a sound special education system in the future, as this report has shown is possible.

### Case study one: An 8-year-old girl with Down's syndrome in Prizren

#### *Education career of the student*

The student, "D", has intellectual impairments. Her parents, together with the unit for special education within the municipality (including one special teacher from the special school and resource centre *Lef Nosi* for children with intellectual impairments) decided she should attend education in attached classes within the regular school near her home. The class is very diverse – other students have learning difficulties and two of them have hearing impairments. D has learned to read and write, though her writing is difficult to interpret. She is very peaceful and quiet with friends in the classroom.

### *Supporting conditions*

Support is provided based on the law for primary and secondary education and other regulations issued by MEST. The municipality of Prizren has formed support groups for special education in co-operation with the school *Lef Nosi*, which establishes the bases for support in this field. Through monitoring, support and advice; the support group improves the education process in the class. The class teacher will also have in-service training

### *Ensured support*

The class teacher will accept weekly support by the mobile teacher from the school *Lef Nosi*. An IEP is prepared for the student D and for all of the other students. The curriculum is adapted to educate the students in all subjects. Academic skills, daily activities and social skills are part of what the school provides. The school day is re-organised in co-operation with personnel from the special education resource centre, so that the student will have flexibility depending upon the tasks performed during the day. They will not be strictly limited to the 45-minute class shift. Each year, they perform special projects integrating all subjects in co-operation with students who have been trained by FSDEK for vocational education (professional development) from the University of Pristina. Teachers are also registered in the TESFA programme for training to increase their level of skills and to have the possibility of taking part in the teachers' network for special needs. TESFA trainers are also registered in the qualitative evaluation for the work in the class. The class team also provides support for the family and the school.

### *Comments*

D had some school subjects and she liked them. She had a very good voice, a good sense of rhythm and drawing talent. They suggested that she could be integrated into the regular class in the music and art courses the following year. This would increase her social awareness (she is not always in a good mood and had difficulties in waiting in turn for discussion). D is not scheduled to attend each school and subject. Next year, she will be integrated in a few subjects until her skills improve. When she is ready to enter the *Lef Nosi* school, she will also go to the resource centre and undergo professional training which will assist her in her vocational education.

## Case Study Two: 12-year-old boy with visual impairment in Peja

“S” has a visual impairment, recognised in his early childhood and resulting from macular disorders. In the beginning, S attended the school for children with visual impairments *Xheladin Deda* in Peja, when he was seven years old. The school participated in the pilot project for inclusive education and S was among ten students with the best skills who were selected for the project. He was then sent to a school with attached classes near his home and is now in regular classes together with his friends. Teachers of attached classes, the school director and the teachers of the regular classes have taken part in the TESFA special training for visual impairments. During the module of the visual disabilities from the professional training and development offered by the University of Pristina, they gave him some education classes in Braille and in using the numerals in the resource centre *Xheladin Deda*. This was accepted by the unit of special education within the municipality of Peja.

### *Supporting conditions*

MEST, together with the municipality of Peja and the school *Xheladin Deda*, accepted the idea of a pilot project. Funds are provided for the activities of the itinerant teachers, teacher training and some modifications in the physical conditions for the school such as better illumination.

### *Ensured support*

The resource centre provided lamps for work and CCTV for students – the same that are used in special schools. Teachers of the attached classes and the teachers of regular classes established a team in the school. Together with the itinerant teacher, they prepared an IEP for S. Because he is rather intelligent, there was no need for curriculum adaptation. The main focus was on establishing particular teaching methodologies. The itinerant teacher also visits the students. The visual conditions of S are unfortunately weaker every day. In the future he will need to know Braille and learn to travel independently. The team is discussing these issues with S and his family. They currently have difficulties in accepting that he may be totally blind in the future.

### *Comments*

S has the opportunity to finalise the requirements of inclusion education. With appropriate support and learning techniques he will be able to go to the same courses as his friends. He is well known and accepted amongst his friends. It is difficult in this phase to predict his profession in the future.

## Chapter 6 – Moldova

The National Report on “Education Policies for at Risk Students and those with Disabilities” of Moldova describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as reform efforts underway. Especially the National Education for All Strategy, building on the Framework for Action of the World Education Forum in Dakar constitutes an important document for the respective policy development. As the report states, mainstream schools have only occasional interaction with children with special needs; therefore ongoing education reform for the coming years will have to give special attention to the development of appropriate legal frameworks and sufficient human and financial resources. As all other reports presented in this book, this account covers the following sections: a short overview of the education system followed by chapters describing the legal framework, policies focusing on special groups, statistics and indicators, and the current situation of teacher training, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. The concept of integration and inclusion are central issues, and attention is paid to barriers and problems of inclusion and equity in education, to parents’ participation and other support services. The report also describes the new challenges the education system of Moldova faces with respect to the specific situation of children without proper parental care.



## Introduction

In order to meet new challenges in the economic, social and political environment in Moldova, the development of both a new legislative framework and education policies has been undertaken. In 1999, the Moldovan Government adopted a National Programme for the Development of Education, several years after its inception, to define and implement the education reform process for the period 1995-2005. Several legislative documents, including the Concept on the Development of Education in the Republic of Moldova (1994) and the Law on Education (1995) describe the form that the education system should take. Reform implementation was planned in two stages; during the first stage (1999-2000) legal, administrative and financial bases for reform were created. The objective of the second stage (2002-2005) has been the elaboration of a national school system based on national and international values arising from different cultures and the integration of the Moldovan system of education into the European education space including adjustment to trends in education development in Europe.

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees the right to education and state education is free of charge; basic education (from grades I to IX) is compulsory. Children under the age of three years are educated at home and families may receive benefits, pursuant to legislation. Pre-school education for children from three to six/seven years of age is not compulsory and comprises a network of education institutions, mainly kindergartens, both public and private, offering diverse education programmes according to national education standards. Over the last few years, the number of children attending kindergarten has decreased considerably to just 40% of the total number of children of this age. The number of children attending kindergarten and those attending upper secondary education institutions has decreased the most in rural regions, where living standards are below those in urban areas. Parents cannot afford expenditures related to school attendance for their children (*i.e.* clothes, shoes and textbooks) and the school environment is not conducive to high attendance. Difficulties include a lack of heating resources during wintertime for rural schools and kindergartens, a lack of secondary schools in rural areas and long distances between home and school for many children. In addition, qualified teachers are scarce: approximately 1 900 teachers left their jobs in 2004 due to their small salaries and the lack of decent working and teaching conditions. Poor equipment in rural schools and the lack of investment in these schools

prevent the development of healthy learning environments. Lastly, some children are left with grandparents and relatives by their parents, while they are working abroad, and these relatives may have less incentive to encourage schooling.

Schooling, with parental consent, begins for 6-year-old children based on the degree of the child's psycho-social maturity, according to a state-administered procedure by the Ministry of Education. Compulsory education includes full-time primary education from grades I-IV for children from 6 or 7 to 10 or 11 years of age. The remaining five years of compulsory education, lower secondary education or gymnasium education (grades 5-9), includes all students upon finishing primary school, without any testing or evaluation. Gymnasium level is for students who are 10 or 11 to 15 or 16 years old and the students receive a certificate upon completion (*Certificat de studii gimnaziale*). Upper secondary school or high school has two-year programmes, grades 10-11, (terminating with the *Atestat de studii medii de cultură generală*). Students completing three-year programmes (lyceum), 10-13 grades, are awarded a *Diplomă de bacalaureat*. Lyceum and general secondary school leavers have the right to enter higher education institutions. Higher education is provided in universities, academies and institutes and the courses last from four to six years, depending on the field of study. Post-university studies include Masters and Doctoral degrees. Additionally, arts and sports education is provided for children with special musical, artistic or sports abilities who can enter through competitive exams. Complementary education is an important trend of national education, helping to develop the abilities and talents of children in various domains through activities in centres offering diverse education services: centres for children's creativity, technical centres, centres for young naturalists, young tourists, sports centres, art groups, and other clubs. Currently, approximately 10% of schoolchildren are attending the 126 institutions of this type. *Continuing* education comprises all types of education such as open universities, distance education and other courses.

The Ministry of Education, the central public administration body in the field of education, develops and regulates education strategy and policy, promotes public education policy and participates in developing state policy on other issues related to children and youth. Directorates of Education are education management bodies located in districts and in the Chişinău municipality. The Government, upon the proposal of the Ministry of Education, establishes the organisation of the Directorates of Education and the school inspectorates within them. Under the Directorates of Education, there are also methodological departments and medical and psycho-pedagogical centres, the structure and responsibilities of which are established by government regulations. Assessment of the quality of

education has just begun in Moldova. For this purpose, the Government set up the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation of Education Institutions. (The National Council began the process of evaluation and accreditation of the higher education institutions in 2000).

## **Education of children with special needs**

Education of children with special needs, a part of the general education system that is also free of charge, has the purpose of educating, training and integrating children with mental, sensory or severe physical disabilities. The length of compulsory education is 8 years for children with mental disabilities and 10-11 years for children with physical and sensory disabilities. The Government, at the request of the Ministry of Education and other ministries, closely regulates special education institutions. The Division for Social Problems, under the Government Chancellery, oversees education issues and authorises the activities of these institutions. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family run the education system for children with special needs. Special education is developed according to the curriculum and study plans elaborated to meet the needs of disabled children. In special institutions, there may be special classes or groups for children with disabilities that are defined as a result of medical psycho-pedagogical observations. Children with special education needs and children in need of social care are taught in different types of schools run by the Ministry of Education or by local authorities. Every institution is responsible for the care and welfare of the pupils and for respecting the constitutional rights of each child. The children's right to education is assured by the State; offering equal opportunities to education and development of all children.

## **Legal framework**

Changes in economic, social and political life in Moldova have demanded the development of a new legislative framework and education policy. Three major documents have been adopted: The "Concept concerning the Development of Education in the Republic of Moldova" adopted by Parliament on the 1994; the Law on Education, No. 547, 1995 and the National Programme for the Development of Education for 1995-2005. In addition, the National Education for All Strategy, 2004-2015, which will be discussed in the next section, has also been put into force. These documents implicitly include children with special needs as they were



elaborated on the bases of the Law on Education. According to the Law on Education 1995, (Article 33) “Special education is a component part of the education system, the aim being education, integration, recovery and social integration of pre-school and school children with special education needs: physical, mental, sensory, speech problems, behaviour difficulties or those with associative disorders.” Procedures for classification are also explained: “Diagnosis of children with disabilities is provided, in the presence of parents or guardians, by the Medical Psycho-Pedagogical Council consultation, established according to the Decision of the Government of 24 July 1994”. Special education is provided in special institutions and boarding schools.

The medical psycho-pedagogical and social assistance of children with special education needs are regulated by a series of international declarations and conventions on the protection of children’s rights and the need for education of children with special needs. These include the “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child” on Special Needs Education (ratified in 1993 by the Republic of Moldova) and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994). The Republic of Moldova outlines policy for special education and rights of children with disabilities in the following Government Decisions: No. 5 (2001) regarding the Concept of the Child and Family Protection, No. 727 (2003) on the National Strategy for Child and Family Protection and the Action Plan of Activities for 2003 dealing with the Protection of Boarding School Leavers and Orphans; No. 1730 (2002) approving the Pilot Programme “Children with Disabilities”; No. 1733 (2002) regarding the assistance of children without parental care established in the Family Placements; and No. 1321 (2002) regarding the approval of the Pilot Programme “Orphan Children” aiming to assist orphan children in education, training and development.

In the framework of the National Strategy of Poverty Reduction, the pilot programme “Children with Disabilities” was approved by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova No. 1730 on 31 December 2002. This programme foresees the collaboration of all institutions and organisations that deal with the policy of social protection concerning the needs of the children with disabilities. The main goals of this programme are: to set up the measures of prevention of child invalidity; to create and assure conditions for complex medical, pedagogical and social rehabilitation of children with disabilities; to assure children with disabilities with technical equipment for rehabilitation and self-services; to develop scientific research in the field of education of children with disabilities; to provide initial and in-service training for the pedagogical staff; and to improve the living and working conditions of children with disabilities and their teachers.

Institutions for children with special education needs are regulated by Government Decision No. 268 (1995) “On Certain Complementary Measures of Improving Child Care and Education in Boarding Schools” and Government Decision No. 398 (1996) relating to the observance of the provisions of the President of the Republic of Moldova and No. 53 (1995) “On Certain Measures of Assistance Orphans and Children from Socially Vulnerable Families, Single-Parent Families and Unemployed Families” as well as under the regulation “On Functioning of Boarding Schools and Gymnasiums for Orphans and Homeless Children”. The Ministry of Education, with the aim of improving the living conditions of children in special institutions, has elaborated and approved, in Government Decision No. 1335 of 2004, new standards for providing children with food, shoes, clothes, equipment for classrooms and dormitories as well as with toys and other necessary items. A quota for admission to colleges, lyceums, vocational or professional schools, where they can learn a profession or continue their studies addresses the need for future studies of children with special needs.

## **Policy review focusing on special groups**

While educating children with special needs is essential in all societies, child and family protection remains a major social issue regardless of the level of economic development. For Moldova, a poor country, education for children with special needs is still faced with many obstacles, as considerable financial investments are required and human resources are still in quite limited supply. The Republic of Moldova, just as other countries in transition, currently faces an unexpected explosion of social problems, and the social protection system is not yet sufficiently developed. The dynamics of transition have primarily affected families and children, whose precarious situations are a result of the influence of many factors: the economic situation, social policies, and the discrepancy between the legislative system and actual situations. Large families, especially in the countryside, single-parent families, families with disabled children and others are facing a great number of problems connected to social welfare, education and medical assistance. The significant problems faced by children and families in the Republic of Moldova encouraged the Government to define family and child issues as a priority for social protection actions.

Based on the *Concept Paper on Family and Child Protection*, adopted in January 2002, the Government has developed the National Strategy for

Family and Child Protection, which was then adopted in 2003. The Strategy provides a comprehensive and long-term approach on children's issues, addressing, in particular, the most vulnerable categories of children, such as children deprived of parental care and disabled children.

### **The National *Education for All* Strategy (2004-2015)**

Legislation of the Republic of Moldova honours international documents that have been issued to protect the rights of children with special education needs and those at risk. Following the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000), the Republic of Moldova elaborated the National Education For All Strategy 2004-2015, approved in April 2003. The main goal of this strategy is to provide quality education for all children, especially for those in difficult circumstances such as: orphans, children without parental care, children with disabilities, abused children, children from vulnerable families, refugees and children with behavioural disorders. The Republic of Moldova identified the following three main priorities for the National Education for All Strategy: early education, special education and non-formal education. The major objectives of the National Strategy are to ensure access for all children who live in difficult conditions to complete compulsory education by 2007 and to facilitate access to *quality* education for all children by 2015; to develop education policy for the integration of children with special education needs into the general education system, as well as to provide the necessary methodology and assistance for educating children in difficult situations.

Specific objectives of the National Strategy include the development and assurance of equal opportunities, rights and duties for all children, especially for vulnerable groups (orphans, children without parental care, refugees and others) by improving aspects of all education institutions; this will include the creation of enabling conditions and material assistance for the social integration and development of children from vulnerable groups as well as a flexible curriculum to meet the requirements of all individuals. Related goals include the eventual integration of children with special education needs in mainstream education and the creation of favourable conditions for children from rural areas to finish compulsory education. Furthermore, it will be imperative to elaborate new mechanisms aimed at facilitating efficient distribution of financial resources and to encourage school preparation of young children through pre-school education in every community. Lastly, education standards will be assured by the social and professional protection of teachers, especially for those who are working in rural areas; and implementation of new education methods on the basis of Information Technologies.

The first practical steps to be taken to meet the above objectives include development of the legislative, institutional and normative frameworks, human, financial and informational resources and community services. Practical development of the *legislative and normative framework* will lead to the development or revision of the legislative acts concerning the quality of education in order to meet international standards stipulated by the international conventions mentioned earlier such as the Dakar Framework for Action (2000); the World Programme of Action for Children with Disabilities (1983); the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990); the UN Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Person with Disabilities and the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs education (1994).

Efforts related to the development of the *institutional framework* will focus on improving data concerning children in institutions aiming to optimise education management; creating a network of special institutions which would provide equal chances for all children and creating centres of early diagnosis, rehabilitation and education. *Human resource development* will contribute to increase the status of teachers, medical staff and non-teaching staff in schools; implementing new methods of pre-service and in-service training of pedagogical staff and developing managerial and professional abilities for those teachers who work with children with special education needs. Changes in *financial management* should create a new mechanism for financing the education system, implementing permanent monitoring and assessment of financial grants for educating disabled children, offered to institutions by donors; elaborating social and education programmes for children with special education needs; implicating the community and local public authorities in the process of searching for extra-budgetary resources to support education institutions and families with children with special education needs. Improving *informational resources* will assist in the development and implementation of evaluation indicators of the education system at the national, regional and local levels. A new curriculum should meet modern European standards and sharing of good practices should be encouraged for sustainability of good schools; a flexible curriculum for children with special education needs and textbooks according to the new curriculum will also be developed. Lastly, fund-raising for the education of children is necessary, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Finally, the National Strategy aims to *involve families and the whole community* to realise the objective of education for children from disadvantaged groups by elaborating a programme for community development in the field of social assistance and protection of children in

difficult situations; by creating psycho-pedagogical and social assistance services to support children in difficult situations in ordinary schools and their families and to provide information, consultations and assistance. In addition, increasing public awareness through seminars, training and mass media should be implemented in the near future.

## **Inclusion and integration**

Analysis of experiences in the West indicates some recommended conditions for integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools, including respect of human rights and individual differences, development of financial resources and decent living conditions; flexibility during the integration process and encouragement of positive public opinion. The promotion of integration in the society is a long process. Integration will become an expected and accepted part of life over time. Disabled persons should not have to adapt to the rules and conditions dictated by society, but should be able to retain individual differences, which the society accepts and respects. At the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain (1994) a common declaration was signed stating that: every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning; every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs; education systems should be designed and education programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs. Children with special education needs must have access to regular schools. Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all, providing an effective education to the majority of children and improving the efficiency of the entire education system.

The notion “inclusion” or “inclusive education” in the Republic of Moldova is conceived as a form of education in which the child with special education needs goes to the same school as his brothers, sisters or friends; attends the same class as other children of the same age; has individual education goals depending on his needs and receives complex medical and psycho-pedagogical assistance. Inclusion in society means transitioning away from an isolating system towards an integrative, more humane approach, including people who have been excluded for any reason. Inclusion demands guarantees of support for those in need, though the development and assurance of support systems. Inclusion implies respectful harmony of those who are different. Recent attempts of integration and inclusion of children with special education needs into regular schools during the last few years in Moldova, have not met with success due to the

lack of support from authorities and the negative attitude of parents and teachers. The process of integrating children with special needs into normal schools is very slow in Moldova. There remains considerable resistance to the integration or inclusion of children with special education needs. Many parents, students and even teachers, from mainstream or special schools are not in favour of the integration and inclusion process. The idea of keeping the existing institutional system prevails. Today, special education in the Republic of Moldova does not yet meet international standards for children with special education needs. Considerable discussions about the integration processes have taken place, but the education system still lacks financial support. To meet international standards on this issue, professional training for teachers is required. Many issues remain unresolved: schools may not be ready to enlist children with special education needs, teachers may not be ready to provide qualified psycho-pedagogical assistance or to combine different groups of children in decent teaching conditions.

### ***Pilot projects on inclusion and integration***

An example of integration, particularly within the framework of special education does exist in the Republic of Moldova, based at the Complex of Curative Pedagogical Centre *Orfeu*, established in conformity with the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova No. 511 on April 2003. This centre is for children diagnosed with moderate and severe mental retardation. Before placement in this centre, these children were isolated in special institutions for invalids run by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family. The education process is undertaken according to the experimental curricula approved by the Ministry of Education and according to individual programmes developed in collaboration with the Medical Psycho-Pedagogical Board. Both are in accordance with children's capacities.

One of the main goals of the education reform in Moldova is the adjustment of the education system to European education standards. Due to the level of economic and social development in Moldova, it is very difficult to undertake reforms without outside support. The Government has already done considerable work with the support of international organisations in the process of developing education reform; Moldova benefited from financial support and contributions of the World Bank, European Training Foundation (ETF), UNICEF, the Soros Foundation and others. The key objective of these projects lies in the enhancement of education systems, adjustment to new economic, social and political realities through curriculum revision, the development of new textbooks and education materials, retraining of teachers, development and implementation of new information technologies and creation of a modern school evaluation system.

The most important projects are UNICEF projects targeting children with special education needs, as well as hospitalised children. The project “Development of life skills for prevention of human trafficking”, launched by the Centre for Information and Documentation on Children’s Rights in Moldova, as a sub-project, is also supported by UNICEF.

UNICEF is focusing on the development of Child Public Care System Reform, aimed at transforming institutional care into a community based system. Special attention is placed on family reintegration, education and development of community-based alternatives to ensure appropriate protection and development of the child. Only ten percent of families are able to provide their disabled child with a specialised education. In fact, many disabled children are sent to residential institutions where they lose all family ties. Unfortunately, many parents and professionals perceive this to be the best interest of the child and the state has traditionally provided care. UNICEF is currently supporting the creation of community based centres for disabled children in co-operation with local authorities in a number of counties. These centres will help to create healthy society and supportive family environments in Moldova. UNICEF supports alternative services for these children in order to avoid institutionalisation and keep children in families.

The General Education Reform Project, co-financed by the World Bank and targeting the first stage of reform of mainstream compulsory education is another essential programme. The Soros Foundation has the following projects as well: “Early childhood” for nursery children aged 1-3 years; “Integration of children with special needs” for children with disabilities; and the Step-by-step programme for pre-school and primary school children.

Through the activities of such international organisations as UNESCO, Soros, UNICEF and others, different education programmes have been elaborated and, based on their education value, the following courses were introduced into schools: “Family and Life Education”, “The Law and Us”, “Civic Education”, “Life Skills Based Education” and others. These courses encourage pupils’ self-confidence and capacities to assume responsibilities for their own destiny and way of life.

An agreement between the Ministry of Education, the Associations Amici del Bambini-Italy and Children’s Friends-Moldova, signed in March 2005, established a new project “Social integration of children from residential institutions”, with the aim to promote social policy in favour of children from residential institutions. The project, which abides by the UN Convention and other international conventions regarding children’s rights and protection, the National Strategy and other legislative acts in force, has the following objectives: development of the child’s personality; promotion

of the alternative programmes and integration of children from residential institutions into families developing the relations child-family-society. One of the first activities was the opening of *Ludoteca*, equipped for different education activities in boarding school No. 1 in Chişinău. At this well-equipped place for games and activities, children from this boarding school have the possibility to meet and play together with other children from the community.

The social programme “A Rainbow of Childhood: Centre for Child and Family”, the result of another important agreement signed in February 2005 between the Ministry of Education, Save the Children-Moldova, Amici dei Bambini-Italy and Children’s Friends-Moldova aims to meet the right of each child with special education needs to have a family. The main objectives towards achieving this goal are: prevention of child abandonment as a result of socio-economic and family crises, promotion of activities regarding the improvement of relations between children from residential institutions and their biological families and promotion of the integration of children from residential institutions into families. This programme includes a certain number of projects such as: “A Family for Each Child”, a pilot project for searching adoptive parents from Moldova; “Prevention of Abandon”, a pilot-project aiming to support vulnerable families to prevent child abandonment; “Towards a Family” attempting to re-establish relations between children from residential institutions and their biological families (underway at the boarding school No. 1 in Chişinău); and “A Dream... a Mother and a Father”, working with the problem of family reintegration. This project promotes the adoption of children from special institutions. In the framework of this project seminars and training would be provided for couples who intend to adopt a child.

On the 2 February 2005, within the framework of the Programme “Deaf Children from Moldova”, the Ministry of Education and the Association of Paediatricians of the World signed a Convention regarding the training of sign language trainers at the University Rhone-Alpes, France.

In addition, during the last few years, many other NGOs have been active in Moldova, some of which have dealt with education services offered to children with deficiencies. Such NGOs include: ProDidactica, Origami Centre, Information and Documentation Centre on Children Rights, Day Centre for Rehabilitation and Social Integration of Disabled Young People (Chisinau), Speranta Day Care Centre (Chisinau), Community Centre for Early Education (Talmaz) and others.



## Assessment and placement of children with disabilities

The Moldovan Medical Psycho-Pedagogical Council provides precise diagnoses of children with special education needs in the presence of parents or guardians. This Council is responsible for diagnoses for admitting children to special institutions. This Council is the only state body that establishes the special education needs of children with physical, learning and mental disabilities, serious chronic diseases and visual and hearing impairments. The Council receives applications from parents who have children, identified by educators or by doctors, who meet with difficulties in their education in early years. The members of the Council are highly qualified specialists in the education of children with special needs such as psychologists, psychiatrists, orthopaedists, eye doctors and others, who provide examinations, precise diagnoses and psychological conciliations, assessments of difficulty in language ability, special speech therapy recommendations and functional diagnostics describing the pupil's pathology, disabilities and capabilities. The specialist studies the medical records of the child from birth to the latest medical examinations, school records, school activity/notebooks, and parents' or guardians' documents. The examination and diagnosis of the child takes place during a meeting of the staff of the Republican Medical Psycho-Pedagogical Council; interactions may include games in addition to simple discussions. Discussing with parents, most frequently with mothers alone, the doctors identify the needed information about the child including their family background (*i.e.* parents' and other family members' ages, level of education and health), information about the prenatal development of the child, early childhood diseases, traumas, disorders in physical and intellectual development, difficulties in the learning process, school absences, repeated classes, behaviour and the intellect of the child.

The report by the Republican Medical Psycho-Pedagogical Council can include conclusions from any of a variety of specialists, such as a paediatrician on the physical development and the status of the child's health, height and weight, skull size and diseases; an audiologist on hearing problems or an orthopaedist on any skeletal deformations. Also possible is input from a speech therapist or a psychologist on memory and cognitive skills or emotional state. Eye doctors can give input on visual acuity and neurologists on the state of the nervous system or the emotional state. Educators can give input related to the child's knowledge, capacities and school abilities (reading, writing, mathematical and other skills), their capacity for observation, analysis, and work and for accepting help from adults. By the end of the examination, and as a result of the specialist and parental discussions, the Republican Medical Psycho-Pedagogical Council

establishes the diagnosis of the child recommending the most effective education institution for their studies.

## General approaches to classification

A range of possibilities exists in the classification of persons with special needs including medical, functional and social approaches. In the medical approach, medical experts use clinical methods to determine sensorial, mental, functional, behavioural or speech-related “deficiencies”; deficiency means a permanent or temporary loss or anomaly in the physiological, anatomic or psychological structure. The notion of “deficiency” can be further broken down to “deficits”, the quantitative aspects of the deficiency or “infirmities”, a considerable diminution or absence of important functions. Infirmities may be either re-educated or accommodated; according to UNESCO, infirmities are “functioning deficiencies”. Finally, “invalidity” implies a temporary or permanent loss of work capacity.

In the functional approach, “incapacities” are due to the loss or diminution of physical, mental, or sensorial capacities hampering normal accomplishment of certain activities. “Incapacities”, which can be reversible or irreversible, inhibit the normal accomplishment of an activity or behaviour. Incapacities can be determined by a variety of tests including: intelligence tests, hearing, sight, or functional development exams; medical ascertainment or socio-professional investigations in the consequences of incapacity on social relations. Though its manifestation may be physical, mental or sensory, incapacity leads to adaptive behaviour resulting in more or less severe personal, professional or social isolation.

The social approach includes the consequences of deficiencies, incapacities and environmental variables. A “handicap” implies certain social consequences and can be manifested in maladjustment, marginalisation, inequity, segregation and exclusion. Human “handicaps” are considered socially disadvantageous, limiting the accomplishment of a social role. In other words, the disability depends on the relationship between disabled people and their living environment and becomes evident in the face of cultural, physical or social barriers, impeding their access to activities and social services that are available to others. “Handicapped” people face multiple and complex difficulties whose categorisation is difficult, they can include: general difficulties in transportation for people with physical deficiencies, speech and communication difficulties for people with sensorial deficiencies and adaptation difficulties with regard to common lifestyles and other social realities for persons with mental and intellectual deficiencies. Professional difficulties relate to education and

professional training and employment. Psychological and social difficulties also exist such as barriers between disabled and non-disabled people as a result of everyday, professional and social activities including the prejudices against professional possibilities for disabled persons.

“Deficiencies” lead to “incapacities”, which in turn stimulate “handicapping” conditions. Social responses contribute significantly to the impact on a person’s emotional and psychological state, possibly placing an individual in a vicious circle. In the next section, these types of categorisations are described further, though these are not yet used for data collection in Moldova.

## Statistics and indicators

Below is a brief outline of general classifications of disability types followed by a presentation of data collection in Moldova, primarily from special schools.

### Main categories of persons with special education needs

*Mental deficiencies* include a significant reduction of adaptation abilities and possibilities for a person to the environment and to general standards of social co-existence. The individual is in a situation of inferiority, expressed through a handicap in comparison to other community members. Other terms to define a mental deficiency include: mental retardation, oligophrenia, mental insufficiency, intellectual disability, mental handicap and mental debility.

*Sensorial deficiencies* are determined by dysfunction or dimness of the main sight and hearing capacities and have major implications on the lifestyle, social relations and cognitive processes of the person, affecting his behaviour and way of life.

*Hearing deficiencies* can prevent the normal formation and development of speech, language and even cognitive processes. The International Bureau of Audio-Phonology identifies the following degrees of hearing loss: minor hearing loss or light hearing deficit (20-40 dB); medium hearing loss or deficit (40-70 dB); severe hearing loss or deficit (70-90 dB); and deafness (profound hearing deficit or surdity), (over 90 dB).

*Sight deficiencies* can be classified according to several criteria: depending on sight function indices: minor sight loss (index of visual acuity

between 0,5-0,3); medium sight loss (index of visual acuity between 0,2-0,1); severe sight loss (index of visual acuity under 0,1); relative cecity – perception of hand movement and light and absolute cecity (blindness) – no light perception.

*Speech deficiencies* are the result of a dysfunction in the reception, understanding, development and production of oral and written communication because of organic, functional, psychological or education variables influencing the infant or child during the period of language appearance and development. Due to the importance of language in the development of cognitive processes, any affection could influence the quality of thinking, including evaluation of relationships with others and the child's personality. The following categories are identified: pronunciation dimness (dyslalia, dysarthria, rinolalia); rhythm and speech fluency dimness (tachylalia, bradylalia, stammering); voice dimness (aphonia, dysphonia, phonostenia); reading and writing vocabulary dimness (alexia-agraphia, dyslexia-dysgraphia) and vocabulary development dimness (retardation in vocabulary appearance and development).

*Associated deficiencies* are a special category of dimness, with or without common etiology, affecting two or more biopsychic components of a person, with aggravating consequences of her relationship with the environment. This could include blindness and/or surdomutism associated with intellectual deficiencies; blindness associated to surdomutism, tactile dimness, equilibrium dimness, smell and/or taste dimness; or to loco motor dimness; and association of two or more types of sensorial dimness.

*Physical deficiencies* affect a person's loco-motor components, both neuro-motor and psycho-motor aspects, determining a range of consequences on the methods of interaction with the environment and with other persons.

*Behaviour deviations* are another category of difficulty that can be contrary to commonly accepted social or school standards; behaviour can be inadequate in terms of age-appropriate development; behaviour difficulties represent a major supplementary handicap for a person, possibly preventing them from learning new skills if the person is excluded from learning opportunities.

## Statistical resources

The Government of the Republic of Moldova and the ministries administrating residential institutions (the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and the Family, the Ministry of Health) have acknowledged the necessity to develop a database containing

information about institutionalised children. Although the relevant ministries took the initiative to develop such an informational system, a lack of resources hampers comprehensive information gathering. Taking into account these particular circumstances, the three ministries expressed their willingness to redress this situation with the assistance of international donors. The Government of the Republic of Moldova and the European Community Food Safety Programme signed on 23 June 2003 a Memorandum of Understanding, the goals of which were recently met as of 2004.

One of the stipulations of this Memorandum deals with collecting data concerning the placement of children with difficulties in special institutions. The objectives of this project are: to collect information about children with difficulties in special institutions; to monitor the situation of children in special institutions; to collaborate between the ministries responsible for the education and the living conditions of these children; and to elaborate advanced methods of evaluation of children in these institutions.

The data includes information regarding all children from residential institutions. The Questionnaire of the child placed in a residential institution contains 13 components: personal data about placement in the institution; development of the child; education; data about the parents, guardians, brothers and sisters and contacts with the community. The creation of an informational system is very important for the future analysis of the situation of children in the residential schools and for promotion of future social policy dealing with the inclusion of these children into mainstream schools.

According to the National Strategy on Child and Family Protection, approved by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova No. 727 on 16 June 2003, the creation of a stable working database, containing information about all children supported within residential institutions in the country is essential for the process of developing social policies and decision-making regarding children's protection. This strategy has been elaborated taking into account the present situation in Moldova and the stipulations of the National Concept regarding the protection of child and family (approved by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova No. 51 on 23 January 2002) as well as the stipulations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The objectives of the strategy are assurance and development of social protection policy for child and family at the local and national levels; adjustment of the legislative framework concerning the protection of child and family to the trends of the UN Convention and other international acts concerning the rights of the child and family; the development of the

capacity of institutions to elaborate and implement new methods and services concerning the quality standards for the protection of child and family; the creation and development of a local and national systems of monitoring and evaluating the situation of child and family; the development of human resources for child and family protection, new financial mechanisms for promotion and assurance of the protection of the child and the family and the capacity of the family and the community to decrease the risk of institutionalising children with special needs; and, finally, the creation of positive public opinion concerning the problems of children with special needs.

The strategy is constituted of five independent components, which reflect the problems of the child and family, a legislative framework, institutional frameworks, development of capacities, community services and financial resources as well as ways of implementing them. The strategy is planned for 5 years and involves the public administration, the whole community and civil society.

The development of an information system as a monitoring instrument for the welfare of children placed in residential institutions of the Republic of Moldova should also judge the efficiency of services provided to them. In the future, this will assist the identification of opportunities to support these children within family and community environments and possibilities to improve the quality of services provided to institutionalised children. The data obtained as a result of quantitative and qualitative analyses shall be used by the ministries interested in developing social policies on the protection of children in difficult situations.

**Table 6.1 Children attending special schools in Moldova in 2003/2004 school year and in early 2005**

Data concerning orphan children and those without parental care 2003-2004 school year	Number of children in:			Total
	Boarding schools	Special boarding schools	Auxiliary boarding schools	
2003/2004 School year	6 144	1 922	3 377	11 443
Orphan children	425	119	149	693
Abandoned children	742	59	85	886
Children whose parents are deprived of parental rights	266	50	49	365
Children whose parents have been condemned by the court	228	18	43	289
Children of parents with mental diseases	172	6	87	265
Children whose parents are unable to work	324	41	83	448
Total number of orphan children and children without parental care	2 157	293	496	2 946
Children from vulnerable families	3 987	1 629	2 881	8 497
Pedagogical staff				2 187
Teachers				1 228
Educators				959
Totals for early 2005	6 026	1 887	3 544	11 457

Note: The ratio for 100 children in boarding schools: Teachers – 10,73 and educators – 8,38

Source: Ministry of Education

Some general education statistics show that in the academic year 1998/1999 the network of public education institutions comprised about 1 549 schools, including 107 primary schools (with primary grades only), 631 gymnasiums and 625 general secondary schools (also including primary school grades). General, non vocational education is attended by approximately 420 000 children, of whom 92% attend compulsory general education. Grades 1-4 are attended by approximately 320 500 children that make up 96% of the total number of children of this age group.

Data above include the type of education institution; the juridical status of the child (orphaned, abandoned, without parental care, etc.) and the number of teachers and educators involved in the education process of institutions for children with special needs.

## School organisation

The Ministry of Education runs 63 special institutions throughout the country, financed from the state budget, with approximately 11 600 children. The placement of children into a special institution depends on the necessity of placement according to the family situation, medical diagnosis, the decisions of the Department of Education, the local administrative authorities, the medical psycho-pedagogical consultations, the Moldovan Medical Psycho-Pedagogical Council, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family. Parents make the final decision regarding the education of their children. Parents of children with disabilities have the right to choose between schooling at a special education needs school, integrated classes or in inclusive classes in regular schools.

A system of special institutions has been created for orphans, children from vulnerable families, children with behavioural problems, children with chronic diseases as well as children with visual impairments, hearing impairments and physical and mental disabilities. This system of special education is organised in parallel to the systems of regular education and includes: preschool education (special kindergartens, special groups attached to regular kindergartens or individual integration in regular kindergartens) primary and secondary education. Many special institutions in Moldova are boarding schools and vary in the number of grades included, with the range from 1 to 7, 8 or 9 grades being the most common. The term “boarding school” is used for almost all types of special institutions, because children with the status of orphans, children with different kinds of diseases (more or less severe) and children from vulnerable families do not have the possibility to go home every day or every week after lessons; they stay at these institutions more or less all year including during vacations. However, there are a very small number of day centres for this category of children. There are special boarding schools, boarding schools for children with behaviour deviations, sanatorium boarding schools and auxiliary boarding schools. Vocational training is sometimes available.

Children from vulnerable families (poor families, families with many children or single-parent families), orphans, refugees, children from rural



areas and others who are not provided for within the family are placed in boarding schools. Approximately 35% of children in boarding institutions are orphans or children left without parental care and the remaining 65% come from vulnerable families. Children with severe diseases are treated and educated in special boarding schools for children with physical, sensory or other disorders. Children with mental retardation are placed at auxiliary boarding schools.

Children with special education needs, at the age of seven years, go to different special institutions according to their special education needs. Children with special needs, in their early childhood, do not benefit from medical and psychological assistance or rehabilitation; interventions which could minimise the likelihood of attending a special institution. The lack of a specialised system of early childhood care, difficult economic and living conditions that lead to an impoverished population and the migration of parents to other countries for work are among the main causes that lead to the increasing number of children who are placed in special institutions. These factors also cause an increase of the number of children with chronic diseases and a high rate of disabilities; the placement of this category of children into special institutions is the best way to provide them assistance at present.

### **Types of special schools in Moldova**

For orphan children, between 3-16 years of age, or others who cannot be provided for within their biological family or an adoptive family, *boarding schools* are created under the jurisdiction of the inspector for children rights' protection of the Ministry of Education. There are 19 boarding schools and two children's houses. During vacations or holidays, the orphans and children without parental care stay at school under the supervision of educators or they may spend time with their relatives or guardians. In the boarding schools, children are guaranteed meals, clothing, shoes, textbooks, toys, and other items. These boarding schools follow the curriculum and the study plans of general compulsory education. After graduation, children have the possibility to participate in exams for admittance to technical or professional schools or to colleges. School leavers are provided with clothing, shoes, personal items and a certain financial sum as prescribed by law. If looking for work or being admitted to continuing studies takes an overly long time, the students, if no more than 18 years old, are permitted to return to the orphanage and benefit from all previous rights. In such cases, these children can be engaged in different activities at the school.

Children with severe diseases are treated and educated in *special boarding schools* for children with physical or sensory disorders (visual,

hearing and physical impairments). The objectives of such institutions are: education, correction, medical assistance, speech therapy and psychological assistance, rehabilitation for recovery and skill development for social integration. The children are sent to these schools on the recommendation of the Moldovan Medical Psychological Council.

The largest category of special institutions is the *auxiliary schools*, of which there are 27. The Curative Pedagogical Centre *Orfeu*, for children diagnosed with moderate and severe mental retardation also has 105 children. At *auxiliary boarding schools*, children with mental retardation acquire elementary knowledge of general subjects and are trained in social skills and abilities in different professions that may facilitate their future lives. Children who attended auxiliary kindergarten and those who have learning problems (2 or more years of failure in mainstream schools) are admitted to these auxiliary schools. Compulsory education in the auxiliary schools ends with IX grade when students pass a two-part exam (on theory and practice) related to their future profession. Children with severe difficulties, who study according to individual plans, do not have exams. In particular cases, preparatory groups can be created for those children, who, having already been diagnosed, did not attend the auxiliary pre-school institutions for different reasons. The minimum number of children in such classes or groups is ten and the maximum is 16. Cases do exist in which diagnoses of the Medical Psychological Council change and children can be transferred to mainstream schools. The admission of children with deficiencies to the auxiliary boarding schools is administered by the local Department of Education in conformity with the decision of the Moldovan Medical Psycho-Pedagogical Council, co-ordinated by the Department of Special Education from the Ministry of Education.

*Sanatorium boarding schools*, of which there are just three nationwide educate children with chronic diseases (cardiovascular and neurological) and other children with specific medical disorders and functional impairments. The sanatorium boarding schools have the mission of offering medical assistance, psycho-physical rehabilitation, education and training to children with disabilities. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health approve the personnel of these sanatorium boarding schools. The children are placed in these schools after medical examinations of 6-12 months' duration, provided by the Ministry of Health. The age of the children is between 6-7 and 14 years, inclusive of those who stay for extended periods in hospitals; the duration of studies is from grades 1-9. The pupils of the sanatorium boarding schools are already enrolled in ordinary schools and can return there if they recover from their illnesses. A special commission, set up at the local polyclinic, selects children for these boarding schools. For the placement in a sanatorium boarding school medical examinations,

vaccinations; certificates attesting that no contact has been made with contaminated persons, references from school and school records are all required. The enrolment in classes occurs at the beginning of the school year according to applications, but cases of matriculation or leaving school during school year also may occur. The duration of a child's stay at a sanatorium boarding school is determined on an individual basis. The education process in these schools is developed according to the curriculum and the study plans of the mainstream school. The average number of pupils in such classes is 20 and lessons last for 40 minutes. In such institutions, children also receive the necessary medical assistance and treatment.

The schools for *children with behaviour difficulties* are administered according to the documents issued by the authorities under the Law of the respective region, the decision of the Court and the decision of the Department of special education of the Ministry of Education. These schools have the mission to educate and train the children in conflict with law. The number of children in these institutions is not constant; varying from 30 to 100 children annually. This type of school is for children with behaviour disorders; a socio pedagogical rehabilitation centre for offenders, the aim being psychological change and social reintegration. Education is oriented towards the formation of practical professional abilities, respect for state law, self-respect and respect of others. The activity of these schools is based on the concept of the Children Rights Law, Children Rights Convention, Criminal Code and the Code dealing with administrative punishment. Placement of offenders, between 11 to 14 years old, in these boarding schools is done according to a Court Decision. School managers are obliged to announce within ten days to parents, guardians, local authorities and the Court about the enrolment of this minor in school. Offenders are educated in these schools until the age of 15 or, in exceptional cases, until the age of 16. The presence of children in such schools more than three years can be permitted only if necessary to finish the school year. Decisions to place children with behaviour deficiencies in a certain class depend on his or her files, school record or the result of a special school commission test prepared for the child. The process of education of the offenders in boarding schools is mostly an individual one, based on study plans, curricula and recommendations of the general school.

The Ministry of Health also runs *orphanages* for young children with different disabilities, including mental or physical disabilities, or for those who are orphans or without parental care, between birth and six years of age. In these institutions, they receive assistance, treatment, rehabilitation and additional training. At the age of seven years, these children are transferred to education institutions that are run by the Ministry of Education. Children with mental and severe physical disabilities are

transferred to institutions run by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family Protection. Children are admitted to orphanages run by the Ministry of Health by parents or guardians under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Education also runs three orphanages for children without parental care or children from vulnerable families (*e.g.*, with unemployed parents). These children are sent to boarding schools according to the decision of local authorities. The duration of stay in such schools depends on the changes that may occur in the family: improved financial capacity, the improvement of the psychological climate or other positive changes.

The Ministry of Labour, Social and Family Protection is responsible for *special boarding schools* for children with severe mental disabilities. The main mission of these schools is the education and training of children with mental diseases. The number of these children is approximately 3 000; almost 85% of these children are from vulnerable families. Such children are sent to these schools on the decision of the medical-psychological council in the family's region. The selection and placement of the children with disabilities in special schools takes into account the status of the child, the type of the institution and geographical factors. The status of the child is determined by the family situation and context, living conditions, the age of the child and the type of disabilities. The type of institution and its objectives must correspond to the necessities of the children with special needs. Geographical factors are very important too, in order not to isolate children with special needs from their social environment. These institutions are for children aged between six and 18 years who need care and medical assistance. At the age of 18, these children are transferred to boarding houses for adults that are run by the same ministry. The Ministry of Labour, Social and Family Protection runs two boarding houses: one in Orhei for boys and another in Hînceşti for girls.

The Republic of Moldova has not yet developed a new curriculum for children with special education needs that would meet modern European standards. In order to achieve success in educating disabled children, a flexible curriculum needs to be developed, able to meet the needs of all children. Individual education programmes are to be elaborated for children with disabilities in order to prepare them for work or for post-compulsory education after leaving school. This is essential, as children with disabilities could develop many skills after graduation with the appropriate support in school. A lot of work remains to be done in this direction. At the present stage, many obstacles remain in the elaboration of a curriculum for children with special needs, including decisions on the extent to which the general and special curricula will correspond. Other problems exist concerning the

structure of an integrated curriculum, the principles of goal determination, selecting the types, content and methods of these curricula.

## Teacher training

The Government, through the Ministry of Education, together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, determines the teaching workload of the education staff. The Ministry of Education determines the conditions of holding a teaching position. Remuneration of teaching staff depends on the level of studies, position held, degree or title, scientific title and work experience. According to Article 54 of the Law of Education (1995), universities and institutes provide initial teacher training; colleges also prepare teachers for primary schools. The Concept Concerning the Development of Education (1994) lays down the legal framework. There are several higher education institutions that provide initial training for teachers: State Pedagogical University *Ion Creanga*; State Universities (Chişinău, Balti, Comrat and Tiraspol – in Chişinău); the National Institute for Physical Education and Sports). The structure of the initial teacher training courses comprises: academic subject study (40-45%); general subjects such as philosophy, logic and economics (20%); pedagogy (20%) including psycho-pedagogy and didactics; and school practice (15%). School practice starts in the second year, with one day in every two weeks spent in a school following the same class throughout the student's training, the students participate not just in lessons but also in all aspects of everyday school life. At first, trainees just attend lessons given by the class teacher, and then in the second semester of the third year, they become responsible for giving lessons themselves. During the fourth and fifth years, due to a shortage of teachers in some subjects, the Ministry of Education allows teacher trainees to teach full-time in schools. In such a way, trainees are well trained through a process of learning by doing.

According to the Law of Education (Article 54, p. 8) teachers are required to undergo a period of compulsory in service retraining every five years. After three years, every serving teacher may apply to be assessed for the award of a "didactic grade". There are three levels: the second, first and superior. Teachers may choose for which level they want to be assessed, although there are certain criteria that they must meet in order to be assessed for first and superior levels. (For example, to be assessed for superior level the candidate must already be a textbook author or have written methodological research papers.) Regarding remuneration, teachers are

awarded two minimum salaries for the second level degree, three minimum salaries for the first level degree, and four for the superior level degree.

The necessity of establishing a system of supporting the professional development of teachers in special institutions through initial training and in-service training is evident. Teachers from mainstream schools are not trained additionally for work with disabled children and there is no additional training for experts like psychologists and pedagogues who work with children with special education needs. The institutions that provide in-service training for teachers in special schools are the State Pedagogical University Ion Creanga, the Institute of Pedagogical Science and the ProDidactica Education Centre. The “Cascade” method is used in in-service training according to which training starts centrally and then spreads out progressively into local training at the regional level and finally at school level.

The first speciality dealing with education for disabled children was “Defectology”, affiliated in 1970 to the Philology Faculty of University Ion Creanga. Some years later, in 1973, the Faculty of Defectology was created, which started to train teachers in the field of special psycho-pedagogy and speech therapy. During this period of time, 1 700 specialists graduated from this Faculty. In 1995 and later in 1999 two new specialities appeared: special psycho-pedagogy and social assistance; and psychology and speech therapy. Teachers at this university are trained at three departments: psychology, applied psychology and in special psycho-pedagogy and social assistance. During the last few years, the speciality in social assistance appeared at the State University of Moldova and the universities in Cahul and Balti.

## **How parents can help teachers**

The role of parents in educating children with disabilities is very important, especially through a partnership between parents and teachers in their everyday struggle for solving their children’s problems. Parents look for better solutions for their children but their attempts may lack specific knowledge about how to educate them. In order to have parents as partners, it is essential to organise meetings and workshops for parents together with school psychologists, speech therapists, special educators, doctors and others, so that parents can learn about their children’s difficulties and how they can help them. Participation of parents in their child’s assessment can also be arranged. Regular meetings between teachers and parents to discuss their child’s progress and to make the parents conscious both of the capacities and the limits of their children should be held. An effective method to assist parents in their support of teachers may be the elaboration

of recommendations for the parents of disabled children as well as the involvement of parents in planning and elaborating individual education programmes in order to prepare them for work or for post secondary education after leaving school. People with disabilities have many skills that could be developed with the appropriate support.

## Conclusion

The special education system in Moldova relies primarily on a network of over 60 institutions of various types located throughout the country. These institutions classify students primarily by their juridical status in relation to the availability of appropriate parental care and according to their special education needs. Mainstream schools have only occasional interaction with special education. The National Programme for Education Development and the National Education for All Strategy foresee essential reform of the education system for the coming years including an emphasis on inclusion of children from disadvantaged groups and the development of the appropriate legal, normative frameworks and sufficient human and financial resources.

Since May 2005, the Republic of Moldova has adhered to the Bologna Process. Although dealing primarily with higher education, this process could have a positive impact upon general secondary education and upon special education as well. One of the objectives of the Bologna Process is access to quality education for all. The major objective of the National Education for All Strategy (the Special Education component) is assurance of quality education for all children, especially for children with special education needs. This objective is not a utopia and should be a reality for Moldova, to be achieved step by step, through the realisation of the following activities: the promotion of the policy of integration and inclusion of children with special education needs into the general education system; the assurance of equal chances, rights and responsibilities for all children and especially for those in difficult situations by improving the didactic and technical equipment of their schools and by offering decent living conditions; the enlargement and diversification of education and medical services for children with special needs and the elaboration and implementation of the new curriculum, which must be flexible and adjusted to the needs of disabled children.

In addition, for the special needs education system to be developed more completely, adequate remuneration should be provided to the pedagogical

staff in accordance with the evaluations of their activity; social and professional protection to teachers, especially for those from rural areas, should be assured; and new education technologies in the education process should be implemented. Public opinion should be improved in relation to the responsibilities of the whole society and each person towards children with special education needs and national legislation should be adjusted to existing international standards as evidenced in international agreements. New methods of initial and in-service training for the staff of special institutions and for the staff of the general schools, where children with special education needs should be integrated or included should be put into practice. New mechanisms of financing special institutions should be created and implemented. A national database including indicators of assessment and monitoring of special institutions at the central and local levels should be developed and centres providing psycho-pedagogical services should be opened. Complex medical, social and psycho-pedagogical programmes for identification, support and rehabilitation of students from at risk groups should be created. In addition, support for gifted children, especially those from disadvantaged families should be encouraged and new ways of providing textbooks, especially for children from disadvantaged families, should be found.



## Chapter 7 – Montenegro

The National Report on “Education Policies for at Risk Students and those with Disabilities” of Montenegro describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as reform efforts underway. This specific area of education has been specifically addressed by the system-wide education reform that began in the year 2000, supported by several international organisations and non-governmental organisations. Authors stress that special needs education is currently undergoing tremendous transition and changes in legislation are currently being developed in a draft law for children with special needs. As all other reports presented in this book, this account covers the following sections: a short overview of the education system followed by chapters describing the legal framework policies focusing on special groups, statistics and indicators, and the current situation of teacher training, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. The concept of integration and inclusion are central issues, and attention is paid to barriers and problems of inclusion and equity in education, to parents’ participation and other support services. The report also gives an insight on a number of pilot projects which aim for the further development of an inclusive approach to education for children with special needs in Montenegro.



## Introduction

Montenegro was a part of the Former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was a socialist country in which the social welfare of all citizens was central to government philosophy. Government policies in Montenegro continue to reflect this heritage, such as in equal rights and the rights of the child. Montenegrin authorities are aware they must design, organise and maintain the type of education services that will enable children with developmental difficulties to learn and grow according to their abilities, needs and interests. In 2000, Montenegro launched a wide reform of the education system, with the aim of attaining equal rights and access to education for all children, incorporating a philosophy of lifelong learning and a dedication to continuous improvement. The education reform acknowledges basic human rights, including the child's right for education. With the appointment of a new government in January 2003, education issues gained in importance as reforms in education, public administration and economics were the three priorities during its tenure.

According to the last census held in 2003, Montenegro has a population of 672 565, including Montenegrins living abroad. Montenegro has maintained a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society, even during the wars of recent decades in surrounding countries. The education system in Montenegro is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. There are 20 pre-school institutions in Montenegro with approximately 13 500 children, divided into about 400 groups; a great majority of the children are pre-schoolers older than three years of age. Just 21% of children attend pre-school institutions, which are established and funded by the Government, a low overall rate compared to the European average. There are 161 elementary schools in Montenegro with approximately 77 000 pupils. The average number of students per class is 22.49, with urban schools facing the problem of overcrowded classrooms (in some cases there are up to 40 pupils in a class). On the other end of the scale are small rural schools that consolidate different students of different grades into one classroom to justify the minimum criteria for holding instruction.

Within the overall education reform process, the Ministry of Education and Science created a long-term vision of the system of education that Montenegro needs to establish in the coming years. The basic philosophy of the reform is to create a system that meets the individual needs of every child. Elementary (compulsory) education was extended from eight to nine years, with children starting to attend elementary school at the age of six

years, one year earlier than previously. Reformed elementary education, was implemented in 20 elementary schools in Montenegro as of September 2004 and 27 additional elementary schools in September 2005 (from a total of 161 elementary schools). The new system will be divided into three cycles of three years each; shifts from one education cycle to another approximately coinciding with the development phases of a child. Furthermore, each cycle will set global developmental and education goals as standards of knowledge; corresponding to standards of developed European countries. The Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro is planning to introduce reform proposals in all schools of Montenegro by the year 2009.

Education in the first cycle of three years (grades 1-3) would be performed by one teacher for all subjects, accompanied by an educator during part-time working hours in the first grade only (when students are about 6 years of age). Evaluation would be descriptive, which would significantly facilitate passing into the system of compulsory education. In the second cycle of three years (grades 4-6), teachers for individual subjects are introduced, a foreign language teacher in grade 4 and in grade 5 teachers for fine arts, music and physical education. Finally, in grade 6 individual teachers will teach all subjects. In the third cycle (grades 7-9), individual teachers will also teach each subject. The reform proposals give the pupils an option for the first time in Montenegro to elect subjects they will study during compulsory education according to their capacities and interests.

The success in individual subjects is generally measured by exams and numerical marks, with those from grades 4-6 complemented with written explanations. At the end of each cycle, external testing will be organised (after grade 3 in mother tongue and mathematics, after grade 6 in mother tongue, mathematics and foreign language and after grade 9 in mother tongue, mathematics and an optional subject). As pupils finish elementary school, they can choose to continue their schooling by entering gymnasium (four years), technical or art school (four years), or vocational school (3-4 years). At this point, pupils can be enrolled in secondary schools after the successful completion of enrolment exams taken after the eighth grade. There are eight gymnasiums in Montenegro, entry to which is very competitive, and the gymnasium curriculum is carried out in an additional 12 locations across the country (those schools are otherwise focused on vocational curricula). Some 30% of all secondary education pupils are involved in gymnasium curricula, while the rest are enrolled in vocational education and training. At the end of gymnasium, the pupils take the Matura exam. Students can also receive training for one of 178 vocational profiles in 17 vocational fields. Those who pass the Matura exam (who successfully complete level IV of vocational schooling) can enrol in university.

A novelty in the reformed education system, in which focus shifts to the student, is that the Matura exam at the end of high school (to be organised by an independent professional institution – the Examination Centre of Montenegro) will guarantee university admission. A Bureau for Education Services has also been founded to improve the overall education process. The tertiary system in Montenegro is small, with only one University consisting of 15 faculties and institutes spread over various locations both inside and outside of Podgorica. The number of students is estimated to be around 8 000 and the academic staff between 670 and 700. There are no private higher education institutions and, for some disciplines, Montenegrin students have no choice other than attending university outside Montenegro, primarily in neighbouring Serbia. This is true, for instance, for students who want to continue specialist studies in topics such as pedagogy, psychology, speech therapy and special education teaching.

### *Special needs education*

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for all aspects of education, including special education. The ministry plans to establish special commissions that will design standards for regulating the number of pupils per class of a particular type and degree of disability. The ministry will also monitor pupils' abilities in relation to the implementation of new curricula. Appropriate professional teams composed of speech therapists or special teachers will be introduced into mainstream schools. In order to implement and monitor these activities, and to approach European standards, the Montenegrin Government wishes to establish expert teams which will co-ordinate the work of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Health in the area of education, social care and protection of children with special needs.

The reformed school opens the door for integration of children with special needs in regular education, as can be seen in these basic proposals and for the possibility of adjusting the curriculum and teaching process to such children, according to individual needs. The Montenegrin education system aims to integrate or include children with special needs in regular schools, if possible. Children with minor developmental difficulties are included in regular kindergarten groups. However, a maximum number of children with developmental difficulties is established per class, to avoid overly demanding work for teachers. Education and treatment should involve professional collaborators such as psychologists, pedagogues, special education teachers and speech therapists, who can monitor these children and assist their parents and teachers. If kindergartens or schools do not have properly trained staff, professionals from other specialised institutions must be engaged. If conditions permit, new developmental

groups exclusively for children with severe developmental difficulties should also be formed.

Inclusive education exists in certain elementary schools throughout the country. These programmes have been developed over the last decade. A law being drafted on education for children with special needs and inclusive education is considered “imperative” in the reformed school system. Inclusion is most regularly implemented through attached classes in elementary schools and has been greatly assisted by several projects that will be discussed further below. Specific plans also exist to address the needs of at risk children.

## **Legal framework**

Different laws regulate special education: the General Law on Education (2002), the Law on Pre-school Education (2002), the Law on Elementary Education (2002), the Law on Gymnasiums (2002), the Law on Secondary Vocational Education (2002) and the Law on Adult Education (2002). The Special Education Law (1992) was replaced by the Law on Education of Children with Special Needs which was passed in December 2004. Special education is under the exclusive authority of the Ministry of Education and Science. A special group of experts from different fields decides about the needs of pupils to be educated in special conditions.

### **Pre-school education**

Pre-school institutions are regulated by the Law on Pre-school Education, published in the “Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro”, No. 64, (2002). Article 3 refers to the coverage of children in pre-school education, including children before they start elementary school. Article 9 provides for inclusion of children with special needs. Article 11 defines the term “children with special needs” as both gifted children and children with developmental disorders. In addition, the Law recognises the difference between children at risk and children with deficiencies in growth. In this definition, children at risk are all children with some risk factor who demand special attention and monitoring of their development (resulting from the mother’s pregnancy, genetic disorders or other factors). Deficiency in growth is defined as damage of some functions or cessation of development.

Article 18 refers to special programmes determining the form and content of education work with children with developmental disorders who cannot be included in regular classes and who are placed in developmental groups. This article includes the obligation of developing individual programmes for children with developmental disorders who can be included in regular training groups in the kindergarten. Special teacher-pedagogues carry out education work with this population (Article 28).

## **Elementary education**

The General Law on Education (2002) states, in Article 9: “the citizens of the Republic are equal in exercising their right to education, regardless of their national affiliation, race, sex, language, religion, social origin or other personal qualification”. Since elementary schools are compulsory and free of charge, education for all the children is an obligation, the fulfilment of which is the responsibility of the government.

Children with developmental delays who need adjustments of the compulsory education curricula, along with additional professional assistance, or who need a special education curriculum, complete elementary education in line with the Law on Elementary Education (Article 9) and other regulations. The education of children with learning difficulties should be, according to the Law, carried out in such a manner that the school shall adjust the methods and the forms of work and enable learning through remedial teaching and other methods of individual and group help. Children with developmental delays may complete elementary education in mainstream schools on the basis of the decision of the competent commission, the “Commission for Categorisation”, that they may be included in regular teaching. The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for prescribing the enrolment process and the organisation of their education.

Adjusted methods and forms of work are also available for talented pupils: the Law on Elementary Education gives the right to extra teaching in line with a separate curriculum (Article 10). As with kindergartens, trained professionals in the elementary schools are responsible for working with children with special needs. Psychologists, pedagogues, sociologists, speech therapists and special education teachers assist the teacher who works with a child with special needs (Article 11).

## **At risk children**

Montenegro does not have a precise definition regarding the education of at risk students and is still seeking the correct balance of the

interpretations of the social and medical models that exist in Montenegro. The above-mentioned definition of children at risk indicates a medical risk of developing disabilities in the future.

In addition, children may be treated for social and psychological problems. Behavioural disorders indicating maladjustment can be reflected in such acts as running away from home and school, vagrancy, conflicts with parents or illegal conduct (minor offences and criminal acts). In March 2004, the Government of Montenegro adopted the Strategy of Prevention of Behavioural Disorders that defines children at risk as children with “conduct potentially carrying unacceptable elements”. The National Programme of Prevention of Unacceptable Behaviour of Children and Youth in Montenegro is seeking to address the problems outlined in the Strategy.

### **Law on education for children with special needs**

In addition to the above-mentioned legal framework, the Ministry of Education and Science has also formed a special commission that prepared the first draft of the Law on Education of Children with Special Needs, which was forwarded to the Council of Europe for comments. The law was passed by the parliament of Montenegro in December 2004. This law embodies acceptable amendments based on the comments given by the Council of Europe and other international organisations (UNICEF, Foundation Open Society Institute Representative Office Montenegro - FOSIROM, etc.). The law defines:

- 1) General provisions – content of laws, definitions of children with special needs, compulsory components, rights to choose curriculum, aims of education, delivery of education, financing of education, glossary.
- 2) Organisation of education work – curriculum, education of children in pre-school elementary and secondary school, curriculum with adjusted content, special curriculum, individual curriculum, specialised and mobile services.
- 3) Procedure for acceptance into a curriculum – procedure of directing, commission for directing children with special needs, objection to commission conclusion, criteria for directing children, enrolment conditions, organisation of education at home, organisation of education within health institutions, financing; teachers, professional associates and associates – teachers in preschool institutions and in special institutions.
- 4) Transitional and final provisions – curriculum, timeline for the commission appointments, regulations, etc.



A suggestion was also made to consider incorporating the appropriate provisions as addenda to the General Law on Education instead of developing a separate law on special education. The commission and local experts considered this option by comparing experiences from other countries.

## **Policy review focusing on special groups**

In Montenegro, the term “children with special needs” is used for children with developmental difficulties as well as for gifted children. The education system in Montenegro, through integration and inclusion, hopes to provide equal chances to all children to be educated in conformity with their capacities and in the hopes of attaining the highest possible degree of independence and social integration to take an active part in everyday life. The integration and inclusion model for children with special needs is currently applied in some pre-schools and elementary schools in Montenegro, as will be shown later in this report. In the reformed education system, a policy for inclusive education will aim to accommodate the individual needs of all children, not only those with developmental delays. The inclusive system accepts that children are different and that methods used in learning must be adjusted to the needs and level of development of the child. Schools are obliged to make organisational and staffing preparations for the fulfilment of this requirement, so that children from various marginalised groups may be accepted, particularly disabled children or children with learning difficulties.

The percentage of children with identified special needs integrated into regular schools is approximately 4%. This estimation is given based on the WHO document “Yugoslav Action Plan” adopted by the Government of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in December 1996. (The Ministry of Education and Science estimates that this number should be even higher than 4% and is aware of the growing need for professionals to deal with challenges of providing efficient education solutions to this population). Obstacles to implementation of the new inclusive education legislation remain. The main hindrances are insufficiently trained teaching staff, under-equipped schools, architectural barriers and prejudice on the part of both adults and other children.

Regular schools, in almost all major towns and cities in Montenegro, also have special classrooms with adjusted curricula, which are attended by children with mild disorders in intellectual functioning (with special

teachers, special pedagogues engaged). The lessons are designed to meet students' special needs and differ according to the type of disability: children with hearing and speech disabilities, intellectual or physical disabilities as well as children with behavioural disorders are all provided for. The teaching process in these schools is adjusted to students' abilities and courses are followed by corrective rehabilitation procedures and exercises such as: special training for children with hearing problems, corrective gymnastics, psychomotor exercises, psychological and neuro-psychiatric treatments; these are all conducted by trained professionals in the fields of social pedagogy, psychology, medicine and physiotherapy.

For children with moderately severe and very severe disorders who account for a third of the population of children with special needs, no education is available in regular schools, nor are there other care options in the form of day-care centres. Tertiary education, though legally accessible, does not accommodate the needs of students with impaired hearing or sight, either in methods of teaching and evaluation, or in structural respects such as access to buildings for students in wheelchairs.

Families with children with functional disorders confront a variety of difficulties, including serious financial and other problems. In Montenegro, there is no organised system of early diagnosis, prevention, and monitoring of children with difficulties in development. There are no advisory centres for pregnant women and no possibility for prenatal detection of disorders. The absence of counselling centres for parents of children with developmental problems has led to complaints by many parents of unpleasant experiences, including insufficient education and attitude of medical staff. The availability of physical rehabilitation is restricted, under law, to a certain number of treatments by category of disorder, a limitation that has not been updated. In addition, during the child's treatment or rehabilitation at a centre away from home, the parent or companion has to cover his or her own expenses, a significant factor against carrying out rehabilitation of this type. Combined with the insufficiency of the financial allowance received, (60% of the lowest salary or about EUR 30), which is, furthermore, irregularly disbursed (at the date of this report allowance payments were 9 months late), it is clear that families with children with special needs are faced with serious financial challenges. Unlike in some countries, where subsidies for electricity bills, transportation, aids and medicines, as well as tax relief, may be available, in Montenegro, assistance in paying these expenses has not been adequately implemented. Only telephone expenses can be reimbursed. In addition, family income most frequently comes from one parent only since Montenegro does not have day-care centres for children in cases when inclusion is not feasible.

No established evaluation criteria for enrolment testing of children with special needs in mainstream schooling exist. These children are not “exempted” from exams at the end of elementary school and they cannot proceed directly to secondary schools. It is important to note a difference in evaluation of children with special needs, who should be evaluated based on their individual level of achievement and not specifically on knowledge in particular subjects. For example, evaluation could include how much of a child’s potential has developed; *e.g.*, whether mathematics has developed and improved the child’s thinking and logical functions or, *e.g.*, whether mother tongue has fostered the child’s speech capabilities. Enrolment for university does not differ from enrolment for secondary school: the status of future students with special needs is similar to that of secondary school enrolment. In other words, the status of future students with special needs is not regulated separately. The criteria do not take their psycho-physical condition and status into account.

In addition, over the last eight years, only seven persons with impairments have found employment out of over 560 registered with the Employment Office of Montenegro (including about 30 with university degrees). Current employment policy and practice do not encourage persons with disabilities to register and look for positions. Even in situations when it may be possible, educated persons with developmental disorders are still not finding employment, which opens the question of raising public awareness about persons with special needs in Montenegro.

## **Categorisation**

In accordance with the current Law on Special Education (1992) and related rules and regulations, the Ministry of Education, together with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, have formed a joint Republican Commission for the review and classification of children and youth with developmental difficulties. This Commission examines and classifies about 400 young people with developmental difficulties a year. The children who are judged to be capable of engaging in education and training, under special conditions, are sent to special education institutions in Montenegro. Regarding the regular school system, specialists in the Commission may give a recommendation both to parents and to the appropriate education unit, but they do not offer the plan and programme for the specific child that would suit his or her own individual needs and abilities. The commission is checking and analysing medical documentation that is gathered for each child sent to this Commission. On this basis the Commission decides on the following categories: 1) children with mental and physical disabilities, 2) children with behaviour disabilities, 3) children with severe chronic illness, 4) children with emotional disorders,

5) combination of disorders, 6) permanently ill children, and 7) children with learning problems.

The decision-making process is currently based on medical approach that is likely to be changed in the future. Based on the opinion of the specialised service of the institution, (*i.e.* Podgorica Clinical Hospital Developmental Counselling Service), the need for special education is then identified. It is up to parents to make a final decision on whether they want to send their child for education to a special institution.

There is an obvious need for reform of the current categorisation commission that works at the Republican level, which places children into categories based on only one examination. In comparison, diagnoses in many parts of the world include longer observation periods and continuous monitoring of a child in adequate conditions with subsequent referral to appropriate treatment and education opportunities. The inadequacy of the existing categorisation on national level led to the proposal at a meeting organised by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the non-governmental sector, to establish developmental counselling centres in the major municipalities. The work of these centres would include child-coaching commissions consisting of specialists of various profiles (paediatricians, psychologists, special education teachers, social workers, parents, teachers and instructors). After continued monitoring of the child, the commissions would deliver a recommendation about which type of education and tailored programme is appropriate for the child, possible proposal and design of a plan of action. The education plan should be appropriate for the kind of difficulty and types of capabilities that the child has, anticipating the child's potential and development possibilities. The implementation of individualised programmes would require regular monitoring in order to better adjust the programme to the child's characteristics and adequate satisfaction of the child's needs.

### **Inclusive model in pre-school institutions**

The process of integration of children with developmental difficulties began, formally, in 1992, with the establishment of a development group in one of the kindergartens of the Ljubica Popović Preschool Public Institution in Podgorica, which integrated children with mild disorders of psycho-physical and mental development such as Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy and other mild to moderate intellectual disabilities. A special teacher and a nurse work with this group, which still exists in this kindergarten. Education progresses under individual stimulation programmes implemented by the special education teacher. The development group is a form of partial integration and the children there have the possibility to participate in

celebrations, performances, to visit other groups together with children from other groups. Up to six children are enrolled in a development group.

In 1998, the same kindergarten started the pilot project “Integration of Children with Special Needs in Regular Kindergarten Groups” in co-operation with the NGO, Save the Children-UK (described further below). At the initial stage, four children were integrated in two groups. From year to year, the number of integrated children increased, along with the number of pre-school institutions included in the project. The project lasted until 2002 and at the final stage encompassed 46 children with developmental disorders in 23 training groups in various pre-school institutions. During the implementation of the project, the process of integration grew into the process of inclusion. The process of integration implied integration in a physical sense only, while the process of inclusion meant offering each child, with or without developmental difficulties, the possibility to be stimulated in all aspects of their growth.

The inclusive model of working in the kindergarten—a child-friendly kindergarten—is accessible to every child, with or without difficulties in development; and a positive climate in a group will create mutual acceptance between children with special needs and other children of the same age. Instructors are trained additionally for work with every child; they are trained to recognise the capabilities of a child, to develop programmes to encourage them and to approach every child as a unique personality (about 60 instructors and teaching assistants have undergone supplemental training so far). Focus in the child-friendly kindergarten is on active participation of children with special needs in activities planned for all. In that way, their potential may be revealed and their development stimulated. For greater efficiency in implementation of activities with children with special needs, kindergartens co-operate with medical institutions, development-counselling centres and other relevant institutions that might be helpful to kindergartens and parents.

Furthermore, the needs of a child and development of the child’s capabilities, as a specific structure of personality of each child, are the basic criteria for individualisation of the programme. Individual education plans are made for children with special needs – based on the assessment of a child before coming to the kindergarten and during their studies; the instructor, professional counsellor and the parent make individual plans for the child and participate in its implementation. Individual work with these children is reduced to a minimum and is exercised only in cases when certain activities cannot be organised in groups of children of the same age. Children with special needs should be continually monitored for further planning. The parent, who is a part of a team, together with instructors and counsellors, participates in making decisions that refer to her or his child.

Parents are partners with instructors and professional counsellors in the kindergartens in the view of monitoring and encouraging the child's development.

In the Programme for Areas of Activities in Pre-school Education (developed by the National Council for Curricula – Commission for Preschool Education, 2002) attention is also paid to children with special needs, including both children with developmental disorders and talented children. This Programme defines the term of children with special needs and lists the specific features of the inclusive programme. It includes general instructions for work with children with developmental disorders and for classification of functional disorders. The teaching plan for children with developmental disorders is not specified in advance because it cannot be the same for all children. The Programme does, however, indicate the appropriate elements of an individual education plan (the current level of development of the child, annual tasks and objectives, monitoring the development of the child, interaction with other children in a group, special education services provided, required individual modifications and the manner of informing parents about the progress achieved by the child). Evaluation is a component of the overall education process, including the education process in kindergartens.

The inclusive education programme has become common practice in pre-school institutions, partly due to the nature of these institutions, which do not necessarily offer formal education for children such as that in elementary schools. The result is that a far greater number of children are covered by inclusion in kindergartens and a large number of kindergarten instructors and teachers are trained for working with these children.

### **Inclusive model in elementary schools in Montenegro**

Inclusion in regular schools is an objective of the reformed schooling system, which is considered imperative. Children will be included according to their geographic location when the competent commission finds that inclusion is the optimum form of schooling for a child, in agreement with the child's parents and the school. The education programme is then adjusted to the child with a developmental disorder, with additional professional assistance. Education of children with learning difficulties is performed in such a way that the school will adjust its methods and forms of work and enable inclusion in supplemental classes and other form of individual or group assistance. The classroom should not have more than 18 pupils and a "Step by Step" programme should be applied, based upon the interests of the child, with implementation including an individualised plan designed for a child with developmental disorders.

Before inclusive education was introduced, a survey was conducted in 37 elementary schools in Montenegro. The questions assessed whether children with developmental difficulties were included in the schools and, if so, what kind of disabilities they had, whether teachers had had any previous experience with such children and what respondents thought about integration of children with special needs into the regular education processes. The findings of the survey clearly suggested, as expected, the need for the Ministry of Education and Science to take an active part in this field, for which co-operation with the UNICEF – Podgorica office, the Pedagogical Centre (an NGO dealing with education, founded as a spin-off of Soros Foundation Activities in Montenegro) and Save the Children UK has been invaluable.

The core principles of inclusive education in elementary schools are integration and special care for pupils with special needs. The primary objective is to enable a pupil to develop in conformity with his or her capabilities. Commissions will be formed that will set special norms and regulate the number of pupils, type and degree of impairment and scope of integration in regular school. Professionals will perform these duties in co-operation with teachers and parents. The teaching plans and curricula shall be applied based on the pupil's capacities. In accordance with these principles, mainstream elementary schools need to introduce additional professional services such as speech therapy, special pedagogy, oligophrenology, somatology, typhology. Moreover, the school buildings need to be adjusted structurally for children with developmental disorders. At present, out of 161 schools in Montenegro, 10 have 21 special classrooms for education of children with mild intellectual disabilities. The Inclusive Education Programme that the Ministry of Education and Science runs in co-operation with the Save the Children UK comprises 12 schools and 67 children with diverse difficulties in development.

## Resources

Significant funds are still needed in order to adjust the infrastructure of kindergartens to children's needs. Resources available for the education of children with special needs were, at least temporarily, greater in those pre-school institutions that were covered by the project "Integration of Children with Special Needs" in co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Science, Save the Children-UK and UNICEF. These organisations provided didactic tools in the training groups that were part of the project. The project covered 23 children groups in kindergartens in 15 municipalities in Montenegro, which included 46 children with developmental disorders (9 groups and 18 children in Podgorica; two groups and four children in

Nikšić, and two children in each of the inclusive groups in kindergartens 12 other localities.)

Overall, funds provided for the education of children with special needs have been minimal. Training in the inclusive model of education has been received by just a small number of teachers and technical assistants; additional funds would need to be provided for training of the remaining staff in kindergartens. At other education levels, funds are needed for investments in existing infrastructure, teacher training and provision of special teaching tools. Ways must be found in the future to ensure additional investments needed to improve the overall quality of education of children with special needs.

## **Students at risk**

As mentioned above, the Government of Montenegro has adopted a Strategy for Prevention of Unacceptable Behaviour of Children and the Young in Montenegro, defining “children at risk” as children with potential behaviour that “carries elements of the unacceptable”. This Strategy report treats behavioural problems from the perspective of social and psychological definitions of children at risk; the main conclusions are presented below.

At risk behaviours are determined by three key criteria: degree to which the behaviour differs from the majority of other young people in the same community; degree of harm or danger for the concerned individual and her or his environment and demand for additional expertise and other social assistance (without which it is not realistic to expect that the young person will overcome such behaviour). At risk behaviours are often in violation of the provisions of the penal code and other written and unwritten norms, customs and ethics. The National Programme of Prevention of Unacceptable Behaviour of Children and the Young in Montenegro is the result of the co-ordinated efforts of a large number of multidisciplinary team members from Government and non-government sectors in health, education, labour and social welfare, criminal justice and judiciary. The National Programme resulting from this Strategy establishes the main principles of the state policy for supervision of unacceptable youth behaviour for the period 2005-2007. The strategic objectives of the National Programme include the establishment of clear responsibilities for individual jurisdictions as well as requirements for state and public bodies to meet their constitutional and legal obligations related to the protection of the young. In addition, the establishment of greater co-operation among government, non-government and civil society sectors is another goal. Legislation related to child and youth protection will need improvement and more favourable conditions for successful education, especially among vulnerable categories of the



population, should be created. Finally, the mobilisation of available resources is required in order to raise public awareness about healthy life styles that assist in avoiding risk factors and preventing unacceptable behaviour of the young.

The implementing parties defined in the National Programme are the Ministries of Health; Education and Science; Labour and Social Welfare, Internal Affairs and Justice, as well as other institutions and administrations, including NGOs whose programmes are supported by the Government of Montenegro. All ministries concerned are obliged to review past activities and upgrade current policies for the prevention of unacceptable behaviour of the young in conformity with their financial, human and other resources. The Ministry of Education and Science has specifically outlined the following projected goals and activities:

*In pre-school education:* The assurance of material and other conditions needed to increase the coverage of pre-school children in elementary and other programmes (especially the short programmes covering children one year before starting elementary school and two-year programmes before elementary school for children with developmental disabilities). The elementary and short programme coverage gives priority to children living in situations of increased risk (poor financial conditions of the family, social-pathological circumstances in the family). MES will monitor the development and conditions in which children live and undertake timely measures to remove difficulties from the child's development when possible, especially those causing maladjusted social behaviour. MES will keep competent health institutions regularly informed and, immediately before starting elementary school, will inform the school about the prior development history of the child; and ensure education in regular and special conditions for children with developmental disabilities (implementing parties are the pre-school institutions)

In addition to the above activities, MES will continue application of diverse programmes that have shown positive results in improving pre-school education, especially in work with pupils at risk, and will continue application of the "Step by Step" programme. MES plans to extend the application of the inclusive education programme to pre-school institutions, enabling the special needs children to join age groups according to a geographic basis, decrease the number of children in groups and bring them to optimum level; and extend the coverage of at risk, displaced or Roma children of pre-school age in elementary school preparatory programmes.

*In elementary education:* MES aims to create instructions, or other publications, through which the school will better educate the pupils and their parents of the pupils' rights and responsibilities at the beginning of the

school year. MES will also disclose and identify, in a timely manner, unfavourable social conditions in which the children live and reveal and identify children with difficulties in development and social behaviour. MES also aims to stimulate and support pupils who show explicit interest and capacity for a particular education area, including the possibility to receive education and training under special (accelerated) programmes. MES will also make it possible for youth older than 14 years of age who have not completed elementary school to do so under a special programme and refer pupils for professional guidance before enrolment in secondary schools.

*At risk students:* Implementation of various programmes that have shown positive results in the improvement of the education process should be continued, especially in work with pupils at risk. These include: organised attendance of “outdoor” school; non-violent conflict resolution; the pilot project “Behaviour Change through Play” (pupils in grades 4-6); individual programmes with children with problems, training and involvement in peer counselling work; and peer training for pupils with learning difficulties and difficulties in social behaviour. Also important are drug-abuse prevention programmes (for pupils from grades 5-8); availability of other activities and involvement of parents in direct work in the classroom. Extended stay in schools for at risk students could be provided, with courses and meals in the school, when facilities exist, possibly in co-operation with the local trade and catering school.

MES will also encourage integration of special needs children in regular classes; co-operation and information exchange among professional services in pre-schools, elementary and secondary schools and school dispensaries related to the aptitudes, possible difficulties and problems of particular children. Other programmes will develop pupils’ creativity, with the assistance of all teachers, particularly those in the areas of fine arts, technical education, physical education and music.

## **Barriers to inclusion**

Children and youth with developmental disorders represent a group of persons, whose emotional, cognitive and social development is burdened with difficulties. The inflexible social environment is difficult to manoeuvre for children with development delays; parents have many other responsibilities and others are not educated as to how to respond to children’s needs in an optimal fashion. The family and society in which a child develops are prepared for “average” children. Therefore, a child with disorders is exposed to additional frustrations and hindrances in their development, already restricted by their different capabilities, resulting in the accumulation of adverse conditions.

The views of parents and family environments differ according to a variety of factors; urban milieus have become more open and have advanced tremendously in recent years. However, in most cases, families are characterised by denial, a feeling of shame and disgrace and very ambivalent behaviour ranging from overly aggressive and protective to a hidden or open rejection of the child. None too rarely, especially in rural and primitive settings, problems are being hidden as well as the children because they are not registered by the parents and therefore not being diagnosed. Montenegrin society, which has still not developed sensitivity and positive attitudes towards children with special needs, their parents and families, is still characterised by great prejudice, cruelty and harshness in this regard. The community does not look favourably on families that have a child with difficulties; they can condemn or reject children with disabilities or consider them “incomplete” or “imperfect”. The school setting can heighten parents’ fears of discrimination, resulting in the child either being sent to regular schooling without assistance or not entering the school system at all (so that parents themselves can avoid being “labelled”). Some parents, who accept the problems of their child, may be unrealistic in their expectations; they could be too demanding or overly sensitive, and perceive the environment as hostile, which leads to misunderstandings, conflicts and disagreements.

In the system of regular schooling, there is also resistance and mistrust on the part of teachers who look upon these children as a problem and are sceptical of their capacities to achieve. This is the result of the general cultural context and a lack of adequate professional education and training that would prepare teachers for work in special education. In addition, working conditions for teachers are poor, salaries are low and there are no incentives. The teachers that work with these children often point to the lack of co-operation from parents, inappropriate expectations, an ad hoc approach by the school system, a lack of other professional staff and their own inadequate education. Furthermore, teachers also see the parents of other children as a problem. Other parents are unwelcoming, believing that their children will have less time with the teacher, and they lack appreciation of individual evaluations of the achievement of a child with special needs who is not judged, as others are, under the usual school grading system.

Teachers and professional assistants in education institutions are not generally educated about children with special needs or have only basic knowledge and, in either case, they very frequently lack practical experience. In addition, Montenegro does not have many specialists (psychologists, special education teachers, social workers, etc.) to be involved in the education process. Teachers expect greater and more frequent supervision, concrete guidelines and approaches that are more instructive in their work. Teachers, pedagogical and psychological staff in

schools need assistance in overcoming the problems encountered in their work through greater co-operation with experts in organising the individualised teaching process. Specifically, assistance in developing ready-made schedules, schemes and concrete instructions in place of teacher's intuitive approaches for what is appropriate for a particular child he or she works with, could improve the situation. In addition, there is a problem of insufficient financing for additional payments for teachers, educators and instructors, which they expect to receive. School pedagogical and psychological services, frequently, simply avoid getting involved, leaving teachers on their own.

Cases of “unguided” enrolments in school, in practice, can lead to situations in which children, without special monitoring, end up following a regular curriculum that was not adjusted to his or her individual capacity. These situations result from inadequately trained staff, having a negative impact on the socialisation, development and education of both that child and other children in the classroom, creating dissatisfaction among parents and teachers.

Teachers also mention that there is no co-ordination in their work with others, no regular exchange of experience, information, suggestions and advice, and no further education. Another barrier may also be a lack of inter-disciplinary communication and reference among various institutions treating children with special needs, as well as a generally accepted definition and terminological determination of the inclusive education concept. The existing system has still not established an efficient way to share information about individual children. Therefore, for example, although a pre-school institution may have records and information about a certain child, this is not passed on to the elementary school attended by that child. The situation is similar where connections between sectors are concerned. For example, the information possessed by the Social Welfare Centre is not always forwarded to the school attended by a child with special needs in order to adequately organise the child's further education.

Montenegro does not have a register of special needs children in place. Information about these children as well as children at risk varies from one institution to another. Many of these children have never been categorised or registered as children with difficulties and have not exercised their social rights, primarily because their parents were not ready to publicly manage their child's problems and there has not been a strong state mechanism to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities in school. This problem is especially significant in rural areas of Montenegro.

## Advantages for inclusion

Advantages in the field of education of children with special needs in Montenegro are, first of all, the established awareness of state institutions, the will for reform and the determination of the Ministry of Education and Science to enable these children to access their right to education and the basic principles that are already laid down and offered in the “Book of Changes” (document presenting the long-term vision of the education system that Montenegro is aiming to create in the future). There are also a great number of NGOs that continue to highlight the importance of education for children with special needs and international donors that have already worked on the implementation and introduction of this concept in schools and have trained a number of teachers in their projects. There are also young, educated people with civic awareness, knowledge of human rights and open-mindedness about people who are different, as well as new generations of parents who can better perceive and understand this problem. Thanks to Save the Children UK, UNICEF and the Pedagogical Centre, there have been many teachers who have been trained through these projects, resulting in at least a critical number of people who can accommodate this demand. Another positive point is that Montenegro is not a large community and it is estimated that, proportionate to the population, the number of these children is not too high and they can all be included.

Generally, the management teams of pre-school institutions and elementary schools show understanding and readiness to implement inclusion in their everyday work with the assistance of their professional staff. School directors know that they need to reduce the number of pupils per class and that this will improve the quality of work (reduction could be from 25 to 18 pupils per class). Also, these children are integrated in elementary school programme based on “Step by Step” principles. A considerable number of teachers of the first three grades of elementary school have already become skilled in educating children with developmental delays in a classroom. This programme is approaching the status of a regular education method in certain schools, providing grounds for the increased implementation of the inclusion programme more broadly in the future.

More and more parents are aware of and open to the possibilities offered by inclusion and are willing and ready to include their children in regular schools, giving them a chance and fulfilling their right to regular education in accordance with their possibilities.

## Parents' roles

Integration of children with developmental difficulties in pre-schools has been faced with significant obstacles. When registering a child in pre-school, parents need to submit a doctor's certificate of the child's psycho-physical condition. However, since developmental difficulties are treated as illnesses in Montenegro, parents did not have the legal right to enrol the child in kindergarten. They had been included in regular groups in kindergartens on an *ad hoc* basis, unofficially and through private connections. This means that parents had very limited possibilities for their child's education. Changes are planned so that parents now have the legal possibility and a parent will be included in the work of the Commission for the Direction.

However, significant changes have been occurring since 1998 with the beginning of the pilot project "Integration of Children with Special Needs in Regular Kindergarten Groups". Based on recommendations of the project supervisor and the Podgorica Clinical Hospital Developmental Counselling Service, parents were given a chance to enrol their disabled children together with regular children groups in kindergartens. If a child had a mild or moderate developmental delay, the parents could also place them in developmental groups. A developmental group is part of regular kindergarten which includes only children with special needs. Pre school and special education teachers work with this group. During the day, children from this group are partially integrated with children without disabilities through different games.

In the implementation of this project, the parents of children with special needs are partners in the education and teaching process. They have the opportunity to be involved in all essential decision-making connected to their child. They also have the right to stay with their child's group in the pre-school. At the first stage of the project, parents attended parents' meetings in a group at which they exchanged information about their children with professionals, such as educators and specialised counsellors, psychologists and special education teachers. At the next stage, these parents' meetings were held as individual meetings, which proved to be much more efficient. Parents, together with the educator and specialists, assessed the developmental level of the child, influenced the choice of subjects and activities that would be part of developing individual programmes for their child and carried out certain tasks from the programme. Upon the completion of this project, the pre-school teaching staff has tried to continue co-operation with parents in the same manner as during the project implementation.

Lately, the Councils of Parents have been trying to get parents more actively involved in the process of creation of school policy, by having them sitting on school boards or in other forms of involvement. They choose the school director, influence the creation of the school's plans, new ideas and projects and also evaluate the school's work. The Councils of Parents cooperate with NGOs and participate in designing projects and programmes for improving the quality of work and working conditions in education institutions. Parents could also have a more active role in the direct work in the classroom, such as in the "Step by Step" method, where parents are engaged in giving lessons on particular subjects. It is possible to change views and prejudices of those parents who feel resistance towards inclusive education and to educate other parents in this matter.

The idea of new commissions for guidance is to have the child's parent or guardian take an active part in the diagnosis and plan for the child. Parents now give case history information alone, but could contribute recommendations and suggestions for the future individualised plan for her or his child, for work with this child in the classroom. It is still not a common practice to have parents included. Only in specific cases of the problem of resistance by other parents, or even the teacher himself, are parents directly involved. Parents, usually a mother, may come into the classroom and work with their child, trying to overcome the problem, making the job easier for the teacher or even replacing him or her.

### **Assistance for children with special needs in pre-school institutions and regular schools**

In nurseries and kindergartens, teachers are the primary helpers of these children; professional counsellors with appropriate training may also assist when available. Teachers engage in regular activities with the children, trying to respect the principle of an individual approach, so that children with developmental difficulties are offered activities appropriate for their capacities. Professionals prepare individual programmes, respecting the opinion of both parents and teachers and using distinct evaluation scales. Individual work is carried out based on the individual programme, which is constantly monitored for the need to introduce changes. Nurses provide important assistance as well. The child's parent or caregiver may also visit and assist the group.

In elementary schools, from grades 1 to 4, teachers also work directly with the children and later the children are expected to continue regular further grades, based on their achievement level, this will be with or without individual programmes and further assistance. Of course, teachers do not receive pre-established individualised programmes for work with particular

children and must create these themselves to define target attainments for the child. The process is based on experience and intuition.

The professional service of an elementary school includes a pedagogue, and, only rarely, other experts such as psychologists (as prescribed by law if the number of children is more than 1 000), speech therapists, social workers and special education teachers. Data shows that in 161 primary schools in Montenegro with around 77 000 students there are: 82 pedagogues, 23 psychologists and five speech therapists. Pre-schools employ six psychologists, seven pedagogues and three pedagogues (who are also preschool directors), five speech therapists and one special education teacher.

During the last 14 years, especially in the early 1990s in response to the end of the war in the surrounding region and the various difficulties that needed to be overcome, a great number of foreign humanitarian organisations (*i.e.* UNICEF, Save the Children UK and FOSI ROM) organised many education and training programmes. These courses, intended primarily for pedagogues and psychologists, included only a small number of teachers and professional counsellors in pre-school institutions. In elementary schools, training was organised for registered teachers of the first three grades, while the specialised staff in primary schools were covered to a smaller extent.

School pedagogues counsel and educate pupils and parents, and, assist teachers with pedagogy and instruction. Counselling tasks are provided to pupils with poor grades, difficulties in adjusting to the school environment, problematic behaviour or unfavourable family and social environments. School psychologists give advice to pupils, parents and teachers and, together with homeroom teachers, get to know the psychological characteristics of pupils, examining the causes of disruption and resolving interpersonal, social and other problems of individuals and groups in the classroom. Therefore, the school pedagogue and the school psychologist do give some assistance in classes. However, as mentioned above, psychologists are much less frequently employed in schools than pedagogues. Furthermore, not all psychologists have been educated about children with developmental difficulties, only those who chose an optional course on the psychology of disabled children. This explains the lack of preparedness and competency on the part of these specialists, to create curricula and programmes for these children on their own initiative. They are, above all, oriented towards working with the child's parents, other pupils' parents and giving suggestions and recommendations to teachers and other school staff.



One novelty in the education of special needs children is the idea to form “mobile teams” that would include education and other specialists from special institutions who would assist the work of inclusive mainstream schools. Special education teachers in various fields would also participate, depending on the type of disability involved.

## Statistics and indicators

Montenegrin education statistics reporting is not well developed at present, in general and with respect to special education; there has not been adequate and reliable data available on the education system, including information about children with disabilities and their education. At the end of 2003 and beginning of 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science started intensive data-collection activities, which are expected to facilitate the preparation of a comprehensive strategy related to education of children with special needs and children at risk. Limited financial resources, knowledge and experience in this area in Montenegro has led to the coverage of these issues through co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Science and international organisations, primarily Save the Children UK, UNICEF and the Pedagogical Centre. Co-ordinators, appointed by the Ministry, monitored each of these projects.

Considering the status of statistics gathering about the education system in general, which has been extremely poor to date, the Ministry of Education and Science currently does not have precise definitions of categories under which unified information would be gathered about special needs children within the education system. The only exception is Roma children, who are defined as a category of children with special needs (language, cultural barrier and migration experience) whose integration in regular schools has already begun in co-operation with UNICEF, FOSI ROM and the Pedagogical Centre, through the project “Roma Education Initiative”.

There is no official register of persons with functional disorders in Montenegro. According to the document entitled “Yugoslav Action Plan for Children by 2000 (and after)”, adopted by the Government of FRY in December 1996, it is estimated that about 142 700 children have developmental disorders, at least 5% of whom would be from Montenegro or not less than 7 000.

It is necessary to establish the practice of following the education career of a child who demonstrates developmental delays, from birth, if appropriate. A single health card for each child, at least from birth until the

age of 18, would enable an appropriate approach to each child, including children with special needs. This would enable registration and review of further development and achievements, as well as a selection of a systematic and multidisciplinary response to their needs (in health, education and from social institutions). The form of a card is very convenient for collecting information about the child's health and other developmental characteristics that can be used for exchange and communication among service providers. The idea about the card with health, education and social information would also facilitate the work of the Categorisation Commission.

It is imperative to set up efficient and high quality commissions that would adequately assess the child's condition, offer guidelines for and conduct the education process appropriately for each child. These commissions should include medical workers, psychologists, special education teachers, as well as teachers and parents. In this way, the correct assessment of the child would be determined and the education methods to be applied in school, subject to the child's development and the parents' experience.

Continued collection of data and monitoring of the health of the children, especially risk groups, could lead to increased co-operation among specialised staff in pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, social welfare centres, special institutions and school medical dispensaries and to the mutual exchange of information about particular children, their traits, aptitudes and difficulties. Information sharing of this type would support the work of competent commissions that would have insight into the development and condition of a given child. It would be easier to assess a particular child and determine practical steps for the child's further development based on information accumulated over a longer period of time.

During regular systematic medical examinations, the specialised staff in kindergartens and schools would pass the information and data about a particular child that are relevant for his or her card and provide for continued oversight of the child. Also, this would ensure an organised exchange of information at several levels of education and a simple flow of information to the benefit of the child's development and implementation of this programme.

Table 7.1 **Inclusive schools in Montenegro**

Elementary School	Location	Number of Pupils	Number of Classrooms	NGO Involved
Pavle Rovinski	Podgorica	1 068	39	Save the Children
Štampar Makarije	Podgorica	1 231	47	Pedagogical Centre
Luka Simonović	Nikšić	1 217	44	Save the Children
Risto Rtaković	Bijelo Polje	553	24	Pedagogical Centre
Aleksa Bečo Đilas	Mojkovac	999	44	Save the Children
Njegoš	Kotor	880	33	Pedagogical Centre
Boro Četković	Podgorica	802	32	Pedagogical Centre
Brača Ribar	Nikšić	656	28	Save the Children
Mileva Lajović Lalatović	Nikšić	1 261	48	Pedagogical Centre
Dušan Korač	Bijelo Polje	840	39	Pedagogical Centre
Jugoslavija	Bar	915	33	Pedagogical Centre
Milija Nikčević	Nikšić	617	24	Save the Children
Total		11 039	435	

*Source:* Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro

Some of the competencies of above-mentioned Bureau for Education Services will be regular monitoring of implementation and delivery of inclusive education, setting up of a database and statistical analysis and data processing, aiming to supervise the results of this project. The Bureau of Education includes responsibility to work on improvement of the teaching process through various divisions: the Sector for Research and Work with Professional Collaborators, Sector for Quality Assurance in Education, Centre for Continuous Professional Development, and Centre for Programming and Development.

Table 7.1 shows that 11 039 students attend 435 inclusive classrooms. Table 7.2 below shows that another 9 078 pupils attend 370 classrooms and 21 special classrooms.

Table 7.2 Schools with attached classrooms for special needs children in Montenegro

Elementary School	Location	Number of Pupils	Number of Classrooms	Number of Special Classrooms
Boško Buha*	Pijevlja	762	33	2
Dušan Korać*	Bijelo Polje	840	39	3
Vuk Karadžić*	Berane	1 311	54	1
Mustafa Pećanin*	Rožaje	1 065	39	1
Olga Golović*	Nišić	1 097	39	4
Lovčanski partizanski odred*	Cetinje	1 075	41	1
Ilija Kišić*	Zelenika	463	25	5
Njegoš*	Kotor	880	33	1
Jugoslavija*	Bar	915	33	2
Boško Strugar*	Ulcinj	670	34	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>9 078</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>21</b>

Source: Bureau for Education of Montenegro

Table 7.3 Special boarding schools for special needs children in Montenegro

School	Location	Number of Pupils	Number of Classrooms
Institute for Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Hearing and Speech Impairments	Kotor	140	24
Centre for Vocational Training and Education "June 1"	Podgorica	123	1 pre-school 9 elementary school 8 secondary school
Institute for Education and Professional Rehabilitation of Disabled Children and Youth	Podgorica	86	18
Institute for Education and Training of the Young "Mladost"	Podgorica	25	4 +(2)*
Special Institute for Children and Youth	Podgorica	40	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>414</b>	<b>71</b>

\* Students from four classrooms are attending classes in the Centre for Vocational Training and Education "June 1" and students from another two classrooms in Elementary School "Ilija Kišić"

Source: Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro

## School organisation

Special education operates on both the primary and secondary level for children with special education needs. Programmes are designed and carried out under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Students with developmental delays who cannot follow regular classes attend special boarding schools. Inclusion is implemented in 12 mainstream schools and, in addition, there are 3 special boarding schools for education of children with special needs.

However, attendance of these schools requires changes in the social environment and early separation of children from their families affecting their integration in the environment in which they live. The organisation in these schools is distinct from that of mainstream schools. The school adjusts to the pupils with developmental disorders by decreasing the number of the students in regular classrooms, developing individual programmes for these pupils, and hiring special teachers. The teaching staff and the support staff act together in order to provide optimum conditions for the psycho-physical development of these children.

The functioning and organisation of most mainstream schools has not considered inclusion of special needs children for various reasons. These schools are adjusted to the average youth population, both in relation to physical structure and in pedagogic respects. Architectural barriers, but also communication and social barriers exist. Some schools have special classrooms, which currently satisfy the needs of this group and can act as the precursors of inclusive education; a link between ordinary children and special needs children. The groups with developmentally delayed children, according to adopted regulations, may have somewhat fewer registered children than other groups (10% - 20%). There is one developmental group with children with severe disorders in the Public Preschool Institution Ljubica Popovic in Podgorica. The children may be included in the full-day or half-day programme and enrolment is made in conformity to parents' wishes.

Changes in the law and curricula for pre-school education imply the process of inclusion in a child-friendly kindergarten. Goals towards integrating disabled children into regular education, partly implemented to date, are: establishing the new, reformed school, designed in a spirit of "child-centred" approach; introduction of inclusive education in schools; adoption of the law on special education, including inclusive education; and a strong media campaign promoting the rights of special needs children and inclusive education as a mandatory component of the new concept of education. Moreover, links between regular and special education have increased and should further strengthen these ties: communication between the two systems has been initiated and the idea of mobile teams of experts from resource centres to mainstream schools has also been discussed.

## **Overview of special institutions in Montenegro**

Several specialised institutions for education of children with special needs and children at risk exist in Montenegro. The common denominator of all these schools is "care taking" of the pupils, including health care, education and rehabilitation of children with developmental disorders.

Special methods are used, adapted to the type and degree of the child's impairment. These boarding schools and institutes currently accommodate and educate 380 pupils in elementary schools and 225 in secondary school. The three schools, discussed further below, are: (1) Institute for Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Hearing and Speech Impairments in Kotor; (2) Institute for Education and Professional Rehabilitation of Disabled Children and Youth in Podgorica (physically disabled, blind and poor-sighted children); (3) Centre for Education and Vocational Training "June 1" in Podgorica (mildly intellectually impaired and autistic children).

The Institute for Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Hearing and Speech Impairments in Kotor was established in 1946. It includes pre-school, primary and secondary education and currently educates 130 pupils. This institution habilitates, rehabilitates, educates and provides professional training to children with various levels of hearing impairments: (1) serious hearing impairment, 56-70 db, 9% of students; (2) severe hearing impairment, 71-90 db – 36% of students and (3) with most severe impairment, 91 db– 50% of students. The institute has 40 specialist classrooms and laboratories where lessons and exercises are held, equipped by the wireless MICRO-VOX system and wire selective audio filter amplification, adjusted to the type of hearing impairment. The children are being trained mostly in manual professions (22 various trades). The Institute has a boarding school with clubs for social and cultural activities for all ages and is well known for its theatre performances. For early treatment, a very important service is individual outpatient work with children in specialist laboratories. There are paediatric, speech therapy, surdo-audiological, pedagogical and psychological and dentist services. The school employs 31 special education teachers, (of whom 27 are teachers of the deaf, three are speech therapists, and one is an audiologist), plus six professors of various subjects, one pedagogue-psychologist and eight instructors of practical training in the school workshops.

The Institute for Education and Professional Rehabilitation of Disabled Children and Youth in Podgorica has been in existence for 56 years; consisting of pre-school, primary and secondary schools. The Commission for Recording and Categorisation of Children with Psychic and Physical Impairment refers the following categories of children to this institution for education: (1) physically disabled children and youth with locomotor disorders, neurological and musculature diseases or chronic diseases that belong to the fourth category of developmental disabilities; (2) blind and poor-sighted children and youth, belonging to the first category and (3) children and youth with multiple disorders with dominant physical disability, blindness and poor sight, combined with mild intellectual disability. Note that the children belonging to the first and the fourth

categories function at the average mental level so that they are educated according to a regular teaching plan and curriculum. The Institute has 23 well-equipped study rooms, plus specialist classrooms and two workshops (for sewing and shoemaking). The staff includes 11 special education teachers and 28 professors and teachers.

The Commission for Recording and Categorisation of Children with Psychic and Physical Impairment is working based on the Rule Book on Classification of Children and Youth and Physical impairment (Public Gazette no 2, 31. 01. 1979) by which categories are following: (1) Person with eye impairment, (2) Person with hearing impairment, (3) Person with speaking impairment, (4) Person with physical disorder, (5) Person with mental retardation, (6) Person with multiple development disorders. These categories depend on medical characteristics and vary from case to case.

The Centre for Education and Vocational Training “June 1” was established in 1967. It has specialist pre-school, primary and secondary education for mildly developmentally delayed and autistic children. In addition to special education, it provides social and professional habilitation aimed at integration in work and social life after the completion of schooling. The Centre, through its full-day programme, enables rehabilitation, education and professional training and directs the children for further education in accordance with their capabilities. Pupils are supplied with room and board, plus some clothes and footwear, health care, textbooks and learning materials, and cultural and entertainment programmes and excursions are conducted. A boarding school with 100-120 beds was built within the centre in 1999. The total staff numbers 63 employees, of which 31 are teachers. A psychologist is not permanently employed but visits regularly from the Children’s Hospital in Podgorica. The developmental counselling centre of the hospital has a team of experts that includes: two clinical psychologists, two speech therapists and two special teachers. The full-time staff of the developmental counselling centre includes two speech therapists, one teacher for the deaf, one special-education teacher (for work with children and youth with behavioural disorders and with autistic children) and 20 oligo-phrenologists – for children with intellectual disabilities. At the beginning of the school year 2003/04, 57 pupils were enrolled in special secondary school; 66 in special primary school, three in autistic classrooms, six in pre-school and four in vocational school. The training is run in two shifts. Grades from 5-8 are morning shifts and grades from 1-4 are afternoon shifts. According to their capabilities, pupils in special three-year secondary school study the textile industry, leather products, food industry, catering, metal processing and personal services.

There are also two other institutes. The Special Institute for Children and Youth (moderate, severe and most severe intellectual impairments) which has become an “asylum” for persons with the most severe (primarily intellectual) disorders; there may still be persons present up to the age of 70. The Institute for Education of Children and Youth “*Mladost*” (children with behavioural disorders) treats children and youth with behavioural disorders (most often underage offenders).

## **Ministry of Education projects in co-operation with NGOs**

### ***Save the Children (United Kingdom)***

The NGO, Save the Children-UK, has been working on the “Disability Project” since 1996. Lectures have been held for parents’ empowerment; parents’ associations have also been created or strengthened. Specialists have been trained in methodologies to work with disabled children and their parents, including through professional exchanges, study tours and the visits of foreign experts. Save the Children also established toy libraries (Community-Based Services), where parents had the opportunity to exchange information and learn from experts about how to stimulate the development of their children through games and the use of didactic material. Parents were also taught about NGO management. These libraries promoted integration, as children with disabilities would play with other children with or without disabilities and with parents.

Save the Children UK has, so far, opened nine toy libraries in addition to one already existing in Nikšić, run by parents’ associations throughout the country (in the municipalities of Podgorica, Nikšić, Cetinje, Berane, Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Bar, Ulcinj, Kotor and Herceg Novi). The libraries are connected into a network and, either independently or through the network, compete for grants and manage smaller projects.

Save the Children UK has also implemented an inclusive education project, since September 1998, as part of a pilot project named “Integration of Special Needs Children into Mainstream Pre-school Institutions in Montenegro”. This project is a continuation of a previously mentioned project “Disability Project”. The project, run in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, aims to: eliminate barriers which keep children with disabilities out of society, draw public attention to the needs of disabled children and their rights to be integrated, initiate changes in the law, promote parents’ partnerships with professionals and inform and train pre-school teachers about new methods and skills for working with disabled children.



Inclusive education was started through several pilot projects, in pre-school institutions over four school years from 1998/99 to 2001/02, and for 2002/03 and 2003/04 in five elementary schools in Montenegro. Pre-schools involved in implementation of the projects stated above are spread throughout the country (Ljubica Popović in Podgorica; Zagorka Ivanović in Cetinje; Dragan Kovačević in Nikšić; Pljevlja in Pljevlja; Plav in Plav; Jevrosima Rabrenović–Jevra in Mojkovac; Vukosava I. Mašanović in Bar; Solidarnost in Ulcinj; Radost in Kotor; Naša radost in Herceg Novi; Bambi in Tivat; Ljubica Jovanović-Maše in Budva; Irena Radovic in Danilovgrad; Radmila Nedić in Berane and Dašo Basekić in Bijelo Polje ).

Five primary schools (Pavle Rovinski in Podgorica; Luka Simonović in Nikšić; Njgoš in Kotor; Aleksa Đilas -Bečo in Mojkovac and Risto Ratković in Bijelo Polje) with eight children from inclusive pre-schools were included in another step of the inclusive education project in 2002/2003. This included training for teachers, head-teachers, school professionals and parents of disabled children in team building and the development of individual education plans (IEP)s; sharing experiences among pre-schools and schools; continuing training for other pre-school teachers; and preparing activities for inclusion into elementary education.

### ***Main activities of Save the Children UK in the field of inclusive education***

The programme has been implemented through the following activities: raising awareness on the part of parents and their children to accept disabled children and tolerate differences; educating pre-school teachers and giving professional assistance to them when required; training experts in making individual programmes for special needs children in different methods such as portage or functional learning; giving support to parents in order to stimulate the child's development in the family and to encourage their partnership with professionals; and organising regular weekly visits of teams of experts and monthly supervisory meetings and parent meetings. The project was also evaluated at the end of each stage of the work. These aspects of the project are described further below.

In order to raise awareness, a TV presentation about inclusive education was shown on 22 April 2001. Two posters were printed and distributed at the Conference for Stakeholders and a television advertisement was made and edited. On 30 October 2001, CBR and inclusive education achievements in Save the Children UK Disability Programme were also presented at a seminar for social workers in Budva. There was also a promotion of inclusive education on TV Crna Gora (Flash Plus) filmed in the pre-school Djina Vrbica in Podgorica with pre-school teachers, parents and

professionals in December as well as one-hour contact programme with two parents and programme officers about children with special needs on Television Budva in January 2002. A leaflet about inclusive education was printed and distributed through professionals at the monthly meetings. The book by Professor S. Hrnjica *Children with Disability in Mainstream Primary School* was provided to all inclusive groups and professionals. Toys for six new inclusive groups were distributed to Plav, Mojkovac, Danilovgrad, Ulcinj, Tivat and Budva during January 2002.

Training for pre-school teachers, professionals and parents was held regularly four to five times per year to support their work of counselling parents of special needs children and stimulating the child's development. Portage training with Jo Birbeck, education psychologist and supervisor of Portage volunteers team in Hampshire (UK) was organised for all professionals: psychologists, pedagogues, special educators and speech therapists involved in the Inclusive Project, as well as for some professionals from special schools and institutions who are working with younger special needs children.

Training in Functional Learning was organised at the end of October 2001. The trainer for the functional learning (FL) method was Anamarija Filipic Dolnicar, a speech therapist from Ljubljana together with M. Djurovic, a psychologist from Podgorica, both students of Katrin Stroh, developmental and speech therapist from London. Participants were professionals and/or pre-school teachers from Pljevlja, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Plav, Mojkovac, Budva, Danilovgrad, Niksic, Tivat, Ulcinj, Herceg Novi and Belgrade. During the four days of the practical and theoretical work about 20 participants had the opportunity to learn and practice the new method of work with special needs children. Working material for FL training as well as for future individual work with children (wooden bricks, cubes, boxes, matchboards) was also prepared and distributed to participants at the training. After the training, the Handbook for FL was translated and printed for participants and videotapes were provided.

Regular monthly meetings with professionals from all the inclusive groups were also held. The professionals need to meet regularly and exchange experience of working individually with included children, following their development, communicating with parents, giving support to pre-school teachers and writing reports about the children involved.

Each year an evaluation of the Inclusive Project was carried out, including professionals from each group, together with the directors of pre-school institutions, parents of children and pre-school teachers as well as representatives of Ministry of Education. A conference, convening all stakeholders was held on 14-15 June 2002 in Budva together with UNICEF

and three ministries (Education, Health and Labour and Social Welfare). Preparation involved participation in working groups before the conference, inviting professors: Milivoj Velickovic from Ljubljana, Alison Closs from Edinburgh and Sulejman Hrnjica from Belgrade. Save the Children, UK took part in two working groups led by Ministry of Health (early detection, diagnosis, categorisation and registration) and Ministry of Education and Science (inclusive education). Initial and final tests (retests) for all children included in the pre-school groups were done. Almost all children showed progress to differing degrees.

A study tour to Slovenia, (Ljubljana, 2001) financially supported by UNICEF, included meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and contacts about organising the study trip to Slovenia were held as well as correspondence with people in Slovenia (representatives of Ministry of Education, Slovenian Education Institution and Slovenian Philanthropy).

### ***Pedagogical centre of Montenegro and UNICEF***

The Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro is implementing the “Inclusive Education in Elementary Schools Programme” in Montenegro in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the UNICEF office in Podgorica. The project began in elementary schools in April 2002 by the selection of schools, teachers and special needs children. The first seminar was held and methodological manuals for work with special needs children were published. The schools were selected on a geographical basis – from the central, northern and southern regions of Montenegro. One of the criteria was the prior implementation of the “Step by Step Programme”, a solid foundation for carrying out the inclusive programme.

Five seminars were held under the programme for the teachers. These included information on the following topics: theoretical bases of an inclusive programme; inclusion benefits and obstacles; observation of children: (principles, cognitive and emotional domain, social domain and interaction among children); family preparation and support; physical environment adaptation; curricula adaptation; (pedagogical implications of the work with special needs children, tentative framework for problem resolution); adaptation of physical environment for work with special needs children; co-operation with family; assessment; preparation of individual education plans; hyperactive children; curricula attainability; physical activities for children with cerebral palsy; international information about inclusion; achievements of special needs children; individualisation; children self-assessment; support to positive behaviour; functional behaviour analysis; co-operative learning; strategies in working with

children with learning difficulties; and work with children with hearing impairment.

### **Arrangements at school for diverse groups**

Today's school does not take into account the needs of diverse groups. The General Law on Education, Official Gazette No. 64 (2002) mandates schools to adjust to children with special needs. However, this process will naturally take time and require certain financial resources, education of teachers and better positions for these teachers and educators. Mainstream schools and pre-schools must transform into inclusive institutions, places where all children may be educated. The curricula presently do not provide a basic level for all pupils with various skills. The professional teams in schools are not skilled in the analysis of education barriers. There are no developed mechanisms and services for the connection of mainstream and special schools, which should work in close co-operation. There is a difference in the arrangements made at nursery schools (for children up to three years of age) and kindergartens (for children from 3 years and older). In the nursery school, there are more nurses and the focus is on development of positive personal habits and in kindergarten the focus is on pedagogic and education process. There is adequate physical access to nursery schools but there are not special arrangements adjusted to the needs of children with disabilities.

### **School accessibility**

Unfortunately, schools do not have the architectural amenities to suit the needs of disabled children. During school construction, these needs were not anticipated. However, according to reform objectives and commitments the pre-schools and schools should be adjusted to special needs children.

## **Pedagogy**

Children and youth with special needs can develop their aptitudes in different settings. Special institutions provide special methods and teaching in accordance with specific pedagogical principles. The capacities of pupils in special institutions vary according to differing psycho-physical constitutions, differences in their environments and in pedagogical and methodological procedures. Methods should relate to the individual capability of every child; requiring diverse tasks that develop abilities, but

also build character and social skills. Inclusive education encompasses the overall education system, in two forms: (1) adjustment to the needs of all pupils and (2) inclusion of pupils with psycho-physical impairment in regular schools. In this manner, the responsibility for adjustment shifts from pupils to the schools, education system and society. The concept of inclusive education indicates the development of non-traditional methods such as various interactive methods, democratic teacher-pupil relationships and the development of pupils' self-confidence. The objective of inclusion is to improve the quality of schooling of education for children with psycho-physical disorders. Like special institutions, the institutions pursuing inclusive education should adjust education to the child's individual possibilities by making custom-tailored programmes. In both special institutions and inclusive education, certain differences exist in the pedagogical approach taken, but, in both cases, individual capacities and characteristics of an individual are taken into account.

## **Methods which are used**

Determination of particularities in developmental capacities of children is one of the main factors of success in the education process, both in inclusive education and in special education. The methods used in special education depend on several factors: (1) contents, (2) type of class and teaching process; practical or theoretical methods, and frontal or individual method, (3) stages in teaching process within a class, (4) developmental level of the pupil, (5) material equipment of the school, (6) school location (general tasks and objectives) and (7) the teacher's profile.

The three basic phases of cognition (personal observation, abstract thinking and practice) enable classification of teaching methods in three methodological groups: the verbal-textual method, the illustrative-demonstrative method and the laboratory-experimental method. These general didactic methods are applied in the majority of teaching. Special teaching methods for each of those areas also exist. General teaching methods used in the teaching of mother tongue, for example are: dialogue or monologue, pupil's independent presentation, text illustration, explanatory, or methods relying on oral or audio, manual, gesture or visual communication. In addition, there are some special methods for the development of speech and verbal expression of initial reading and writing, story and literary work analysis, reproduction methods, methods of analysis of linguistic and orthographic concepts.

In pre-school institutions, methods are adjusted to the desired objectives, level of child's development, child's individual capacities and the available resources. Most frequent methods are: observation,

demonstration, explanation, discussion, graphic and other works, exercises (*i.e.* role-play, model imitation, advancement of mobility). In carrying out various activities, the principle is to go from easier to more difficult tasks. Toys are frequently used such as: toys for role-play (*i.e.* dolls, dishes, technical appliances); portable-sports toys used for muscle exercises, movement co-ordination, body balance exercises (*i.e.* balls, tricycles, jump ropes); building toys (*i.e.* cubes, cylinders, construction sets) exercising and developing the mobility of hands, visual precision, perception of spatial relations; didactic toys (*i.e.* various balls, objects of various forms and dimensions, constructive materials), stimulating development of senses and cognitive processes; and toys made by child's personal creation. Work with children may also include visual objects such as: picture books, objects, illustrations, books, and audio and manual expression.

In primary schools, inclusion is applied in the classrooms using the methods of the "Step by Step Programme". This programme respects individual characteristics of the child and orients the child to the central fields of her interest and capacity and, as such, contains the elementary basis for individualised plans for developmentally delayed children.

### **Methods used for diverse groups**

Various teaching aids are used in work with developmentally delayed children in special education and in inclusion education. The proper selection of teaching aids satisfies the visual principle. Pre-school groups will use the following teaching aids: wall posters, picture books, letter books, building and filling cubes, mosaics and education boxes. Special schools will also use: textbooks adjusted to child's psycho-physical abilities, various magazines adjusted to the child's mental age, counting beads, modelling clay for fine motor development, stationary bicycle and rowing machine for psychical and physical mobility development, graphoscope, slide projector and cassette tape recorder. Special secondary schools will use: in a textile course, machines for sewing, hand shears, cutting patterns; shoe-making course, machines and tools for making soles of footwear; and in the metal works course, machines and tools for metal works. Computers, which have become the norm in many countries, are not available in the majority of schools in Montenegro.

## Curriculum

Within the overall education system reform in Montenegro, the National Curriculum Council, an independent body established by the Government of Montenegro, consisting of eminent experts (university professors, directors and teachers-practitioners), was formed in February 2002 to design curricula for all education levels and to prepare draft curricula in accordance with the adopted teaching schedule. The work of this council contributes to decentralisation; this is the first time that this issue has been addressed by an expert (technical) body and not by the Ministry of Education and Science. Newly developed curricula are quite precise on the intention to discontinue the practice of centrally defining curricular content; only 80% of the curriculum will be defined by the commission, 5% will be determined by the school and the remaining 15% by the local community.

The next stage of development will require more serious efforts focused on adjustment of all draft curricula to children with special needs. A special commission formed during the work of the Council prepared a document that is supposed to serve as a guideline in adjusting the curricula to special needs children, entitled “Methodological Instructions for Inclusive Education and Training of Children and Youth with Developmental Difficulties in the Mainstream Education system in the Republic of Montenegro”. The National Curriculum Council has provided basic curricular materials, which will be subjected to the review and approval of the competent education councils (Council for General Education, Council for Vocational Education and Council for Adult Education). In addition, the Bureau for Education Services, which will seek to improve upon them, will take up the work on the curricula in the next period through its development department.

## Teacher training

Teachers presently do not receive adequate training for special education during their regular teacher training. Changes foreseen in the university system include the introduction of a new subject that would provide more background on special education. However, great attention has been paid to the training of staff working in nurseries and kindergartens and many teachers and specialists have been informed and educated about inclusion. After a couple of years of implementation of the Save the Children UK project, a team was set up that organised two seminars aimed

at sharing gathered experiences with the staff of other pre-school institutions in Montenegro.

Students of the teacher-training college are taught social and natural sciences that will not be directly applicable in their future work in the classroom. The strictly theoretical knowledge in this area does not provide background for practical work with special needs children. However, teacher trainees do have some theoretical grounding in subjects such as general psychology, general and special pedagogy, psychology, developmental and pedagogical psychology and special work methods. The Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Save the Children, UK have considered including the students of teacher-training schools in the preventive modification of behaviour through play programme (MMPI), intended for children with behavioural problems, to allow the teacher trainees to face problems that they will certainly encounter in their future work. Additionally, these trainees could be volunteers and assist teachers in classrooms covered by the inclusion programme that have a child with special needs, which would give them valuable practical experience for their future work.

## **Teacher training for different levels of schooling**

With the introduction of inclusive education in kindergartens and schools, it became clear that teachers need additional training in this area. Seminars that have been organised lately provided not only education and training, but also helped to promote inclusion and create favourable grounds for application. Pre-school teachers receive training on nurturing a child by developing the child's character and qualities. Primary school teachers (for the first three grades) receive basic training in the content areas that need to be presented to the children, where skills and information need to be passed on to them (mathematics, mother tongue, nature and society, art, music, physical education). Primary school teachers' missions are oriented more to educating the children than to simply nurturing them (in comparison to kindergarten teachers).

In the early stages of inclusive education projects in Montenegro, the training programmes in inclusive education and work with special needs children were more frequently organised for pre-school institutions so that teaching staff at this level is now considerably strengthened in this area, more so than teachers in primary or secondary schools. Teachers of individual subjects in higher grades of the primary school have almost no opportunity to tackle this matter during their university studies (*e.g.* if they choose biology teaching, they will only have a course on "General Psychology and Teaching Methods"). Furthermore, future teachers may not



be exposed to inclusive education at all, although they are still expected to work with special needs children from grade 5 onwards (in several subjects: mathematics, biology, art and music).

In general, teachers' basic education and orientation is focused on preparing for subjects they will be teaching in the classroom. They acquire knowledge in psychology and pedagogy and basic information about teaching special needs children. However, it is not before a teacher receives such a child in the classroom that he becomes involved and integrated in the inclusion programme training plans. Teachers of individual subjects (mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, foreign language, fine art, music, physical education) do not receive any instruction in either pedagogical principles or special pedagogy during their basic studies. These teachers should be prepared to include special needs children much earlier. Increased numbers of children in inclusive education are added at higher levels of schooling as children from inclusive pre-schools complete these years of schooling and progress through the school system. Teachers are expected to join this process and accept training for working with these children.

### ***Training of special education teachers and experts***

Training for special education experts was conducted in recent years primarily through the programmes and seminars of Save the Children-UK, UNICEF and the Pedagogical Centre. As mentioned elsewhere, there is no university-level education for psychology, pedagogy and related sciences in Montenegro. These future specialists can attend faculties in Serbia (Belgrade and Novi Sad), but the chances for young people to study there are minimal due to enrolment criteria, acceptance rates and competition, which makes the staffing situation in Montenegro difficult.

Students of pedagogy learn about several types of psychology and psycho-pathology, but not about the problems of children with developmental delays. The students of psychology acquire knowledge in genetics, psycho-pathology, psychiatrics and only must select an option to study the psychology of the developmentally delayed, which means that they acquire only basic theoretical information and no skills on how to deal with these problems: there are also no teaching practicum during regular studies. Later, in their professional engagement, these specialists do not have opportunities to undergo additional training focusing on these problems.

At the Special Education Teaching Faculty in Belgrade, an equivalent of which does not exist in Montenegro, those students from Montenegro who manage to enrol may take courses such as: introduction to special education teaching, neurology and psychiatry, sociology of handicapped persons,

methodology of work with children with moderately serious and severe retardation, methodology of work with mildly intellectually impaired children, pedagogy for intellectually impaired persons, professional rehabilitation, general developmental neuro-psychology, diagnostics of impairments with psycho-motorics. These subjects are the basis for the continuation of further studies. After this general education, the students may choose one of the following majors: (1) surdoaudiology, (2) typhology, (3) oligophrenology, (4) speech therapy, (5) somatology, (6) prevention and re-socialisation of persons with disorders in social behaviour.

### ***Parents (and others) helping and supporting teachers***

Parents of kindergarten children with special needs are partners in the process of education and upbringing and may participate in making important decisions related to their child. They also have the right, which they often exercise, to stay in the group together with their child. Of course, the parent, together with the teacher and the specialised counsellor, gives input to the assessment as well, influences the selection of content and activities that will be part of the Individual Stimulating Programme for the child and, finally, carries out certain tasks from the programme.

In primary schools, parents decide on whether their child will attend regular lessons within the inclusive education programme. The parents, either together or, more frequently, the mother alone, suggest activities to be undertaken with their child and exchange information with the teacher and the school's specialised counsellor. Parents can also assist the teacher directly in classes by working with their own child, which the "Step by Step Programme", taken as the basis for inclusive education, encourages. However, this is sometimes abused and mothers may spend more time in the classroom than needed, which is not the objective of the education process.

### ***Some examples of existing teacher training for special needs education***

Beginning in 1998, a number of teachers and specialised counsellors participated in seminars organised by Save the Children UK with lectures from renowned experts in the field, related to the following skills and areas: communication with a child, problematic behaviour of children, how to communicate with parents and establish a partner relationship, accepting the distinctiveness of a child with disorders, significance of play for the child's development, characteristics of developmentally delayed children (Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, MCD (Minimal cerebral dysfunction), children with sensory impairment (sight, hearing), preparation

of individual education plans, observation and assessment and stimulating the child's development.

The Ministry of Education and Science co-ordinated all activities and education within the project. A team was formed of the teachers and counsellors from a pre-school in Podgorica, Save the Children UK and the Ministry of Education and Science, which ensured follow-up. In December 2002 and May 2003, seminars were held in the kindergarten Ljubica Popović in Podgorica for all teachers and counsellors in pre-school institutions in Montenegro. Some of the topics addressed were: the UN Conventions on the Right of the Child, characteristics of development of special needs children, parents as partners; analysis of experience from work with special needs children, with video films; stimulation of children's development in kindergartens- video presentation of stimulation methods – portage and functional learning, team work; problematic behaviour; child with difficulties included in an integration group (video film and comments), use of scale of attainments and scale of integration, preparation of Individual Stimulation Plans; and structuring of the work environment for special needs children.

## Conclusion

Through system-wide education reform that began in 2000, Montenegro is beginning to address difficulties in providing education for children with special needs. Changes in legislation are currently being developed in a draft law for the education of children with special needs. A variety of pilot projects in partnership between the Ministry of Education and Science and Save the Children UK, FOSI ROM and UNICEF have helped to lay the groundwork in both pre-schools and primary schools for continued developments of an education system for children with special needs. Special schools provide some services, complemented by the development of the inclusive education system. Pilot projects, which began at the kindergarten level, are now supported at the primary level and it is hoped that these students can help to provide examples to encourage teachers and school administrators to accept inclusion in their schools. Montenegro does not have a teacher-training facility within its borders that can train teachers with special skills, and only very few teachers can attend schools in neighbouring Serbia to augment their capacity in this area. However, workshops and other peer training has been conducted to present basic knowledge to teachers. Special needs education in Montenegro is

undergoing tremendous change and it is hoped further advances will continue to be made in the near future.

## Chapter 8 – Romania

The National Report on “Education Policies for at Risk Students and those with Disabilities” of Romania describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as reform efforts which are underway. The Romanian government has effected several legislative acts in accordance with key international documents regarding the education of children with special needs since the mid-1990s. As is the case with all other reports presented in this book, this account covers the following sections: a short overview of the education system followed by chapters describing the legal framework policies focusing on special groups, statistics and indicators and the current situation of teacher training, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. The concept of integration and inclusion are central issues, and attention is paid to barriers and problems of inclusion and equity in education, to parents’ participation and other support services. The report also describes new strategies and policy development for disabled and at risk children.



## Introduction

All Romanian citizens have an equal right to education, at all levels and in all forms, regardless of gender, race, nationality, religious or political affiliation and social or economic status. This right is stated in the *Education Law No. 84 of 1995*. Public education is free and the state guarantees the right to education to the benefit of the individual and of all society.

The special education system, under the Ministry of Education and Research, is part of the national education system in Romania and offers a diversity of education services according to students' development needs. Special education is the responsibility of all employees of a school and is flexible and comprehensive. Qualified teachers are devoted to working with children with special needs, together with other specialists and non-teaching personnel.

In Romania, children with disabilities have access to different forms of education and may enrol, according to the level of disability, in the special education system or in the mainstream education system. Children with medium, severe, profound and multiple disabilities are most often enrolled in special schools. Children with mild disabilities, with language or learning difficulties, or with behavioural or socio-affective disorders are integrated into mainstream education where they can benefit from support services. Special education is also organised according to the type of deficiency – mental, hearing, visual, motor and other associated deficiencies. The identification of the type and severity of a deficiency is the responsibility of the Commission for Child Protection, which is a component of the Public Service for Child Protection, under the responsibility of the 42 County Councils at the local government level.

Children participating in special education may follow the mainstream curriculum, a slightly adapted curriculum or a special curriculum. The duration of schooling may also vary. For example, the duration of primary school and of gymnasium for children with severe mental deficiencies may be 9 or 10 years, which is one to two years longer than the eight years in mainstream compulsory schooling. During the schooling process, students with special education needs have access to psycho-pedagogical rehabilitation and recovery resources – both medical and social – and other types of specific intervention services available in the community or in specialised institutions, including those of special education.

Special schools are organised at all levels of pre-university education including in kindergartens, general schools (grades 1-8, primary and lower secondary), arts and trades schools, high schools and post-high schools, education centres, day centres, and centres for pedagogical cure<sup>16</sup>. In some cases, schools cover several levels of education in the same special education institution. Education for children with special education needs is organised in groups and special forms and in some cases individually. The groups or forms in special schools are usually smaller than those in mainstream education. Some special schools offer instruction in the languages of minorities.

## Legislative framework

Article No.3 of the *World Declaration on Education for All* states “The learning needs of the disabled demand special attention. Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education in every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system”.

Education for children and adolescents with special education needs enrolled in pre-school, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary or post-high school levels is organised according to Article 58 of the Romanian Constitution, Chapters VI and VII of Education Law No. 84 from 1995 and the provisions of Law No. 128 from 1997, regarding the teachers’ statute. Special education, as established by Romanian legislation, is an adapted form of schooling and assistance (medical, education, social and cultural) addressed to people who cannot attain standards established in mainstream education, either temporarily or during the entire period of their schooling.

### Legal framework for special education

Romania respects the legislation created by international organisations related to the education of persons with special education needs and has signed the following international conventions:

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Salamanca Declaration.
- The Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Rule 6 on education).

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<sup>16</sup> The Centers for Pedagogical Cure are pedagogical alternatives related to Rudolf Steiner pedagogy.



- The International Declaration regarding Education for All.

In accordance with the international documents regarding special education, Romanian legislation has been expanded in order to incorporate these global development trends within the Romanian situation. The legislative framework for special education is comprised of the following legislation.

The Romanian Constitution (Article 46) states that “persons with handicaps are granted social protection. The state guarantees the enactment of a national policy for prevention, treatment, re-adaptation, learning, instruction and integration of persons with handicaps, respecting at the same time the rights and the duties of parents and tutors”.

*The Education Law No. 84/1995*, with subsequent modifications, also determines the legal structure in Romania for special education. Chapter VI, entitled “Special education”, in Articles 41-46, refers to pupils with special education needs. Article 41 states that “special education is organised by the Ministry of Education and Research for *children* (pre-school and pupils) with mental, physical, sensorial, language, socio-affective and behavioural deficiencies, in order to teach, educate, recover and socially integrate them”. Articles 42-46 give more details about the length of compulsory special education (which is 10 or 11 years according to the situation), the structure and content of special education (framework, curriculum, syllabi, textbooks, teacher guidebooks, etc.), school orientation and re-orientation to mainstream schools and from mainstream to special schools. Article 141, Paragraph 1 adds “The Ministry of Education and Research ensures specialised schooling and psycho-pedagogical support for children with physical, mental, sensorial or associated deficiencies”.

*The Teachers’ Statute, Law no. 128 from 1997* in Articles 5, 7 and 43, refers to criteria, conditions and modalities for enrolment as well as to the need for quality activity of special school staff. The *Regulations for the Organisation and Functioning of Pre-university education* (Ministerial Order No. 4747/2001), in chapter VIII on special education, refers to the problem of integration of pupils with light and medium deficiencies in mainstream education. Article 140 states that “children with light and medium mental deficiencies are integrated into the mainstream school near their home”. Children with light and medium mental deficiencies are integrated into mainstream school as follows: individual or group integration for pupils with light deficiencies and integration into special forms for pupils with medium deficiencies. Furthermore, Article 144 relates to pre-school classes and classes from mainstream education, which “can be organised in some special schools, both categories of children/pupils having the right to benefit from competent and efficient specialty services”. In

addition, “Special schools receiving this type of class will change their structure, their organisation, the content and the objectives to be achieved”.

The above-mentioned laws and regulations create a framework for the development of special education in two main directions: (1) the re-evaluation of the activity of special schools and their re-organisation process regarding forms of activity, objectives and education goals and (2) the beginning of a process of integration of special education into mainstream education through expertise, diagnosis and early evaluation of children’s deficiencies for early and efficient intervention, enrolment of children with various deficiencies in mainstream kindergartens, enrolment of children in first grade in a mainstream primary school near their homes, the transfer of pupils with light and medium deficiencies from special schools to mainstream education, putting in place education support services for children integrated into mainstream education during school, social adaptation processes and transforming some special schools into open schools for all children in the community.

In order to achieve these significant transformations, the above-mentioned legislation regarding special education was complemented by government decisions, ministerial orders, methodologies and regulations designed by the specialists in the Ministry of Education and Research. This was in order to clarify and improve activities in this domain. Some of these include:

- Government Decision no. 586/1990, modified in 1992 regarding the organisation of special education.
- Norms No. 9233/1995 regarding home schooling for persons with motor deficiencies.
- Ministerial Order No. 4323/1998 approving the curricular framework for special education (primary and gymnasium level).
- Ministerial Order No. 3796/1999 approving the curricular framework for vocational education and training for children with special needs.
- Ministerial Order No. 4378/1999 approving the education programme “Measures for the Organisation of Special Education”.
- Ministerial Order No. 4217/1999 approving the Regulations for the Organisation and Functioning of Special Education.

- Ministerial Order No. 3634/2000 approving the National Programme for Integration and Rehabilitation of Children with SEN in the community.
- Ministerial Order No. 4653/2001 approving the Methodology for the Organisation and Functioning of the Education Services for the Children with Deficiencies Integrated in Mainstream, with Itinerant and Support Teachers.
- Ministerial Order No. 4747/2001 regarding the Regulations for the Organisation and the Functioning of the Pre-university Education System, which has a chapter dedicated to special education (Chapter 8).
- Ministerial Order No. 3662/2003 approving the Methodology for the Establishment and the Functioning of the Internal Commission for Ongoing Evaluation.
- Ministerial Order No. 3372/2004 approving the curricular framework for art and trades schools for children with special needs.

Other ministerial orders are being prepared in the field of special education – including on the methodology for the certification of a sign language interpreter, the regulations for the organisation and functioning of speech therapy centres, regulations for the establishment, organisation and functioning of documentation and information centres for inclusive education and the curricular framework for pupils with severe, profound and associated deficiencies.

Some existing regulations will also be modified in the near future on: the regulations regarding the organisation and the functioning of special education, the methodology for the organisation and functioning of education services for children with deficiencies integrated into mainstream school through support and itinerant teachers, the curricular framework for special education, adapted to the legal provision of ten-year compulsory education and the methodology regarding home schooling for persons with motor deficiencies who cannot be transported.

## **Policy review focusing on special groups**

The aim of special education is to educate and teach students with deficiencies or with learning difficulties, to remediate their difficulties and

to ensure integration into socio-professional life. The education of children with special education needs should correspond to their developmental needs. Also, special education should envisage an adequate evaluation of the potential of learning and development and should ensure the rehabilitation, recovery and compensation of the deficiencies. Special education aims at helping the students with SEN to achieve an individual development level as close as possible to the normal level of development by accumulating the required experience in school and social learning, developing the necessary abilities for learning, accumulating knowledge and skills useful for socio-professional integration and cultural life into community and ensuring the opportunities and the conditions for life-long learning at different levels of education.

### **Recent changes and changes envisaged in the policy framework**

The education policy of the Ministry of Education and Research envisages the modernisation and reconfiguration of the special education system towards achieving the fundamental goal of educational, professional and social integration of children with special needs and their adaptation to community life. In order to achieve this goal, two main directions have been determined for future action. Children will begin their schooling in a mainstream school nearby their domicile and diversified and good quality education support services will be established.

Recent changes concern the creation of education support services for pupils in difficulty. Attempts at increasing the quality of education for these children will include training teachers from mainstream schools in special needs and inclusive education, offering education services for psycho-pedagogical and specialty support, offering home schooling, reduced frequency schooling and specialty services for language therapy and psycho-pedagogical counselling.

The Ministry of Education and Research, school inspectorates and schools in partnership have also developed many projects and programmes.

### **Definitions used in Romania regarding persons with disabilities**

Many concepts are used in Romania for persons with disabilities such as: deficiency, incapacity, handicap, disability and special education needs. Deficiency means the absence, loss or alteration of a structure or a function (anatomical, physiological or psychological) of a person – inherited genetically or the result of a disease or an accident, or negative conditions connected to the developmental environment of the child, especially psycho-affective factors. Incapacity means a functional limitation due to a physical,

intellectual or sensorial deficiency resulting from environmental or health conditions, or mental or neuro-psychic dysfunctions. They can be temporary or permanent, progressive or regressive. Handicap refers to social disadvantage. It has to do with the loss or limitations of opportunities of a person who cannot take part in social life at the same level as his or her peers. The handicap appears when persons with disabilities meet cultural, physical, architectural or social barriers that can prevent their access to different systems of society accessible to other members. Disability refers to the result of the complex relationship between the health condition of the individual, personal factors and external factors. Due to this relationship, the impact of different environments on the same individual with a given health condition, may vary considerably. Special education needs means supplementary education needs, complementary to general education objectives and adapted to individual or characteristic particularities of one or another deficiency or difficulty of learning. SEN also implies complex assistance including medical, social and education aspects.

According to the specific activity of institutions involved in matters related to persons in difficulty, a variety of terminologies are applied. The Ministry of Education and Research uses the concepts of “deficiency” and “special education needs” in its documents. The National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption (NACPA) is a central institution, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family. The main focus of its activity is the child, his or her rights and his or her social protection. This institution uses the “disability” concept. The National Authority for Persons with Handicap (NAPH) is a central institution, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family. The main focus of its activity is persons with handicaps, their rights and their social protection. This institution uses the “handicap” concept. According to the level of handicap, support measures are taken and material rights are granted to the respective persons.

## **Concepts of special needs education**

Two education perspectives are currently being used when we discuss special education – they are the individual perspective and the curricular perspective. A third, the special education needs concept is being introduced.

Individual perspectives regarding the child are those that define school difficulties, taking into consideration the child’s individual characteristics (deficiencies, social context or psychological particularities), thereby creating distinct approaches in different countries regarding children with learning difficulties. For instance, a group of children can be identified as

“special” when their progress is not the same as that of other children and they are in need of remedial education in a special school. Secondly, children may need individual learning assistance in response to their problem. A third option is that children who have the same or similar difficulties could be put together to learn in special groups, forms or schools. These children could be considered “different” from other “normal” children in that they benefit from ordinary forms of education. In this perspective, education is based on labelling and segregation. What are the effects of labelling? First of all, the labels which propose possible causes of the child’s learning difficulties distract attention from other factors, including factors that could help the child to succeed. The second problem is that many children do not fit pre-defined categories exactly. The third and most worrying problem related to labelling is in regard to attitudes, which can lead to overprotection, indifference, isolation or mistreatment. Special school is the most frequently used form of “protection” that leads to segregation. New trends envisage the elimination of these kinds of rigid labels, with negative consequences for the future development of the child.

Curricular perspectives are defined in terms of tasks and activities for children and in terms of created conditions in the classroom. Curricular approaches underline the fact that children with special needs might appear in any classroom. This perspective incorporates the idea that any child can have school difficulties. School difficulties are normal in the learning process and do not indicate that something is wrong with the child. Such difficulties could indicate methods for teaching-process improvement, as some are the result of decisions, tasks and resources offered by teachers that are insufficiently adapted to the child’s needs. Improvement of the teaching process can lead to better learning conditions for all pupils through consistent involvement of teachers. The required support must exist for teachers who try to improve their teaching practice and those teachers must co-operate with those who could become points of support (professionals from the psycho-pedagogy domain, parents, etc.).

The special education needs concept aims to bypass the traditional separation of children into categories through a new, non-categorical approach to all children. This concept defines a continuum of special problems in education, which include a vast register – from profound deficiencies to light learning troubles or difficulties very often encountered by children from regular schools.

Even if it seems to be an ambiguous term, SEN is relevant from the psycho-pedagogical point of view, as it aims clearly at the individualisation of both the evaluation and education approach and at the dynamic and multi-factorial analysis of the causes of school failure. In other words, the evaluation is envisaged from the social perspective and not from the medical

perspective, as was done until now. This perspective is much closer to the ideal school of the future, which wishes to offer services as a response to a variety of education demands expressed by different children, without becoming an exclusivist environment.

The SEN concept was incorporated into UNESCO terminology in the 1990s, as a corollary of the increased orientation of special education towards the child and the community. It was also adopted by Romanian Education Law and by Romanian regulations regarding the special education system. The SEN term means demands or specific needs regarding education which may or may not be determined by a deficiency, supplementary to the general objectives of the child's education. The children with SEN are children with needs mainly derived from mental, physical, sensorial, speech, socio-affective, behaviour or associate deficiencies, regardless of their severity. In addition, we can also mention some children protected in residential institutions, children or pupils from the regular education system with learning or school adaptation troubles and difficulties. The typology of SEN categories includes: emotional and behavioural troubles, mental deficiencies, physical and motor deficiencies, visual deficiencies, hearing deficiencies, speech troubles and learning troubles, difficulties or disabilities. Without an appropriate approach towards special needs accommodation, we cannot really speak about equal chances of access, participation or school and social integration.

The special education needs concept, which leads to special education demands, refers to the impossibility of a pupil to fulfil his or her role as a pupil during a period of time. This period is variable from one individual to the other. It can be short, long or definitive. It is determined by causes such as genetic heritage, diseases, accidents, etc. These difficulties demand special conditions for education and learning in school and also in the family.

An alternative formula is that of special demands and needs with an often larger sphere. This includes other categories besides the above-mentioned criteria such as: children from disadvantaged social environments and families, institutionalised children, children who are criminal offenders, children from ethnic or religious minorities, street children, abused or physically and psychologically mistreated children and children suffering from chronic diseases (tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS, diabetes, etc.). All of these children have the same basic needs for their growth and development as others – the need to be loved and to be secure, the need to be appreciated and positively stimulated, the need to be self-confident and the need to be responsible and independent. Children also differ according to their temperaments, capacities and motivations. Children should grow up and develop together, without transforming differences into barriers.

## Integration and inclusion

In the Romanian language, the dictionary defines integration as “the action of including, incorporating or harmonising as a whole”. Integration is a psychological process which can be done only in correlation with social integration – an incorporation or assimilation process of an individual into social units and systems (family, group, classes, schools and society). “Objective integration” is when the child with deficiencies from the special school is transferred to public mainstream school. The group or class that receives the child has to re-organise activities according to the needs of the new member. When the child enrolls directly into public school, integration also refers to adaptation, socialisation and the acceptance by the class.

Inclusion differs from integration. The integration of children with special education needs aims at incorporating them into mainstream classes. It focuses on relocating the children from special schools into local schools in the community. Ordinarily, they are relocated in order to spend their school time in separate classrooms and to receive the necessary support. When this relocation is not accompanied by an increased interaction between children with special education needs and other children, it represents only one step – physical integration and not real inclusion. Inclusion refers to the capacity of a group, class or school to successfully receive new members who require support in order to adapt, integrate and socialise. Inclusion implies structural and functional modifications for both parties, *i.e.* for the person to be integrated and also for the school or system into which she is being welcomed. The Salamanca Declaration states that mainstream schools with an inclusive orientation represent the most efficient way of fighting discriminatory attitudes, a means to create welcoming communities, to build an inclusive society and to offer education for all. Inclusive schools assure an efficient education and even the improvement of the entire education system.

Inclusive education refers to breaking all learning barriers and assuring participation of all those vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation (UNESCO, 2000). It is a strategic approach designed to facilitate success in learning for all children. The first requirement addressed by inclusive education is decreasing and then eliminating exclusion in education, at least at the level of elementary school. It aims to assure access to quality education, participation and success in learning for all children. The inclusive school is the mainstream school that is accessible to all children and succeeds in offering them good quality education, building the essential skills necessary for their social integration.

Inclusive education represents a continuous process of improving the school, aiming at exploiting existing resources (especially human resources),



in order to support the participation of the education process of all pupils from the community. This means that a special school may also be inclusive or may develop inclusive practices in working with children. Open and friendly schools, in which the focus is on a flexible curriculum, increasing the quality of teaching and learning, continuous evaluation and education partnership are considered inclusive schools.

Key principles of inclusion refer to the following fundamental concepts:

- Valuing diversity.
- The right to be respected.
- The dignity of the human being.
- Individual needs understood as individual requests.
- Planning.
- Collective responsibility.
- Development of professional relations and culture.
- Professional development and equal opportunities.

The factors that facilitate inclusion at the school level concentrate on three dimensions – culture, strategy (or policy) and practice. Culture refers to the degree to which all of the education staff from the school embrace the inclusive education philosophy and in which it can be perceived by all members of the school community and by all those that enter the school. In fact, creating a school culture must become a process as important as the process of theoretical and practical teaching. Such a philosophy may then be the basis for elaborating strategies and making decisions regarding practices. This dimension refers both to the reality of a school and to the image that it transmits. Strategy or policy refers to placing the inclusive approach in the core of school development so that it will be reflected in all strategies and will not be considered a new, distinct approach added to the existing ones. The concept of inclusive education must be reflected in all documents regarding school planning. Practice refers to assuring both inclusive culture and the strategy of the school in the classroom activity. The teaching-learning activities must encourage the participation of all pupils.

Bearing all of these definitions in mind, we can enumerate inclusion indicators related to each dimension that enable the implementation of inclusion in school. “Developing inclusive cultures” entails a welcome for everyone actively seeking to develop partnerships within the local community. The diversity of the pupils is seen as a valuable resource. The teacher knows and values all pupils equally. Parents and education staff are

also equally valued. The pupils know what to do when they have a problem and can help each other. The education staff support each other in solving problems, are involved in the decision-making process and collaborate with parents. People address one another in ways that confirm their individual value.

An ideal inclusive system would have the following characteristics. Inclusive policies in the school would attempt to provide an efficient integration programme for all pupils from the local community. Pupils would have the right to study any subject and to participate in any activity. The school would have efficient policies and strategies to diminish pupils' absenteeism and to handle cases of pupils' exclusion for disciplinary reasons and intimidation and abuse among pupils. Strategies for elaborating the curriculum would consider the diversity of pupils in terms of cultural, linguistic, gender, successes and deficiencies or differences. The school would realise adaptations of the building that ensure easy access for all. The evaluation system would correctly assess the results of all pupils. In-service training of the teaching staff would take into account the diversity of pupils and support policies and services would be globally co-ordinated and stimulate participation in common classroom activities. Policies for solving behavioural problems would be enhanced with policies which support learning activities. The distribution of school resources would be equitable and the school would have a strategy through which the parents are encouraged to become partners in the learning process of their children. The support services at school level (assured by psychologists, speech specialists, school counsellors, support teachers, medical staff, etc.) would assure the increase of the participation rate of the pupils. The participation and involvement of all education staff in school management would also be encouraged.

### ***Developing inclusive practices***

When planning lessons, all children should be considered. Lessons develop understanding and respect of differences. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and teachers' explanations help pupils to understand and learn the lesson in the classroom. During lessons, pupils are encouraged to work together and to talk during the class activities about the way they learn. Teachers adapt the lessons according to pupils' reactions and help the pupils to revise their own individual learning process. School personnel react positively to pupils' problems. The pupils obtain successes in the learning process. Learning difficulties are considered opportunities for developing improved teaching practices. All teachers are involved in planning the preparatory activities. The members of the managerial council are involved in improving classroom activity.

An inclusive approach is also found, not only at the level of the education system, but also at the level of the teaching process. The main characteristics of the inclusive teaching process are the adaptation to differences among children. Teachers who have rich experiences in personal and social life also use their relations with parents or other members of the community to improve methods in the teaching-learning process. Relationships between teachers are a learning source and a continuous exchange of experience. Current practices lead to building experiences, shared with colleagues, in order to become another source for improving the education process. The teacher organises the learning process involving all pupils and evaluates the potential of each child in a positive and flexible manner. The process of learning is continuous, involving the introduction and sustained means of support. In order to develop the personality of the child and to build psycho-social competencies, the learning process is more important than the product. If the pupil does not adapt to the proposed school learning rhythms, she or he cannot be considered a problem and accommodations will continue to be made.

### **Integration in the Romanian system**

In the Romanian education system, integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools has been done mainly in compact classes or in groups of three or four children, with SEN included in regular classes. Individual integration of children with SEN has been realised in the mainstream school near their home. This is mainly physical integration and not about real inclusion. Support services were absent, both for the integrated children and their families or for the school community.

The regulations in force envisage the possibility of nominating a support or itinerant teacher for 15 children in primary education or for 20 children in lower secondary school. The possibility of SEN children receiving the support of a specialised teacher in mainstream schools depends on the decision of the Child Protection Commission, which has to specifically mention this in a written decision regarding the school orientation of the child.

The experience of itinerant or support teachers shows that the existing methodology regarding status and attributions has insufficient provisions. The status of the support teacher is not clear and he or she has too many tasks, some of which could be done by other specialists in special education. Furthermore, there are no facilities for the transportation of the support teacher to the mainstream school where the child is integrated. The results of the activity of the support teachers are rather modest at the level of the development of the children. They are more obvious at the level of the

changes in the mentality of the teachers in the mainstream schools where integration is present and of the parents of children without special needs.

Until now, only a limited number of mainstream schools have integrated children with special needs. Romania does not yet have inclusive schools in the real sense of the term as support services are incomplete and the change in mentality has not reached a level that allows the inclusion of any child in any school. However, during the last years, a number of programmes co-ordinated by non-governmental organisations and using international funds have been developed. These aim to transform mainstream schools into inclusive schools. At the level of the entire Romanian society, a segregationist approach still exists concerning persons with disabilities and therefore such experiments have not been generalised at a national level as of yet. However, the Ministry of Education and Research has promoted several projects on a case-by-case basis at national level, aiming to create the prerequisites of coherent and efficient reform:

- The Twinning PHARE Project “Access to education for disadvantaged groups” aimed to evaluate the situation of the Romanian special education system, to elaborate a national plan of action and a good practice guide. The project ended at the end of April 2004. Another project was designed as a result of the Twinning PHARE project which has shown that it is important to include in the target group children from special education integrated into the mainstream. This on-going project aims to improve access to and increase quality of education for children coming from disadvantaged groups. One of the main components of this second project is establishing, in all of the participating counties, resource centres for inclusive education. This will use the premises and the human resources of special schools, thus creating an important tool which will contribute to the integration of children with special needs in mainstream education.
- The National Strategy for Community Action began by involving students from high schools to commit themselves to regular visits to local placement centres, special schools, hospitals, etc. and engaging students in a programme of education activities which could facilitate the process of social integration of persons at risk. Students and teachers from Christ’s Hospital from England participated in these activities in schools from Brasov and Ialomita counties. This was followed by a pilot-project in Dolj County which lasted three months in the summer of 2003. The positive results have encouraged the ministry to design the National Strategy for Community Action, to organise a national conference in which the

strategy was presented and regional conferences for the organisation and training of county teams. The strategy will be implemented in all 42 counties starting in the school year 2004/2005. Community Action is a voluntary, certified activity in the curricula of high schools and enables students of today to become informed, resourceful and committed citizens of tomorrow.

- The National Programme “Together in the same school” has the main objective of ensuring that all children start school in the mainstream school near their home. This objective implies a comprehensive policy, co-ordinated at the national level, the correlation of the legislation of all institutions involved in education and child protection and the implementation of diversified education services able to answer the needs of each child.

### **Ascertainment and special school reform**

The decision for school orientation, which limits access to a special school, is taken by the Commission for Child Protection from the specialised public service of each county or sector of Bucharest. That decision is taken after an evaluation realised by the Complex Evaluation Service, based on a methodology elaborated and approved by the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoptions. Even if the law guarantees the right of the family to decide upon the school the child will attend, in many cases that legal provision is ignored. The involvement of the school and of the family in the decision making is often not very significant. Furthermore, the financial implications are very important for the decision regarding school orientation.

Until the year 2000, some special schools had boarding houses where children coming from other localities lived during the week. During the week-ends and the holidays, the children returned to their homes. In 2000, the boarding houses were transformed into placement centres under the co-ordination of the Child Protection Department from each county. Confusion was created regarding the state of children that needed to be accepted into the boarding houses. Because these were no longer boarding houses, some families had to accept the institutionalisation of their child in a “placement centre” in order for the child to have the possibility of attending the respective school. In some cases, children were not accepted, though they lived in other localities and needed to participate in special education.

This change generated dissatisfaction for all involved. The children’s families could not accept that their children had to receive a placement decision in order to be accepted into the boarding house during the week.

The special schools noticed that a large number of children were included in mainstream education without any support services. The regular schools were forced to integrate a large number of children with deficiencies, without any previous preparation and the local authorities noticed an unnatural increase of the number of institutionalised children. This situation has many dysfunctions that affect the children with SEN and limit their right to education and, by doing so, their access to a normal life. The impossibility of transferring funds from one county or sector of Bucharest to another is another anomaly, contrary to the principle that “the resource follows the child”. This prevents a large number of children from benefiting from education services adapted to their needs and leads to a danger for school failures. This is a matter of concern for the Ministry of Education and Research (MER), which, together with the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption, is seeking the right solution.

### **Facilitating and hindering factors for inclusion**

Facilitating factors for inclusion include: governmental policy in the domain of education, the activity of non-governmental organisations, the in-service training of teachers and the parents of children and pupils with deficiencies. More and more, the current tendency is to evaluate and to extend these facilitating factors in order to realise an efficient integration of children with deficiencies into mainstream education and into the community.

Hindering factors include negative mentalities and prejudice, some schools and teachers of mainstream education, the parents of pupils without special education needs, insufficient material and financial resources which prevent schools from developing support services or including more teachers in training courses and the existing system of evaluation for teachers and schools. This evaluates and values high-level achievements among certain pupils, manifested in results in exams and contests, while insufficiently appreciating and following the individual progress of each child.

### **Education policies regarding children with disabilities**

According to the education policy of MER, all children can be educated and have the right to be educated. The government and the local authorities are obliged to ensure the necessary education conditions for all children. Education reforms take into consideration children with disabilities or at risk children. For these categories, the MER elaborates and realises projects and programmes regarding their education, such as the “Second Chance

Programme”, “Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups”, “Together in the Same School”, the National Strategy for Community Action and others, as mentioned above. The resources used to implement these programmes are human and material resources such as the following:

*Human resources* include the total number of teachers from mainstream and from special schools, the parents, NGO representatives and the representatives of central or local institutions responsible for education, health and protection of children. Those resources are, generally speaking, sufficient and well trained in their specialty. Unfortunately, they are not always correctly allocated, as they are concentrated mostly in urban areas. Thus, the rural areas are neglected and lack specialist services. Most of the schools that benefit from support services are in urban areas. Schools in rural areas still have problems in ensuring the necessary qualified teaching staff. Local communities have not yet succeeded in putting in place effective services of support for children and their families. A lot of efforts aim at ensuring material resources and the importance of human resources is often minimised. There are also large differences between the necessary number of specialists in some domains (school counsellors, school psychologists, support teachers and support and recovery therapists) and the existing resources. For around 15 years, as a result of a political decision, Romania did not have universities for education sciences, sociology and special psycho-pedagogy and the positions of school counsellor, school psychologist or psycho-pedagogue no longer existed. As a result, the lack of qualified human resources in special education has not yet been resolved.

*Material resources* including financial resources have an important role to play in the decision-making process and in ensuring access to and the quality of education in general and for children with disabilities in particular. Public education is free of charge in Romania and children receive textbooks free of charge in compulsory education. Nevertheless, the schooling costs for stationary, transportation and other costs are still high for a family with reduced resources. All the adaptations and the accommodations necessary for children with special needs demand supplementary costs that the local communities can provide only with difficulty. For that reason, there are still cases of children who do not receive the most adequate school orientation, due to the fact that they live in counties other than those where the schools and the education services they need exist. The majority of regular schools do not have the minimum requirements of infrastructure and resources for a sufficient integration of children with deficiencies. Teachers and parents purchase or make, according to their own resources, some materials and accommodations when absolutely necessary.

The need for reorganising the special education system is increasingly evident. This has to take into account complex legal changes, which will derive from a new definition of persons needing special education, a new approach regarding special education and a new vision for the role of school in Romanian society. All of these changes will lead to a comprehensive reform of the special education system.

### **Support services for children with special education needs integrated into mainstream schools**

Mainstream schools are developing a number of support services for children with different special needs. For children with speech disorders and learning difficulties, there are “speech inter-school centres” which have specialists who develop specific therapies in order to correct speech disorders and to overcome learning difficulties. All pupils attending mainstream schools who have been identified by speech therapy teachers as having a speech disorder have access to these centres (including children with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc.). The speech therapy teachers are specialised in speech therapy and are graduates in psychology and education sciences. In order to obtain a position in special education, they have to participate in a written contest. The subject of the examination is special psycho-pedagogy. For children with behavioural disorders and adaptation difficulties there are “psycho-pedagogic assistance centres”, where psycho-pedagogic counsellors offer services both to children in risk and crisis situations and to their families. These counselling centres are better represented than the speech therapy centres. However, the number of both speech therapy inter-school centres and psycho-pedagogic assistance centres is still insufficient and thus, they cannot treat all the cases existing in schools. For children in mainstream schools with deficiencies identified and recognised by the child protection commissions, services of support and itinerant teachers are also available.

### **Support or itinerant teachers**

Support or itinerant teachers are recruited from among: pedagogues, psychologists and psycho-pedagogues, speech therapy teachers from the speech therapy interschool centres, special psycho-pedagogue teachers from special schools and teachers from mainstream schools trained through special courses. A teacher from the mainstream system may become a support or itinerant teacher in a variety of ways: by graduating from special courses, completing some form of evaluation and selection or by completing a limited period probation. The itinerant teachers have to follow, after their selection, a training course (specified in Ministerial Order No. 3634/2000).



The support teacher activity is directed at all children, but especially at those with SEN. It is also directed at all parents, but especially those having children with SEN and all education staff who work with children that have learning, adapting, or development difficulties.

The itinerant/support teachers work in one or more public schools, or in special schools, where children with severe, profound or associated deficiencies are integrated. They also work in resource centres, but the main activity is in the classroom with the class teacher. The support teacher uses instruments such as: psychological tests (for diagnosis and prognosis), pedagogic tests, school programmes, personalised intervention programmes, books, newsletters, brochures (for counselling the family and the education staff) adapted education materials and methods for intervention. There is no precise period in the day schedule or in a school year for the intervention of the itinerant or support teacher. This varies with the number of children, the diversity and complexity of their difficulties and the express requests of the beneficiaries. The support or itinerant teacher has to have specific aptitudes, high motivation and perseverance, consistency in realising the programmes, and good communication and observation skills. Further details on the support/itinerant teacher duties are presented below.

The support or itinerant teacher has responsibilities such as identifying the need for support in the classroom, done at the request of the teacher that sees the need during activities carried on by the school support team and organising preliminary “exploration” meetings with the target group of children outside of the classroom in order to identify non-intellectual factors that contribute to school failure (*i.e.* emotional instability or disorders, family conflicts, lack of motivation or of self-motivation and adapting capacity and lack of self confidence). The support teacher will also evaluate the learning potential of the group of children and compile the inventory of disabilities that might cause the learning difficulties. This can include ascertainment of:

1. The level of visual and auditory perception.
2. Spoken language: vocabulary, articulation, pronunciation disorders, phonematic hearing, understanding, codification, de-codification or reproducing.
3. Graphilexy: graphem-phonem connection, grapholexic analysis/synthesis, visual-motricity copying.
4. Motricity and proxy: motric abilities, holding a pencil, lateralisation.
5. Space-time orientation.

6. Visual, auditory, spoken, short period working, etc.
7. Attention span.
8. Operational behaviour.
9. Symbolic-mathematic abilities: calculus, rationale, association and dissociation, solving problems.
10. IQ level.
11. Work rhythm.

Further duties include organising and sustaining counselling activities for education staff regarding learning difficulties; collaborating and co-operating with the class teacher (in the resource centre) and sharing information regarding the integration of children in class. The support teacher can offer counselling to teachers in order to adopt a positive, encouraging attitude, to avoid marginalisation of these children, to discover their needs, interests and hobbies that might be used as tools in developing learning motivation. The teachers also help by evaluating and adapting the curriculum and elaborating the “Personalised Intervention Programme (PIP)” with short- and medium-term priorities according to the child’s competencies, preferences and difficulties. Together with the class teacher, the support teacher also defines the working methods for certain lessons, raising awareness regarding the necessity of revisions. The teacher also proposes working methods on learning sequences in which the children have difficulties and develops activities of recuperation and intervention that envisage curricular learning in a different environment from the classroom (such as a resource centre or speech therapy centre). Those educational recuperation intervention activities are done either individually or with the entire group of children, proposing gradual learning sequences in order to raise interest for learning and develop self-confidence. The support teacher can also act as an assistant or observer for the group of children; assuring the continuous evaluation and personalised intervention programme, re-adapting it according to the student’s evolution.

Support and itinerant teachers work with a variety of groups including children with SEN and teachers as mentioned above. To the families of the children with SEN, the itinerant/support teacher offers information and advice regarding the options for their children, counselling for the family members when different problems are encountered, support for family participation in the realisation of the intervention programme and education for the family. During work meetings with parents, they encourage the responsibility of the family in the recuperation process through learning and acknowledgement of and about the difficulties of the child. The support teacher acts in partnership with the family through counselling and offering

education programmes to be done at home. Where necessary, he or she acts as psycho-therapist for the family, settling inter-familial conflicts.

For ordinary children in an integrative school, the itinerant/support teacher offers counselling regarding the acceptance and integration of children with SEN and support in school activities when needed. To the families of the ordinary children in the integrative school, the itinerant/support teacher offers information regarding the particularities and needs of children with SEN. They also offer counselling when difficulties in accepting children with SEN or in the education process of their own child are encountered and mediation of the relation with parents of children with SEN. To the community, the support teacher offers awareness-raising courses about the problems of children with SEN and their integration into mainstream education, involvement of different institutions in supporting integration programmes, promotion of the principles of inclusive education and of non-discrimination of children with SEN in the community.

### **Support for minority students**

For minority children, it is envisaged that the state will ensure teaching in their mother tongue whenever possible. The curricular framework and the syllabi for minorities are similar to those used in other schools, where tuition is offered in the Romanian language. For the larger minorities, such as the Hungarian minority, an important network of schools is organised at all levels of education with complete instruction in their mother tongue. For smaller minorities, where full instruction in the mother tongue is not possible due to insufficient human resources, some subjects are taught in the maternal language and some in Romanian. For very small or scattered minorities, if teaching in some courses in the maternal language is not available, the study of the mother tongue, at least, is ensured. Though the Roma minority is quite important, there has been no tradition of teaching the Romany language until recently. However, over the last decade, there have been significant developments in this respect.

### **Parents' participation in the decision process regarding their children's education**

The education legislation and practice in Romania involves the family in the education process as stated in the Education Law No. 84/1995 Article 180: "The parent or the legal guardian has the right of choosing the form of education and the type of education for the minor child". The responsibilities of the parents also include their obligation of assuring the attendance of the child in compulsory education, as well as the option to

choose to attend religion lessons and to choose between confessions. Article 152 from the *Regulations Regarding Organisation and Activity of Pre-university Education* states: “Collaboration between parents and the school, harmonising their options with education offers and realising the final purposes that both parents and the school envisage, are major objectives”. The requirements of these regulations are also valid in special schools. Moreover, the Education Law states that the decision regarding school orientation of children with deficiencies is made in agreement with the family or legal guardians.

Since 1999, the curriculum at all levels includes a number of hours, called a school-based curriculum, which is decided at the school level, taking into account the input of pupils and parents and the resources of the school. At the level of each class, parents elect the “Parents’ Committee of the Class” with objectives related primarily to improving the material conditions necessary for the proper development of the education process. They are consulted regarding the school-based curriculum, but also about internal regulations or other school matters. The representatives of the parents’ committees from each class are included in the “Parents’ Representative Council”, a representative body of the general association of the parents from the school. This body has a consultative role but seldom plays an important role in decision making in the school. It is often used in order to raise money for improving the education environment.

Co-operation with parents is sometimes better in the special schools than in the mainstream ones, due to the need to discuss the evolution of the children and also, at times, the need for the parents to participate actively in their child’s education. The role of the partnership between parents, education staff and other specialists who work with children is more and more acknowledged. Only together, through a co-ordinated education programme, can all partners aim at obtaining maximum autonomy for the child – including a normal and active life in society. Co-operation between stakeholders and consistency and coherence in the decision-making process are extremely important. The relations between parents and the school staff have an important influence on the educational progress that the child makes. In order to support the efforts of the education staff, the parents need information and advice regarding the objectives of learning and self-development. Also, the special needs of the child cannot be properly evaluated without valuing the parents’ experience. The need for a working partnership between school and family is widely recognised, but the involvement of parents in the decision-making process in education and in the improvement of the legal framework remains insufficient. The main perceived problem is the lack of information and counselling programmes for parents in special schools. Services meant to address parents’ needs have

only been developed in some schools. NGOs play an essential role in this direction, involving parents in many different programmes.

## Out-of-school children

Romanian legislation regarding education stipulates that all children have the right to be educated. Children have the right to go to mainstream education or to a special school, according to their individual physical or intellectual possibilities. However, there are children who cannot, temporarily or permanently, go to a school – such as in the case of the following groups of children:

- *Children suffering from a chronic disease that requires long periods of hospitalisation:* Some, but not all, hospitals (especially sanatoria) have envisaged the possibility of organising courses in the hospital. After recovery, children may resume their studies.
- *Children infected with HIV or suffering from AIDS:* There are different situations that may be encountered in these cases. Some children follow courses, without integration problems, at the school nearby their domicile and others are integrated into special classes, together with other children infected or suffering from the same disease in mainstream or special education schools. In the most severe cases, schooling is organised in the hospital. Unfortunately, there are children infected with HIV who cannot go to mainstream schools because the parents of the healthy children do not accept the participation of these children in the same classes. Though legislation is very clear about the right of every child to education, the pressure of the parents is very strong, putting the school authorities in a difficult position. No satisfactory solution has yet been found to ensure the right to education of both the un-infected and the infected children. Efforts are currently being made to better inform the population regarding HIV and AIDS. An optional subject, called education for health, has been introduced at all levels of pre-university education, where the subject of HIV/AIDS is treated. All pupils also encounter the subject in the compulsory hour (per week) of guidance and counselling.
- *Street children:* This category of children is a complex problem. These children, who live in the streets, in make-shift shelters or elsewhere, most often do not attend school. Some of them

temporarily attend day or night centres which are specially organised for them, where they benefit from medical care and some education activities. Unfortunately, they only stay a short period of time in these centres and the education received is not sufficient to allow them to graduate from compulsory schooling.

- *Children whose parents migrate from one locality to another:* Due to the obligation of the adults of the family to transfer from one locality to another for job-seeking or other reasons, children are often compelled to relocate. Children can be forced to leave school or be led to have many breaks between one school and another or to permanently abandon school.
- *Children with severe or multiple/associated deficiencies:* There are two categories that belong to this group. The first one includes children who live together with their families and are not brought to school due to reasons related to parents' motivation – either their ignorance of schools which deal with children having such problems or of their children's right to be educated, the shame of the parents (who do not want the community to know of their problem child who they prefer to keep hidden), or the material interests of the parents (some may believe, falsely, that they will lose the financial benefits received for taking care of their handicapped child). The second category includes abandoned children with severe handicaps, who formerly lived in hospital-placement centres (called "*camin-spital*" in Romanian), which are now gradually being abolished. Some of those children are brought to special schools but some of them, without any school orientation from child protection services, just live in the centres, benefiting from medical care but entirely without school services. The hospital-placement centres are being abolished and the children are now gradually being included in special schools. As these children had never attended school before, a curriculum for severely handicapped children had not been developed. A specific curriculum has since been designed and entered into force in the school year 2004/2005.
- *Overage children, older by three or more years than their class peers:* Some children remain out of the education system for other reasons (repeated classes, school dropout, late school starting, lack of assistance from their family, etc.). Several measures have been taken in order to ensure the possibility for

them to be included in schools. One possibility is to enrol in literacy courses for adults for those who did not finish primary school. Starting in the school year 2005/2006, a methodology for remedial courses, for persons who did not finish the primary education, entered into force. For persons having finished primary education, but not gymnasium, a reduced frequency course may be organised. The “Second chance” programme introduced an innovative school curriculum, allowing the graduates of primary education who dropped out of gymnasium to attend a three-and-a-half-year course. They follow general education courses, but also vocational education and training. At the end of the course, they receive the same general certificate obtained by the gymnasium graduates but they may also obtain a professional certificate, acknowledging the level of qualification.

## Statistics and indicators

Data concerning children with special needs included in special schools are presented in the tables below. It is important to have complete data for monitoring children from special education schools. The monitoring process is essential in order to know the evolution of each child – useful for making appropriate decisions according to his or her developmental needs, the precise number of children who need support services, the training needs for teachers of special education and avoiding the exclusion of any child from the education system.

While there is no problem in monitoring the situation in special schools, the same cannot be said about children with special needs integrated in mainstream schools. Where the decision of integration has been taken by the school or in accordance with the school inspectorate, the children are followed and benefit from support measures. But in some cases, children were sent from the special school to the mainstream school near their home in another locality – usually a remote village which is sometimes in another county. In these cases, children’s educational progress has not been followed and they did not receive any support. Even if the child’s progress was followed, in isolated communities there is no possibility for offering specific support for children with special needs. As the mainstream school system is very demanding and excellence oriented, the children with special needs have little chance for success without a support system and professional follow-up.

Many institutions are responsible for the health, education and protection of the rights of the child: the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Administration and Internal Affairs, the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption and the National Authority for Handicapped Persons. These central institutions and their corresponding local counterparts have different policies regarding children with disabilities, different legislation and different criteria for identification. They tend to take into account only one aspect of the multiple needs of the child and try to solve it, without communication between these organisations and without co-operation and co-ordination. A coherent monitoring system for children with deficiencies and an efficient partnership between institutions is necessary in order to ensure a correct knowledge and assessment of the situation of children with disabilities and to prevent the non-observance of children's rights. This is also the conclusion of the Twinning Light PHARE project "Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups" which analysed the present situation of the special education system and proposed some remedial actions in order to ensure the right to education for all children with special needs.

Romanian education is comprised of different types of criteria for statistical data: "Type of education" refers to the institution that organises and finances the school process and includes public or private education. The "level of education" includes pre-school, primary, gymnasium, lower cycle of high school or art and trades school, upper cycle of high school, post high school and university education. The "education form" is the way in which courses are planned, such as day or evening courses, reduced-frequency courses, merged courses and open or distance courses. "School profile" is applicable only for high schools and refers to the qualification students receive after their final assessment: theoretical, technical and vocational. Specific subjects are arts, theology, pedagogy, sports, military studies, etc. Special schools include a variety of levels as already mentioned and integrated special education can have three forms: (1) compact classes for pupils with deficiencies integrated into mainstream schools, (2) groups of pupils with deficiencies (two or three) integrated into a mainstream class and (3) individually integrated pupils in mainstream classes.

The classifying criteria in special education are: type of deficiency, mental deficiencies, sensory deficiencies, psycho-motor deficiencies, neuro-motor deficiencies. The levels of the deficiency are light, medium, severe/profound and multiple/associated. According to the type of deficiency, different types of special schools are organised. These include schools for children with mental deficiencies, schools for children with hearing or sight deficiencies and schools for children with motor deficiencies. According to the level of deficiency, children are oriented



towards a special school (if the deficiency is medium, severe/profound or multiple/associated) or towards mainstream (if the deficiency is light or medium).

The tables below present the situation of children from special schools during the school year 2003/2004, the situation of integrated children with deficiencies in mainstreams schools and the situation of special schools transformed into open schools, with both special and ordinary classes.

**Table 8.1 Children with mental deficiencies in special schools in school year 2003/04**

Number of special schools	Total children in special schools	Pre School children	Primary Schools Grades I-IV		Gymnasium grades V-VIII		VET special schools		Home schooling	Children with HIV
			forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils		
150	22 920	1 225	520	5 055	966	10 812	459	5 828	170	284

Note: The 150 total schools in the table above is the number of schools for mental disabilities only. The other schools, listed below, are additional.

Source: All quantitative data were provided by the County School Inspectorates in Romania

**Table 8.2 Children with motor/neuro-motor deficiencies in special schools in school year 2003-2004**

Number of special schools	Total number of children in special schools	Pre School children	Primary school Grades I-IV		Gymnasium Grades V-VIII		VET schools		Special High schools	
			forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils
4	662	16	18	125	21	226	13	136	15	159

Source: *ibid*

**Table 8.3 Children with visual deficiencies in special schools, school year 2003-2004**

Special schools	Total number of children in special schools	Pre School children	Primary school Grades I-IV		Gymnasium Grades V-VIII		VET special schools		High schools		Post high-schools	
			forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils
7	511	110	30	286	44	457	21	217	20	230	18	195

\*90% of the special schools with grades I-VIII and all the special high schools for visual deficiencies follow the curriculum of the public school.

Source: *ibid*

Table 8.4 Children with hearing deficiencies in special schools, school year 2003-2004

Special schools	Total number of children in special schools	Pre School children	Primary school Grades I-IV		Gymnasium Grades V-VIII		VET special schools		High schools		Post high schools	
			forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils	forms	pupils
19	3098	306	75	693	82	851	76	914	27	315	1	19

Source: *ibid*

In the past few years, high interest has been shown in the integration of children with deficiencies in mainstream education. The evolution of this phenomenon during the past four school years is shown in Table 8.5:

Table 8.5 Pupils with deficiencies in special schools and in mainstream schools

School year	Pupils in special schools	SEN pupils integrated in mainstream schools
1999/2000	53 446	1 076
2000/2001	48 237	5 659
2001/2002	37 919	10 779
2002/2003	27 359	11 493

Source: *ibid*

As a result of the national policy of the Ministry of Education, beginning in 1999 the number of children with deficiencies from special schools decreased annually and the number of integrated pupils into mainstream education increased.

Table 8.6 Children with special needs integrated in mainstream school during school year 2003-2004 (Identified by the Complex Services for Evaluation from the Child Protection Department)

Total number of children with SEN in mainstream schools	Pre School children	Primary school Grades I-IV	Gymnasium Grades V-VIII	VET special schools	High schools
11 760	321	4 560	4 330	2 553	58

Source: *ibid*

In addition, in 18 counties, 24 special schools were transformed into open schools with 408 forms affected and 5 145 pupils. This included one pre-school, ten vocational education and training programmes, 11 gymnasia, one combined gymnasium-VET school, one combined gymnasium-high school and one rehabilitation school.

## School organisation

According to the Education Law, the national education system is comprised of the following levels:

- Pre-school education with three levels, the last being the school-preparatory level.
- Primary education grades 1-4
- Secondary education, lower secondary level, with two successive cycles, gymnasium (grades 5-8) and lower cycle of high school or art and trades school (grades 9 and 10).
- Upper secondary level – the upper level of high school, grades 11 to 12/13.
- Tertiary education – non-university tertiary education at post high school, as well as university and post-university studies.

The Education Law also determines that all schools have the same organisation concerning three things. Firstly the structure – pupils are organised into classes, usually according to age, with an established time table. Secondly the content – this involves the teaching-learning-evaluation programme, differentiated objectives and goals. Thirdly, the perspective – each pupil has the right and the opportunity to reach a higher level of learning. The schools can have different structures and timetables.

Kindergartens can have morning programmes, normally extending from 8am to midday, with a long programme (8am to 6pm) and a weekly programme in a boarding school (Monday to Friday) as other options. Children in kindergartens are organised in groups by age. For the youngest children there are 10 to 20 students in each group. The educational activity is managed by the pre-school teacher with a didactic obligation of 25 hours per week. Pre-school education is not compulsory, but the preparatory year for school has been implemented broadly and is attended by more than 90% of this age group.

Primary and lower secondary levels are compulsory. Children begin primary school when they are six or seven years old. General schools, with grades from 1-8, include primary education (grades 1-4). The activity is managed by a primary teacher for each classroom, with a didactic obligation of no less than 18 hours per week with 15 to 25 pupils in each class. The daily programme includes four to five hours of study. In gymnasium education (grades 5-8), the number of pupils remains the same as in primary education. The daily programme includes five to six hours of study. Each subject from the framework curriculum is taught by a specialty teacher. The didactic obligation of each teacher is 18 hours per week. At the end of the eighth grade there is a national exam in the following subjects: Romanian language and literature, maternal language and literature (for the students who have studied in their mother tongue), maths and an option of Romanian history or geography. The results obtained at the national exam and the results obtained during the grades 5-8 are used as criteria for the admission to high schools or art and trades schools. Students coming from the lower cycle of high school may continue the last two or three years of high school. The ones coming from arts and trades schools may decide to follow one more year of professional education and then enter the labour market, or they may continue their high school education for another two years.

In high schools (grades 9-12/13), the number of students in each class cannot legally be higher than 30. Each discipline is taught, as in a gymnasium, by a specialty teacher. The daily programme includes six to seven hours of study where theoretical activities are combined with practical activities. The final assessment of the high school students is realised through the baccalaureate exam. That exam consists of tests for the following subjects: Romanian language and literature (written and oral tests), mother tongue language and literature (written and oral tests, for students studying in their mother tongue), a foreign language (oral test), a compulsory subject from the specialty area, another subject at choice from the specialty area and a subject at choice from areas other than the specialty area (all of these are written tests). At the end of high school, the students from technical and specialty high schools receive a qualification certificate after a special test.

Art and trades schools (grades 9 to 10/11) prepare students for different professions according to the demand of the labour market in the local community. The first two years correspond to level one of qualification. The third year is the completion year and is a bridge between professional education and high school. At the end of the completion year, the pupil can sit an exam in order to obtain a level two qualification. The graduate can pass on to grades 12 and 13 of high school and thus continue his or her studies up to the baccalaureate exam.

At the end of high school, the graduates receive a certificate that allows them to participate in the national baccalaureate exam or for some students, in the exam for certification of professional competencies. Admission to higher education depends upon having passed the baccalaureate exam. Access to non-university tertiary education (after high school) is permitted to all high school graduates, with or without a baccalaureate diploma.

### ***Distinctions of the special education system***

The organisation of the special education system is similar to the organisation of the mainstream system but some differences do exist. Special education is organised according to the type and level of the deficiency. Only the pupils with severe, profound or associated deficiencies are accepted in special schools and, in some specific cases, children with moderate deficiencies. All of the other children are integrated into mainstream education. A specific category is that of children with sensory or motor deficiencies who follow the curriculum for the regular school, despite the fact that they attend special schools. The differences between special and mainstream schools are defined by physical and methodological accessibilities specific to each type of deficiency. In special schools, there are three types of compulsory activities: teaching-learning activities (taught by special education teachers during the first period of the day), specific therapies for compensation and recovery (taught by the psycho-pedagogy teachers and therapists) and education activities (taught by the educators in the afternoon). The number of pupils in a classroom is established according to the level of the deficiency: 8-12 children with moderate deficiencies or 4-6 children with severe deficiencies. There are cases where the group of children is smaller (less than four) for the children with profound or associated deficiencies. The Law No.128 (1997), regarding the statute of the teaching staff, establishes some specific teaching positions for special education: itinerant teacher, teacher for special education, psycho-pedagogue and speech therapy teacher.

Graduates of the special school for sensorial deficiencies may participate in the national testing exam, together with the pupils from regular schools, and they benefit from rights referring to the necessary accessibilities for the exam according to their deficiency (*i.e.* the prolongation of the exam by one hour, use of large print text and the opportunity to write in Braille). The art and trades special schools have a curriculum quite similar to that of regular schools. The qualifications in one or another profession are obtained in the same way as in the regular education system. For children with sensorial or motor deficiencies, there are high schools and post-high schools where they can continue their

studies. The access of those youngsters to higher education also depends on having passed the baccalaureate exam.

### **School accessibility**

With regard to the accessibility of the school, two aspects must be borne in mind: the physical accessibility and the accessibility to the education system and process.

Physical accessibilities refer to the environmental adaptation of the schools from mainstream education in order to be capable of accepting children with special needs. This includes the creation of access ways, access platforms, hand-rails (for pupils with motor deficiencies), sound signal systems (for pupils with sight deficiencies) and visual signal systems (for pupils with hearing deficiencies). Communication facilities include access to the Internet, textbooks in Braille language, computers with voice synthesisers and usage of sign language. Another important aspect of accessibility is transportation for children who cannot walk from home to school in order to reduce the number of children who live in boarding houses (placement centres) and to ensure their legal right to education.

Efforts are being made in order to provide access ways and other facilities for people with motor deficiencies. There is currently a collaboration project between the Ministry of Education and Research and the National Authority for Handicapped Persons which aims at evaluating the current situation of the accessibility of school buildings and at creating accessibility where lacking. For both institutions, the achievement of accessibility is a priority. Regarding communication accessibilities, the government is currently implementing a programme of ensuring each high school (including special high schools) has a network of 25 computers and access to the Internet. The continuation of this programme is envisaged for gymnasias. The ministry has approved and will finance the printing of textbooks in braille. Other solutions for the achievement of specific needs regarding communication facilities can be offered in partnership with NGOs. The present government had, among other objectives relating to education, to ensure transport to school for children living in isolated communities. This programme was not dedicated to children with special needs, but to all children coming from small rural communities. Some NGOs ensure the transport of children with motor deficiencies from home to school. Those accessibilities are not yet completely and coherently achieved at national level and they represent local solutions to problems encountered in different areas of the country.

Other access to the education system relates to coherent legislation which respects children's rights, efficient support services for all types of

disabilities, the completion of teachers' competencies through an initial and in-service teacher training in the field of special education and the process of changing mentalities for teachers from regular schools.

Regarding legislation, there is not enough current coherence in laws related to education and those related to child protection. There are overlaps which are present at the level of services offered to children with deficiencies.

Support services still require further development, though important steps have been taken in the creation of support services for children with different disabilities. The system of special education is well established and the teachers working in special schools are well trained and very dedicated to their jobs. There are other tasks remaining to be done – especially regarding support services in mainstream education. The number of itinerant/support teachers has to be increased. Their roles and activities have to be clarified and more significant incentives have to be offered to both the itinerant/support teachers and the teachers from mainstream schools. Support needs to include a flexible curriculum which allows the necessary curricular adaptations, specific methodologies for different types and levels of deficiency, individualised pedagogic materials, school materials adapted to the needs of the children, higher numbers of specialists in different domains for teaching support, specific therapies for compensation and recovery, and school and family counselling. The curriculum, methodologies and specific therapies used by teachers in special schools need to respond to the requirements of flexibility and to offer the opportunity to adapt to the needs of each child. Currently, initial and in-service training of teachers in special schools allows them to adopt individual approaches adequate to the needs of all children.

On the other hand, teachers from mainstream education are not prepared to work with children with different levels of achievement. They have not been trained to adapt their teaching to different intellectual levels or to be able to help low achievers in order to improve their results. Many efforts have recently been made by the Ministry of Education, with the important help of NGOs, to offer in-service training to teachers from mainstream education in order for them to understand and accept the differences between children, to be able to adapt the curriculum and the teaching methodologies to the needs of the children and to have an inclusive approach in the classroom. The creation of resource centres, which has already been piloted and will be developed through the PHARE 2003 project “Access to education for disadvantaged groups”, is an important measure designed to assist all teachers in the difficult process of creating an open, inclusive school.

## Pedagogy

Pedagogical theories in special education find their roots in the same theories that guide the entire Romanian education system. Modern pedagogical theories continue to be incorporated into the general perspectives in Romania regarding school and its outcomes. Children with special education needs are increasingly valued. Education aims to achieve the development and the socio-professional integration of children rather than just attaining academic competencies. Ensuring the quality of the education system has been one of the major objectives of the government in the past few years. Quality means offering education services in accordance with the needs of the children. The efficiency of such services can be verified using school indicators such as: the rate of success, the drop-out rate, the rate of success in national exams and the level of professional integration. The orientation towards key competencies and the increased duration of compulsory education are measures currently implemented in the entire Romanian education system, including in special education.

In recent years, a special interest has been shown at the Ministry of Education and Research for the development of specific methodologies for different categories of children with limited access to school education. The categories include children with severe, profound and associated deficiencies, and deaf or blind children. For those categories of children, a special curriculum has been developed and a series of training courses for teachers has been organised. Teaching staff from Romanian universities, researchers from the Institute for Education Sciences and practitioners from the special education system have done studies and research in order to develop suitable identification and intervention methodologies. There are specific methodologies developed according to existing human and material resources and according to the type and level of each category of deficiency. Furthermore, instruments for identification and evaluation have been standardised for the Romanian population.

Romanian special education uses a variety of specific methods for the recovery of and compensation for children's' deficiencies. These include sign language, dactyl language, lip-reading, Braille, using computers for artificial voices, using computers with keyboards adapted to motor or visual deficiencies, writing with printmakers in Braille, didactic play, demonstration, examples and concrete-intuitive pedagogic materials. These methods are appropriate for children with different categories of deficiencies. However, their extension into mainstream schools is difficult due to insufficient human and material resources. The main obstacle regarding the integration of children with deficiencies in mainstream schools near their homes is the difficulty in providing the appropriate teaching and



accommodation associated with the education system, especially the assistance of experts who would be able to use the different methodologies specific to each type of deficiency.

## Curriculum

The Romanian curriculum is elaborated by the Ministry of Education and Research and includes three main elements: the framework curriculum, the syllabi and the educational materials including the textbooks for students and the support materials for school activities. The concept of a curriculum includes strategies for developing the content of both formal and informal education along with specific objectives for a given level of education. The curriculum includes an education programme organisation of the learning and education situations for the achievement of the stated objectives and the evaluation of the results.

The “framework curriculum”, an official document in Romania, is compulsory and expresses the education policy of the state and the system of values of the school institutions. Schools and classes are also offered the opportunity to organise the teaching-learning time to cover the necessary subjects. Principles for the elaboration of the framework curriculum include:

- The cultural selection of subjects to be studied.
- Functionality of subjects, which are age-appropriate and take into account the current level of knowledge.
- Coherence, with equilibrium between different curricular areas.
- Equal chances for all children, assured by compulsory education and by the core curriculum.
- Decentralisation and flexibility, ensured by the school-based curriculum.
- Relevance, connecting the curriculum with the realities of social and economic life.

The subjects mentioned in the framework curriculum are grouped into curricular areas such as: language and communication, maths and sciences, man and society, arts, physical education and sports, technologies, and counselling and orientation.

The *curricular cycles*, comprising several years of study include: *the fundamental acquisitions cycle* (last group of kindergarten and grades one

and two) aiming at the acclimation of the child to the demands of the school system and initial literacy, stimulating the child in order to learn about the environment, stimulating the creative potential of the child, their intuition and imagination and motivating the child for learning as a social activity. Next is the *development cycle* (grades three to six) that moulds the basic capacities, communication and language skills, using different specialised languages, autonomous thinking and social integration. *The observation and orientation cycle* (grades seven to nine) optimises the student's school and professional choices. This means the development of the capacity of analysis of the competencies acquired through the teaching/learning process, in order to be oriented towards a specific professional career. *The thoroughgoing study cycle* (grades 10 to 11) is for in-depth study in the chosen specialty, ensuring, concurrently, general training based on the core curriculum and learning about optional subjects from different curricular areas. *The specialisation cycle* (grades 12 and 13), has the objective of pre-specialisation in order to ensure efficient integration into the university education system or the job market.

The framework curriculum is an umbrella document that includes: *the core curriculum, the differentiated curriculum and the school-based curriculum*. *The core curriculum* in compulsory education includes the compulsory subjects and the number of hours of courses for all pupils at an education level. The total number of hours of the core curriculum is established by the Ministry and differs from one grade to the next. *The differentiated curriculum* represents hours allocated to subjects from a specialty area. *The school-based curriculum* includes a variable number of hours allocated to courses supplementary and complementary to the core and differentiated curricula. The teachers in the school design the syllabus for the school-based subjects, which have to be approved by the school and the county school inspectorate. The school offerings, including various optional subjects, are presented to parents and students who have to select an option from one or two subjects. The school-based curriculum can be a new subject, an extension of a subject from the core curriculum or the differentiated curriculum (to study additional themes or chapters of an already studied subject), an in-depth study of a subject (with an increased volume of information for a chapter or a learning unit in an already studied subject).

The *School syllabus*, a normative document at school level, designs the didactic content for each subject of the framework curriculum. The role of the school syllabus is to orient the approaches of the teacher in order to attain the projected results, underline the contribution of the subject to the accomplishment of education goals and ensure the practical character of the child's learning. The school syllabus is developed taking into account the

minimum number of hours of the discipline from the framework curriculum. The content of the syllabus is organised respecting the logic of the subject and of the didactic process within the structure of the education system. It can be structured in linear fashion, with continual linkages of information from one year to the next or be circular, returning to a theme and increasing the complexity and difficulty level of the information. The content can also be “winding”, building on a theme and returning to it from another perspective. During recent years, the school syllabi have become more flexible, allowing the intervention of the teacher and their adaptation of the teaching process.

*The methodological guide*, a working instrument for teachers, treats, in detail, the content of the school syllabus and offers the methodological support necessary for any teacher in order to develop his activity in good conditions. Every school syllabus has a methodological guide and any change of the syllabus brings modifications to the corresponding guide. *Auxiliary materials* are varied, they include exercise books and didactic materials elaborated by the class teacher or existing on the market. The auxiliary materials are facilitators of the learning process and are adapted to the level of each class and to the individual needs of the pupils.

*The textbook (manual)* systematically develops the themes presented in the school programme for each subject and for each grade. The textbook, a working instrument for pupils and teachers, includes pedagogically structured information, presented in chapters or learning units, corresponding to a set of detailed lessons. The lessons contain definitions, explanations, illustrations and/or photos matching the text and exercises and applications which stimulate the cognitive capacities of the student in order to assimilate, process and apply the knowledge. Several textbooks are available for the same subject in the same grade. For compulsory school, the textbooks are distributed free of charge. After the approval and the publication of each school syllabus, textbooks are developed by teachers and other specialists in the subject. The draft is presented to a publishing house and, if accepted, the publishing house will participate at the tenders annually organised by the Ministry of Education and Research. The evaluation by the publishing houses has a quality component (compliance with the syllabus, scientific accuracy, pedagogical methods, quality of the presentation and illustrations etc.). Annually, new textbooks are printed or reprinted for all or some of the subjects, according to the needs of the schools and to the approved changes of the school syllabi.

## Special education curriculum for special schools

In special education, the curriculum has the same structure as in regular education with the introduction of accommodations appropriate for different groups of learners. The framework curriculum, the school syllabi and the textbooks are designed to respect the type and the level of the deficiency. For example, in special schools for children with mental deficiency, the curriculum is different from the regular school curriculum and is differentiated according to the level of the deficiency. In special schools for children with sensorial or motor deficiencies, the education process can be developed through a special framework curriculum or through the framework curriculum of the regular school to which the specific therapies for recovery and for compensation are added.

A framework curriculum for children with severe, profound and associated deficiencies includes 5-7 hours of activities in communication and language (*i.e.* stimulation and compensation of language abilities), from grades 2-10; in sciences and environment, courses on such issues as sensorial-movement, the environment, the living world, one's body and hygiene, and applied mathematics, are held from 3-5 hours per week in grades 1-3 up to 4-9 hours per week in grades 9 and 10. Courses in art and music are two hours per week from 1-10 grade and 3-4 hours per week for physical and practical education, including manual and professional activities. Lastly, subject courses in man and society, religion, moral and civic education and history and geography of Romania are from 1-2 to 4-5 hours per week. In total, courses on curricular areas range from 17-21 hours in early years of schooling and rise to 22-30 hours in grade 10. Counselling is offered one hour per week throughout schooling. Complex and integrated education therapy such as for increasing autonomy, occupational, cognitive and play therapy is 20 hours per week throughout the entire education career. Specific compensation therapies in speech, perception and vision, orientation and mobility, audiology, kinesiology or psychology, decreases from about 8 hours in early years to four hours in higher grades.

In arts and trades special schools from 9-11 grades, courses include Romanian language and literature, foreign languages, mathematics, physics and chemistry and biology. Other subjects such as history, geography, religion, entrepreneurship, arts and physical education are all taught. Even information technology is included for these students, who also have the opportunity to have apprenticeships and education counselling. Curricula include a core curriculum that can be augmented by the school curriculum, locally developed with the participation of social partners, according to the existing occupational standards.

The framework curriculum for art and trade special schools for children with mental deficiencies from grades 1-9 includes 6-7 hours of Romanian language, reading and writing and communicating with an additional hour of special language assistance in lip reading, sign language or Braille for a total of 7-9 hours of courses from 1-9 grades. In science and environment, students have an hour of courses on psycho-motor compensation in their first few years of schooling, followed, in grades 5-8, by an hour of “stimulation-compensation-integration”. Knowledge of the environment is taught for an hour in fifth grade and elements of botany and ecology, zoology, and anatomy and hygiene are taught, one hour each, successively in grades 6-8. Mathematics courses are 3 to 4 hours per week in all grades from 1-9, physics and chemistry are taught in grades eight and nine. Under the discipline “Man and Society”, an hour of moral and civic education is taught every year from 3-9 grades, religion is one hour per week every year. History and geography are one hour each, every year from 5-9 grades. Arts are also taught, an hour or two hours of classes are held in all grades for both visual education and music. There are two hours per week in each grade of physical education and sports. Technical and practical training courses are held two hours per week in manual activities from 1-4 grades and professional training ranges from 2-4 hours from grades 5-9. There is also one hour of counselling per week in all grades. Specific compensation therapies, as mentioned above, are available an hour per week and psycho-diagnosis and counselling, school orientation and therapy are available two hours per week. Education for life and society includes 20 hours per week in life skills such as for personal autonomy, practical training, play and cultural activities and socialisation.

## Curricula for children integrated into mainstream schools

Children with deficiencies integrated into mainstream education, have the right to benefit from specific therapies for recovery, realised by specialists, according to their disability, and, in addition, the support teacher undertakes the needed elaboration of plans after consultation with the teacher of the respective class. Two plans are elaborated: the *Individual Services Plan (ISP)* and a component of this, the *Personalised Intervention Plan (PIP)*; both are described below.

The *Individual Services Plan (ISP)*, is an instrument for planning and co-ordination of services, in order to insure their continuity, complementarity and quality in response to the multiple and complex demands of the child with SEN. The ISP includes: biographical information, the date and dossier number, the case responsible party and the team members, types of services (educational, social, medical, psychological and psycho-therapeutic and other forms of rehabilitation), competencies,

preferences and difficulties of the child as well as goals and objectives for their learning. The case responsible party is chosen from the multi-disciplinary team, according to the dominant difficulty of the child. This person must supervise the planning and the accomplishment of the ISP. The elaboration of the ISP, in a multi-disciplinary team, includes the following steps: a services request and information collection; global evaluation of the capacities, difficulties and special demands of the child; elaboration of the ISP itself; co-ordination and monitoring of the ISP; and operating and updating the ISP through personalised intervention plans (PIP). The ISP must specify the objectives regarding development and learning on specific intervention domains, types of services available in the community for the achievement of these objectives and deadlines for achieving the objectives of the ISP. In so doing, the ISP promotes the rights and the interests of the child through establishing and defining services and responsibilities.

The ISP ensures that interventions are complimentary and takes into account the family context and life environment. The ISP also co-ordinates the activities of partners: child, parents, professionals and the community. The ISP must be annually revised and updated whenever necessary, at the proposal of the case responsible party in order to respond to the special needs of the child towards their development, personal autonomy and social inclusion. If, at the beginning, a correct global analysis of the child's needs was accomplished, performing this review on an annual basis is sufficient. The evaluation of the demands must take into consideration progress made or other changes in the status of the child, justifying revisions and alterations of the interventions.

*The personalised intervention plan (PIP)* is a component of the ISP, a planning and co-ordination instrument to assist in the achievement of the proposed objectives for the child in each domain of intervention. The ISP serves as an orientation for each PIP; the two instruments are complementary, with the (ISP) representing a holistic approach to all services and the (PIP) as a particular aspect of these. The elaboration process for the PIP also has several stages that partially overlap with those of the ISP: the initial evaluation in order to establish the competencies and difficulties of development and learning of the child; the in-depth analysis of the situation and the establishment of the priority needs of the child; the elaboration and implementation of the PIP; the evaluation of the PIP and, finally, revisions, based on data provided through the evaluation process.

The PIP specifies: the persons involved in the accomplishment of the plan; the short- and medium-term objectives; resources needed; duration of the interventions; the criteria for the assessment of the child's progress; the methods and the instruments for the evaluation; and plans for the revision of the PIP, ensured by the whole team, in order to permanently adapt it to the

needs of the child. Several persons are involved in the elaboration of the PIP: experts, the child, the parents/legal representatives of the child and other collaborators. The revision of PIP must be realised at regular intervals of between 3 to 6 months, according to the domain of intervention and the age, type of disability and the evolution of the child. The revision process includes the evaluation of the achievement level of the proposed objectives and of the intervention's efficiency; a decision regarding the continuation or the modification of the PIP according to the progress achieved and encountered difficulties; and the correlation of PIP with the ISP. The PIP includes biographical data, the intervention domain, the specialists and other involved persons and dates of establishment and revision.

The PIP should include methods for curricular adaptation which varies according to the types of special needs: learning difficulties or specific deficiencies. For deficient children, a part of the general curriculum for children from mainstream education may be covered by the children with SEN without more complex elements, or the entire curriculum may be simplified. The general curriculum may also be complemented with other elements (individual activities, therapy for compensation) in order to ensure the recovery of children with SEN and their efficient participation in the regular learning process.

To date, the integration accomplished through curricular adaptation has shown positive results, especially for pupils with light and medium deficiencies. Remarkable results have also been obtained through the designing of an individualised and simplified curriculum for children with mental disabilities integrated in mainstream school. For pupils with physical or sensorial deficiencies, the curricular adaptation is realised especially through extension and aims at aspects related to space orientation, and teaching deaf children to speak and socialisation, communication, learning of additional languages or practical activities for the professional preparation.

## **Models of education**

The Romanian curriculum needs to be developed in the direction of levelling gaps and compensating for differences, in order to bring about the integration of children/students with SEN into the community. Historically speaking, two fundamental models of education for children with SEN can be identified.

The first model, based on selection, separation and segregation, starts from the thesis of differences between children, which imposes a distinct pedagogical treatment in separate schools. Selection is based on student's aptitudes and performances. Adaptation of the child to the school system is

expected in this socio-pedagogical model and if he is incapable of meeting the appropriate requirements, he will go to a special school. The proposed pedagogical treatment is therefore based on negative selection and “failure”. In Romania, the system for special education is organised mainly on this model, based on the concept of deficiencies. Only children with a certain medically and psycho-pedagogically diagnosed deficiency have access to a special school and to the support services (through support teachers).

A second model, of integration and inclusion, is based on a philosophy that trusts the child and encourages the development of his capacities. The socio-pedagogical expectation is the adaptation of the school to the child and, correspondingly, equal treatment based on positive discrimination and the spirit of support. Acceptance of the disability concept excludes the possibility of segregation and considers the differences between persons as “normal”. Existing differences between people demand appropriate solutions, in conditions as close as possible to mainstream programmes, respecting the individual needs for adaptation and development. That approach generates the need for a flexible curriculum, as close as possible to learning and development possibilities of other children and an efficient system of support services addressed to all students who have a learning difficulty at any given time. Adopting of this second model, could help to denounce the model of elitist schools, prevalent in Romania, and, in so doing, the school failure of a large number of pupils could be prevented.

## Teacher training

Human resources, comprising the totality of the staff involved in education (*i.e.* teaching staff, auxiliary staff and non-teaching staff), are an essential factor for increasing the efficiency of the education system.

### Training of teachers

Training of teachers is a continuous process that comprises two compulsory stages: *pre-service (initial) training*, which allows graduates from different universities to enter the teaching profession and *in-service training (continuing training)*, involving courses that are held when teachers are already working on schools. The *pre-service (initial) teacher training* in Romania emphasises training on a chosen specialty but is less well developed concerning the preparation of a future teacher, insufficiently including such matters as modern teaching methods, co-operative teaching, class management and conflict resolution. Therefore, when completing



university, Romanian teachers are good specialists in their subject, but not very good facilitators of learning. The need is felt for a longer period of practical training before entering the teaching profession. In-service teacher training was formerly ensured mainly by universities and, as a consequence, was rather theoretical and did not take into account the changes brought by the reform in pre-university education. A lack of competition was a reason for the training providers not to change and improve their training offering.

The Ministry of Education and Research has recently submitted to public debate a reformed teacher training system. The objectives of the reform of both pre-service and in-service teacher training are: to professionalise the teaching career in Romania; to improve the balance between theoretical and practical components of pre-service training with the extension of initial training until the teacher license is received after the “definitivat exam”; to develop an “education market for in-service teacher training programmes” based on a fair competition system; to correlate the structures and periods of the teaching career with education standards and to insure a professional dynamic by using the transferable credits system; and to develop modern institutional structures (the National Centre for the Training of the Teaching Staff and the Managers from the Pre-university Education System) in order to optimise the in-service training activities for the teaching staff.

### **Description of pre-service (initial) training**

The initial training of teachers is organised according to the level of education in which they will teach. For teachers in pre-primary or primary education, pre-service teacher training is organised in pedagogical high schools, post high schools and pedagogical colleges for institutors (short-term higher education). The curriculum includes a basic curriculum, psychology, pedagogy, special psycho-pedagogy, children’s psychology, developmental psychology and the methodology of the teaching-learning process. The ministry intends to ensure training for teachers in pre-primary and primary education in the future only at university level. For teachers in secondary education, pre-service teacher training is organised in universities, with a compulsory module comprising: psychology, pedagogy, children’s psychology and the methodology of the teaching and learning process for their specialty.

The initial training of teachers who will work in special education contains, besides the training in universities mentioned above, a psycho-pedagogy module in special education. The psycho-pedagogues, specialists in special education, are trained in the Faculty of Psychology and Sciences

of Education, in one of three specialisations: special psycho-pedagogy, pedagogy, or psychology.

### **Description of in-service teacher training**

Continuing training for the teachers from the pre-university system has different forms, including professional grades for teachers and courses on teaching specialties.

*Professional grades for teachers:* definitive grade (after two years of activity in the specialty), second grade and first grade (at least four years have to pass between two consecutive exams). In order to occupy a permanent position in the education system, teachers have to obtain the *definitivat* after a class inspection and exams passed in the university, both in the subject matter and in psycho-pedagogy. The same process results in order to obtain the second grade. For the first grade, teachers have to elaborate a thesis on a subject proposed by universities and to pass a class inspection. The professional grades are a pre-condition for professional promotion and for an increase of salaries.

*Courses organised in the specialty of the teaching position:* in-service teacher training is compulsory, as mentioned in the Law 128/1997, regarding the teacher's status. The teacher has to obtain at least 90 credits in five years. A credit is obtained for a number of training hours established by the training providers: universities or teacher training houses.

Teachers may also benefit from participation at the school methodical commission of specialty and at the pedagogical meetings or symposiums outside the school; elaboration of a student's book, teacher's guide, methodical guides or auxiliary materials; post-university education: master or doctorate degree and studies and scientific research in the education domain.

The in-service teacher training courses are usually organised by universities and by the specialised institution existing in each county, the "Teacher Training House". Annually, the Teacher Training House from each county elaborates an in-service training plan which has to be approved by the school inspectorate and the universities must also approve the content. The training offer must respond to the training needs of the teachers from that county and to those formulated in this domain at the national level. In-service teacher training in different domains of education could also be organised in other institutions. All the training providers have to be accredited by the specialised department of the Ministry of Education and Research, through a transparent process, which is described in a government decision.

## Training of teachers for special education

The special education training system is similar to the training system for mainstream education. A primary or a secondary teacher of any subject who wishes to teach in a special school has to complete a psycho-pedagogy module in special education. In order to become a psycho-pedagogue in a special school, the candidate has to have a degree in special psycho-pedagogy, pedagogy or psychology. In-service training for teachers from the special education system is focused mainly on the psycho-pedagogy domain, according to the teaching position.

There are two categories of teachers for teaching children with deficiencies integrated into mainstream education: teachers from mainstream schools and teachers from special education (support teacher, teacher for specific therapies which aims to remediate or compensate a deficiency). For some years now, the Ministry of Education and Research has been implementing training of teachers from mainstream schools that have integrated pupils with deficiencies on topics related to special psycho-pedagogy. The first courses were informational and awareness-raising courses for managers, school inspectors for pre-primary and primary education and school directors. Those courses were followed by courses addressed to different categories of teachers who work with children with SEN integrated in mainstream schools (pre-primary and primary teachers, support teachers, specialists in different compensatory and recovery therapies). The training was organised by counties CCDs (Teacher Training Houses), NGOs or associations actively involved in problems of children with disabilities.

All the existing support services, equally accessible to children with deficiencies integrated into mainstream education and to those in special schools, are realised by specialists in the domain of special education who have been distinctly trained for this purpose.

The way pre-service and in-service teacher training are realised has been mentioned above: initial teacher training is realised in pedagogical high schools, pedagogical colleges, post-high schools and universities; and in-service teacher training can be realised by universities, which organise the pedagogical module for special psycho-pedagogy and in the CCD (Teacher Training Houses), which organise the module for integration of children with deficiencies in mainstream and the modules for intensive studies in specialty. NGOs can also organise different courses in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research. Such NGOs are RENINCO Association from Romania, SENSE International from Romania, VISIO, Light into Europe Charity Organisation, the Special Olympics, etc.

Some training courses in special education have been organised by the Ministry in partnership with nongovernmental organisations. There have been training courses for: itinerant/support teachers; teachers working with deaf and blind children; teachers working with children having severe and associated deficiencies; also for school managers regarding integration of children with special needs in mainstream education; teachers in mainstream schools which have integrated children with SEN; the parents of the children with SEN; common teachers from the Internal Commissions for Ongoing Evaluation, organised in special schools and for the specialists from the Complex Evaluation Services, organised in the County Child Protection Departments.

### **Parent involvement and counselling**

A unified system for informing and counselling parents regarding education problems does not exist at national level, for the moment. At the school level, there are different forms currently used to inform the parents about the activities in school and the school progress of their own child: lectures for parents (realised once a semester in each school, presenting themes of interest for parents), collective meetings with parents (organised monthly at the classroom level, presenting the evolution of their children and requiring their agreement for different administrative issues), consultations with parents, organised weekly or on request (the most frequent activities, consisting in individual meetings between teacher and parent).

Some of the schools distribute brochures and publications, which aim to inform parents and families. Usually these are addressed not only to parents, but also to children. In some of the schools, there are centres for psychopedagogic counselling. Their activity is mostly centred on children and less on parents, but it is supposed to involve parents in different stages of the activity. Also, NGOs propose projects that have parents as a target-group; their neutral position gives credibility and their resources ensure quality services.

Beginning in 2004, major changes took place in Romanian education policy regarding people with disabilities:

#### **a. Regulations:**

- **Government Decision No. 1251/2005** redefines the concepts used in the field of special education and re-organises the special education and integrated education system. This government decision aims to achieve the principles of inclusive education and access to education for all children.

- **Ministerial Order No. 4527/2005** approves the framework curriculum for special schools or for mainstream schools dealing with children with light or moderate deficiencies. The new curricular framework is a flexible one, offering children with disabilities the opportunity to be efficiently integrated into a mainstream school.
- **Ministerial Order No. 4528/2005** approves the national framework for special schools dealing with children with severe, profound or associated deficiencies. It is the first curricular framework which ensures the right to education of children with severe deficiencies.
- **Ministerial Order No. 5418/2005** restructures the existing education services at the county level. This includes the organisation of support services for children with special education needs integrated into mainstream schools, the establishment of county resources and education assistance centres in each county and the transformation of some special schools into school centres for inclusive education.

*b. Programmes:*

- **PHARE 2003/005-551.01.02** “*Access to education for disadvantaged groups*” – aims to facilitate access to and the quality of education for all children, regardless of their psychological, ethnic, linguistic or socio-economic particularities.
- **NSCA – National Strategy for Community Action** – extended the 2004/2005 school year in the majority of Romanian high-schools with the help of 22 490 volunteers.
- “*I learn as much as I can and would like*” – a pilot-project, developed in 11 special schools, aiming to organise education activities based on centres of interest.

## Conclusions

The Romanian education system is still a traditional system that, despite all the existing dysfunctions, has a rather good level of quality; Romanian pupils perform quite well in the contests at the international level in different domains of the education. But the results obtained in the international surveys, like PISA or TIMSS, are not as good as the results in the Olympics

in maths, informatics or sciences. This shows that the quality of teaching is not the same for all children and that the system pays attention to the best pupils and less attention to the low achievers.

Another characteristic of the school system is the tendency to demand the same performances from all children, without understanding the natural differences existing between individuals. Many educators think that a child who fails is responsible for the failure, as he or she was not able to comply with the requirements: they think it is the child's obligation to meet the standards of the school. Few teachers understand and accept that the failure of a pupil is also the failure of the teacher and that the school should adapt to the needs of the child and not vice versa. Some teachers are able and willing to change and to turn towards a child-centred and more individualised teaching process. The methodology of evaluation, both for schools and teachers, has been changed in order to increase the weight of the criteria having to do with increased access to education for all children, measuring the school progress rather than mere results, creating an open, friendly school, able to accept and value every child. For the moment, the criteria concerning high achievers and the best results in contests and in exams are still prevalent, but steps towards changing this approach have been made. It is our hope that the "inclusive" criteria - the number of children who have been helped to avoid school failure, the number of children who have been integrated in inclusive schools, the number of children who have improved their school results, become as important as the very "selective" ones.

The special education system offers education services corresponding to the development needs and to the possibilities of children to adapt and learn. The system becomes continually more open. Children with deficiencies have access to public schools and can benefit from support services in order to facilitate that type of integration. The reform of the special education system has to include new approaches from regular schools and also the new principles developed in special education all over the world.

## Chapter 9 – Serbia

The National Report on “Education Policies for at Risk Students and those with Disabilities” of Serbia describes the current status of special needs and inclusive education as well as reform efforts underway. The basic principles of education for children with special needs as agreed upon by the international community have been adapted to the Serbian reform policy although barriers to inclusive education still remain persistent. The country has undergone extensive reforms and has developed strategies and policies to implement changes, though available resources are scarce. As all other reports presented in this book, this account covers the following sections: a short overview of the education system followed by chapters describing the legal framework policies focusing on special groups, statistics and indicators, and the current situation of teacher training, pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. The concept of integration and inclusion are central issues, and attention is paid to barriers and problems of inclusion and equity in education, to parents’ participation and other support services. The report also proposes a set of key activities with respect to policy development and system improvement that would encourage the implementation of inclusive education in the Serbian school system.





## Introduction

Since the 1980s, the education policy of Serbia concerning children with special needs has passed through three quite distinct phases. The first phase began with the United Nations Decade of the Disabled Person (1983-1992), during which the various members of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agreed to start recognising world trends in education such as the obligation to provide compulsory education for all; the adjustment of the education of children with special needs to their abilities; and the inclusion of disabled children in early intervention programmes<sup>17</sup>. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Serbia in 1990 and clearly stating the need to provide equal education opportunities for all children, has, together with the Declaration on Education for All (EFA), strongly influenced the promotion of a new education paradigm.

Just a few years later, during the phase of armed conflicts in the Balkans (1992-2000) the situation was characterised by drastic social upheaval, isolation and exclusion from all international organisations which resulted in an inability to continue adapting to international standards. During wartime, degradation of social, economic and physical environments led to a drastic violation of the most elementary of children's rights: not only the right to education, but also the right to life, the right to medical care, rehabilitation and social security and the right to non-discrimination<sup>18</sup>. The Ministry of Education directly managed all functions related to education during this time (even expert institutions such as pedagogical institutes were abolished), an overly centralised approach which reduced or eliminated local input and led to various problems such as the insufficient use of school capacities and further bureaucratisation<sup>19</sup>. During this period, the international community passed important agreements such as the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the Dakar Framework for action (2000) which present an inclusive model to encourage equality of opportunity in education.

In last several years, following the establishment of a new democratic government in Serbia in 2000, a third phase has begun with the initiation of

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<sup>17</sup> The Education of Children with Special Needs in FRY, Hrnjica, Sretenov as well as the Review of The Current Status of Special Education in Yugoslavia, Hrnjica

<sup>18</sup> Reform of the Education of Children with Special Needs, 2004

<sup>19</sup> UNICEF, 2001; OECD, 2001b; The Ministry of Education and Sport, 2001b, 2004, Ministry of Education and Sport, 2004

education reforms, based on principles promoting an inclusive approach, wherein pupils have opportunities appropriate to their potentials, abilities and talents avoiding discrimination based on prejudice and stereotypes. The initiative for inclusive education focuses on groups previously deprived of quality education such as children with disabilities, chronically ill children and other at risk children such as children from deprived socio-economic environments and those suffering the consequences of war, children of refugees and internally displaced persons, children with behavioural problems, and, in a broader context, gifted children.

### **Current status and reform of education for pupils with special needs**

A fully developed system of education appropriate for children with special needs does not yet exist in Serbia. Reforms need to address problems related to the theoretical bases of the current system, insufficient resources, and administration and management. The current system lacks flexibility and relevance to pupils' needs in everyday life. Links to other institutions are rare or inexistent and parent involvement in education and in the decision-making process remains low. Only with fundamental reforms will inclusive education with a child-centred perspective be possible at all levels of education.

The Expert Group for the Reform of the Education of Children with Special Needs, established in 2002, has become the main actor in the reform process; first by producing an analysis of the pre-reform situation in the education of children with special needs, followed by the strategic directions for reform and the production of a timeline of short-, medium- and long-term activities to be implemented. Recent conferences, public discussions and roundtable talks have included parents of children with special needs, people with disabilities, members of disabled persons' associations and representatives of both international humanitarian organisations and the local non-governmental sector along with experts, such as those from the Faculty of Defectology. Two education seminars have been organised for pre-school teachers, teachers from mainstream schools (200 participants) and defectologist-teachers from special schools (150 participants). However, these efforts are only just beginning to move towards the goals of education reform for children with special needs.

## Legal framework

The development of legislation in the former Yugoslavia pertaining to the education of children with special needs and special schools began in 1963, when the Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was passed clearly stating the rights of disabled children and invalids as well as the community's obligation to ensure these rights. The Law on Special Schools (1961-33/1965) later defined the tasks of special schools: alleviating or eliminating developmental defects or disorders and their consequences; developing the abilities of students; preparing pupils to perform skill-appropriate jobs; facilitating the pupils' active participation in the economic and social life of the community including through opportunities for pupils to interact with peers from mainstream schools; and co-operating with the pupils' parents or guardians. Ten years later, the Law on Special Education (51/1976) stated: "Children who shall be considered to have developmental problems are children whose bodily, mental, speech and emotional development, growth and maturity are damaged to such an extent in the long term that it is necessary to provide special education for them." The Law specifically mentions children with impaired vision or hearing, children with speech and language disorders, children with physical invalidity, mentally retarded children and children with a high degree of developmental disorders, defining different degrees for each of these categories. The Decree on the Criteria for Classifying Children with Development Problems (32/1977) was passed in 1977 and updated in 1986 with minor changes with both versions further elaborating the categorisation and degree of disorders. The Board for Classifying Children with Development Problems (16/1986) defines the Board's activities operating in local health care centres, which include a doctor, psychologist, defectologist and other specialists. Thereafter, the Law on Amendments to the Law on the Education of Children and Young People with Development Problems (18/1989) and the Law on Primary School Education (5/1990) were also passed.

The current legislative foundation of the education system and some important documents on rights of disabled persons include: the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (1/1990); the Law on Primary and Secondary School (50/1992); the Law on Social Care of Children (49/1992); the Law on Advanced Schools, the Law on University; the Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (1/2003); the Charter of Human and Minority Rights and Civic Freedoms (6/2003), (which bans discrimination on the basis of disability); and the Law on the Basis of the Education system (62/2003, 64/2003).

In Article 83, the Law on Primary School (50/1992), defines children with developmental problems as children with bodily and sensory damage (physically invalid children, blind children and children with impaired eyesight, deaf children and children with impaired hearing); intellectual disabilities (mild, moderate and severe); and multiple development disorders or autism. Children exhibiting one of the above forms of developmental problems are enrolled in school on the basis of a decision of a Board for Classifying Children with Development Problems determining the type and degree of developmental problems and the school where the child is to be enrolled (Articles 85 and 87). The rights that a child acquires after the Board has established that he or she has special needs include the rights to education under special conditions; increased child benefits; free medical and psychological care; full discretion concerning their diagnosis; additional social protection and accommodation in special homes if there is a need for education outside their place of residence. The Law on Primary School further states that the plan and programme of primary school education shall correspond to each type and degree of development problems (Article 88) and designates the numbers of students in classes or education groups (Article 90)<sup>20</sup>.

In 2002, amendments to the Law on Primary School and Secondary School showed a change in the way the system functions. In the segment referring to children with development problems, the Law defines the procedure of classifying children, outlines the authority of local governments in appointing Boards for Classifying Children with Development Problems, establishes the procedure for appointing a Board of the Second Instance to deal with complaints against first-instance decisions and states the obligations of parents and guardians.

The Law on the Basis of the Education system was enacted in 2003 with amendments in 2004. There was an obvious change in the legal philosophy pertaining to children with special needs in education. The new law guarantees equal educational opportunities for children with developmental problems. However, implementing regulations in this area have yet to be developed<sup>21</sup>. This law defines the principles and objectives of education in an entirely new way and introduces, for the first time, the category of education outcomes.<sup>22</sup> The law prescribes that persons with developmental problems and persons with special abilities shall have the right to education that will respect their special education needs; however the right of people

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<sup>20</sup> The Education of Children with Special Needs in FRY, 2000

<sup>21</sup> Quality Education for All – The Challenges of the Educational Reform in Serbia, 2004

<sup>22</sup> The Challenges of Educational Reform in Serbia, 2004

with disabilities to inclusive education is not explicitly mentioned. According to Amendments of the Law on the Basis of the Education system from 2004 seven centres were abolished and formed two Institutes: The Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing and the Institute for Estimation of Quality Education. The Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing comprises has the following organisational units: Centre for Strategic Development, Centre for Programme and Textbook Development, Centre for Professional Development of Employees, Centre for Professional and Art Education.

A variety of other laws have also been amended to address special needs. The draft version of the Law on Pre-school Education states that pre-school institution programmes for children with development problems should be in accordance with special conditions and programmes passed by the Ministry of Education and Sport. The draft version of the Law on Higher Education also contains provisions on respecting the needs of persons with special needs. The Law on Public Information prescribes that the state and the local government shall be obliged to provide access to information in an appropriate form for people with disabilities. The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children (16/2002) prescribes that financially at risk families with children, families with children who have developmental problems and children deprived of parental care shall receive financial support. The Law on Social Welfare and Providing Social Security to the Citizens (2002) establishes the right to financial provisions, benefits for the help and care provided by other persons, including in the home and for work preparation, as well as for day care or accommodation in an institution or family.

In the future, additional legal provisions will need to be developed in order to accommodate all the proposed changes in the education reform process concerning the education of children with developmental problems and at risk children, especially in connection with the mainstream school and the national curricula.

## **Policy review on special needs groups**

The Ministry of Education and Sport acknowledges responsibility to provide appropriate education opportunities for children with special needs. In the education system of Serbia, primary education is *obligatory* and free for *all* children aged 7-15 years. Currently, however, the mainstream Serbian education system has neither inclusion indicators nor any evaluation

or monitoring mechanisms to ensure that children with special education needs are in school. It is hoped that the newly founded Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing, in addition to the Expert Group for the Reform of the Education of Children with Special Needs (the “Expert Group”), established in 2002, will be successful in implementing the reform plan presented here below. In particular, the Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing will be able to rely on the activities of the non-governmental sector and a number of research projects and pilot programmes in Serbia supported by international organisations (UNICEF, Save the Children and UNESCO).

### **Classification and enrolment procedures**

If a child is of the age to enter the first form, the school principal may send them to the Board for Classifying Children with Development Problems, which includes such experts as doctors, medical specialists, psychologists, pedagogues, defectologists and social workers<sup>23</sup>. Parents are not legally obligated to act on the principal’s recommendation to bring the child before the Board for examination. Today, there are 76 regionally organised Boards of the first instance and four Boards of the second instance. The general estimate is that the percentage of children with developmental problems encompassed by the classification procedure is low. Furthermore, it is presumed that approximately 15% of children with impediments are enrolled in special schools, while others are either in mainstream schools without support or are not attending school. Objections towards this process were registered in 1986, after the law was put into place, from both parents and experts, who claimed that the Board’s interaction was limited to one insufficient encounter with the child which resulted in an uninformed decision on classification. Furthermore, a lack of standardised IQ tests and of reference to socio-cultural, environmental and other influences which could account for perceived special needs also undermined the quality of the work of the Board<sup>24</sup>. The educational reform process has taken these criticisms into account, and the Boards for Classifying Children with Development Problems, soon to be renamed Boards for Assessment and Guidance, will begin basing their work on the social model of impediments, thereby considering the child and her environment as a whole.

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<sup>23</sup>The principal acts on the proposal of the school pedagogue or psychologist which would be made in the course of examinations before enrolment or through assessments of the child’s school-readiness in accordance with Article 90 paragraph 7 of the Law on the Basis of the Education system.

<sup>24</sup>Reform of the Education of Children with Special Needs, 2004

For secondary school, pupils with developmental problems, who are not obligated to take an entrance exam, may enter special secondary schools on the basis of a decision of the local government, in accordance with the work of the Classification Board, specifying the type and degree of developmental problems and recommendations for the professional training of the pupil in question.

## Reform of education for children with special needs

Several international documents have been used as a basis for general and special needs education reforms in Serbia: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by Serbia in 1990, the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) passed in 1990 by the World Education Forum in Jomtien, Thailand and extended with the Dakar Framework for Action (2000). The most important document for the field of special needs has been the Salamanca Statement from the World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994). Other important international documents such as the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1994) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disabilities and Health from 2000 have also been essential to development of plans for reform in Serbia. International experiences, particularly from European countries whose development Serbia would like to emulate (such as Finland) are useful in considering how to proceed. Experiences from neighbouring countries, such as the Slovenian and Croatian systems, which shared the same type of education system until recently, can serve as useful examples of educational reform as well.

The Ministry of Education and Sports strategies and action plans for reforms in education in Serbia, include the EFA report: *Quality education for all: the way to a developed country*, where special emphasis is laid upon: the *democratisation* of education, education for democracy and civil society; the *decentralisation* of education, managing and financing education on the local-community level; *depolitisation*, improving the quality of education by establishing a new system of evaluation, and a view to meeting the demands of the economy and the economic needs of society. The implementation of these principles and their adjustment to special needs forms the basis of the educational reform in this area<sup>25</sup>. "The strategy of developing curricula in compulsory and higher education" written by the Commission for Developing School Programmes, the "National Action Plan for Children until 2010", the "Strategy for Reducing Poverty" (MES, 2003), and the "Mid-term Action Plan for Children with Special Needs" of the Ministry of

<sup>25</sup>The Reform of the Education of Children with Special Needs, 2004.

Social Welfare all define government policies in this field. Conclusions from conferences on Children and Youth with Special Needs Education (June 2002), Reforms in Education in the Republic of Serbia (September 2002) and the roundtable “School by child's measure” (October 2002) have all proved useful. Experts and research from pedagogy, sociology, psychology, defectology and medicine all contribute to the reform process as well.

The basic principles in this area that have been agreed upon by the international community, adapted to the Serbian reform policy, are presented as follows:

- The *rights of the child* form the evaluative framework of any national education system in terms of the extent to which it is “made to measure” for children. All categories of teachers and the system as a whole must pay greater attention to the stimulation of a child’s development.
- The *enrolment of children in special schools* is to be recommended only in the case that regular school education cannot meet the child’s educational or social needs, or when it is necessary for the child’s welfare or the welfare of other children.
- *Compensatory individual programmes*, made separately for each child, should be introduced. The basic guideline for developing such programmes is the *development of the child’s potential*.
- *Changes in the system of education of children with developmental problems* should be introduced within the framework of the inclusive model, paying special attention to the development of children with developmental problems and to the development of gifted children.
- *All schools shall be obligated to accept every child* if it is estimated that it is in the child’s interest to attend school with their peers. The education and professional training of teachers must be in conformity with this requirement.

National guidelines and quality indicators will be planned in a process to be open to all interested parties (schools, parents, the local community, expert institutions, ministries, etc.). In order to improve quality and emphasise educational outcomes, greater responsibility should be placed upon educational staff to undertake self-evaluation of achievements; evaluation of the school and pupil’s achievements; and team work and care for the quality of the educational institution. The implementation and



realisation of these plans should be taken over by a variety of newly formed Centres<sup>26</sup>.

In order for children with special needs and at risk pupils to remain engaged in the educational process, schools should be prepared for inclusion. Legal regulations, adequate textbooks and trained teaching staff are essential to this process. Education needs to take place as to the origins and causes of disabilities, preferably according to the *social model of disabilities*, which treats disability not only as a loss or impairment in some function, but also as a limiting factor arising from the environment, which is not adapted to their functioning at the same level as other people. This is in opposition to the *medical model of impediments*, emphasising only the particular problems and defects of the students themselves, still at the basis of practice in Serbia, within the philosophy of the Faculty of Defectology and in the perspectives of a great number of defectologists working in special schools as well as teachers working in mainstream schools.

## Definitions of special needs, inclusion and integration

In the analysis of the current situation of the education of children with special needs and in proposing measures aimed at reforming this area of education, particular attention was paid to explaining the current terminology, to provide guidance on specific concepts. The term “children with special needs” has come up against some resistance in Serbia, both among experts and among persons with development problems themselves. The Expert Group, in accordance with the social model, has recommended the term “children who require special social support.” This distinction aims to capture the understanding of these children as those most unable to develop and maintain the age-appropriate level of physical, intellectual, emotional and social development, without the help of additional social services. “Children with special needs” or “children requiring special social support” are terms comprising both children with developmental problems and at risk children. *Children with developmental problems* are those children whose problems are due to organic disorders, accidents, or affliction with certain chronic diseases, any of which affect their mental, physical, sensory or linguistic development. *At risk children* are children whose development has been delayed as a result of unfavourable social, cultural and economic conditions such as children deprived of parental care, abused children, children of refugees and internally displaced persons, or

<sup>26</sup>The Evaluation Centre, the Centre for Planning, Programmes and Textbooks, the Centre for Professional Training and Development, the Centre for Artistic Education, the Centre for Professional Training and Education of Adults, the Centre for Accreditation and the Centre for the Education of Persons Who Need Special Social Support.

children from socially disadvantaged environments. (For example, Roma children may lag behind in their development due to unfavourable socio-economic conditions and are not infrequently sent to special schools on the basis of Board decisions). Gifted children, who also require a special kind of support, are also included in this definition. Common to these groups is their equal marginalisation and, for all but gifted and talented children, their segregation from other children. This classification leads to distinct theoretical and methodological bases for activities aimed at improving education.

The Expert Group has adopted the following definitions of the terms: *integration, inclusion and inclusive education*. *Integration* of children with special needs into regular schools or wider social environments means the insertion of a pupil into an existing system, without adapting the system to meet his or her special needs. Experience with integration goes back to the establishment, by some republics of the former “Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”, of legal frameworks in the mid-1980s including some specific legal regulations on integrating children with developmental problems into regular schools. Humanitarian organisations and parents exhibited particular interest in a shift towards integration. However in practice, mainstream schools were not sufficiently prepared to work with these children. Research showed that pupils with developmental problems achieved very poor results at school and that their peers tend not to accept them. In the face of these circumstances, integration became synonymous with the mere presence of a child in a non-adapted environment. In spite of this evident failure, integration still became a good starting position for the development of *inclusion*.

The framework in which *inclusion* is understood and defined was developed from a social perspective viewing developmental problems and special needs as something that is not only an individual characteristic of a person but also a characteristic of the social environment, the social model of impediments, including a positive approach to a child’s educational potential. The *inclusion of persons with development problems* and special needs presupposes changes and adjustments of social institutions, and society in general, so as to meet their special needs. *Inclusive education* means changes and adaptation of a mainstream education system or a whole society have taken place in order to meet the special needs of children with disabilities and all other children who have special needs. Inclusive education primarily pertains to the practice of enabling children with development problems to exercise their right to education along with all other children and to attend a neighbourhood school that they would normally attend if they did not have developmental problems.

In a proposal for implementing an inclusive system in Serbia, described in more detail below, three options for education are outlined: *inclusive education*, *partially inclusive education* and *a new special school or Centre for Education and Rehabilitation*. The three parallel systems should be compatible and flexible in order to allow easy transfer from one system to another when needed to keep from isolation students and from prohibiting advancement. (At an appropriate moment in their education, a pupil with special needs well prepared in a programme of a special school should be able to easily transfer to a mainstream school and, in the opposite sense, from a mainstream to a special school, if it is shown that this particular pupil is not successful in the mainstream education system.)

*Inclusive education*, when successfully implemented, indicates complete inclusion of the pupils with special needs into classes with all other pupils, but with additional support available if needed: special support provided to a pupil from a teacher while working with the whole class; assistants who help pupils with special needs in parallel with the teacher; a special education teacher periodically singling out pupils with special needs into small groups; individual work by a school professional team that includes a defectologist; and providing the child with rehabilitation treatments in specialised institutions while attending mainstream classes; and other forms of help and additional support.

*Partially inclusive education* has two basic forms: *Special classes at the mainstream schools* that would provide mutual participation in lessons with other children in some classes such as in physical education, musical education and fine arts as well as in extracurricular activities. An individual pupil from the special classes who is having success in some subjects and can fit into the regular classes from these subjects; should be possible as well. *Special classes at the special schools* are a second form of partially inclusive education and include centres for education, habilitation and rehabilitation, where mutual lessons would be organised on some subjects with all other children of the same age from a neighbouring mainstream school. A possibility of some pupils attending some lessons at a regular school would also be provided. Some of the extra-curricular activities would be organised together with children from mainstream schools as well.

*Special education* at special schools (centres for education, habilitation and rehabilitation) would be maintained for those pupils with disabilities who have severe or multiple impairments, who present barriers too significant for mainstream education to overcome and thus these children are in need of a higher levels of support and connections between education and rehabilitation. Inside of special education, three distinct curricula (A, B and C), described further below (in the Plans and Programmes section), should be available, wherein an “A” curriculum would present the closest

possibility for a pupil to be transferred to the regular system and at the same time would be some sort of preparation for this transfer.

## **Proposal for inclusion in Serbia**

The following proposal was based on the model referred to above, of inclusion, partial inclusion and special education and was officially accepted by the Reform Council in February 2003 as the concept for education of children with special needs that should be applied in Serbia. The activities that will make implementation of an inclusive system possible may be divided into four components presented here below.

### ***Preparation of a strategy for reform***

Creating a strategy for the reform of the education of children with special needs will include developing strategic steps and a reform budget, as well as the conceptual development of individual reform components, based on the document “The Reform of the Education of Pupils with Special Needs”. Special working documents have also been prepared about reform in the areas of pre-school, primary school, secondary school, higher education and education of adults with impediments, but need to be supplemented by developing a sequence of strategic steps and the dedication of a budget, which will serve as the basis for a reform feasibility study.

Further steps need to include: conceptual proposals for adjusting the national curriculum to the needs of inclusive regular schools; developing the curricula for partial or mixed inclusion based on the networking of regular and special schools; preparation of special programmes (A, B and C) for the special education system and for institutions accommodating persons with multiple developmental problems on a permanent basis; developing inclusive indicators and a provisional budget for establishing inclusive schools; developing the concept of the reform of special schools and forms of special education in schools and other social welfare institutions (such as hospitals, day-care centres and rehabilitation institutions providing long-term accommodation; and reform analysis from both the perspective of distinct special needs and developmental problems.

### ***Providing the institutional and legal framework for the implementation of the reform***

The *institutional* framework presupposes the establishment of the Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing, the procedure for which is under way. The *legal* framework presupposes the preparation of a new Law on the Education of Persons Who Need Special Social Support and

a number of decrees; preparation of the annual plan and programme of the Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing covering all forms of education, care and protection of persons requiring special social support (in accordance with the Strategy for Decreasing Poverty in Serbia); creation and development of institutional mechanisms for connecting regular and special schools with each other and with relevant social partner institutions (health care centres, disabled persons' associations, the labour market). Legal reform will have to include passing a decision to ensure planned inclusion of Roma students in the regular system of education (the process should unfold in one class per year, from the first form onwards, see the National Plan of Action to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals, 2004); and establishment of the criteria for determining whether mainstream schools are prepared for inclusion and obliging all regular schools to co-operate closely with parents of children with development problems.

### ***Preparation of schools, curriculum, community and staff***

This area requires preparation of the schools, staff, plans and programmes and creating the mechanisms for connecting regular and special schools. In terms of information for educational planning, updating information and statistical services will need to be undertaken in order to better collect data on the number of children with special needs as early in life as possible, (sources of information would be hospitals, health care centres and counselling centres); the number of children with special needs in special and regular schools and pre-school institutions; and in day-care centres and dispensaries. Already, two educational seminars have been organised for teachers, pre-school teachers, defectologists and others. But more will be needed. Development programmes for participation in European integration through the OECD project. Reform of the Faculty of Defectology with programmatic changes would create a new profile of experts trained to work in inclusive and new special schools and a change in the name of the Faculty of Defectology to the Faculty of Special Education, Rehabilitation and Readaptation, in accordance with the Quebec Classification Model would show this new direction. Plans and programmes at the Faculty of Teacher-training and the Academy of Pedagogy should enable teacher trainees to work with the inclusive programme. Planning activities aimed at the broader social environment to develop positive attitudes towards children with special needs and inclusion as a new educational model should be undertaken.

### ***A transitional implementation period of the inclusive model and pilot projects in special and regular schools and pre-school institutions***

In September 2003, the Ministry of Education and Sport issued a public invitation for projects involving a trial implementation of the educational models suggested by the Expert Group. Four projects, most adequately fulfilling the requirements, have been approved. The projects will be carried out in regular and special schools and pre-school institutions in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Subotica. The pilot phase lasted until February 2005, while the processing and interpreting of the results will last until May 2005. It is expected that the data obtained from the project will contribute to the development of a realistic framework for a feasibility study concerning the strategy of educating children with special needs including clear financial indicators of inclusive education.

A significant amount of work still remains to be done to enable teachers and expert consultants, through additional courses, to participate in inclusive programmes. Defectologists in the system of special schools should also be available to teach basic subjects in the first four years of primary school.

### **Facilitators and barriers to inclusion and equity**

The factors that *facilitate* the principle of equality in education and facilitate the introduction of inclusion are the process of reforming the educational policy initiated in 2001, based on democratisation, which ensures the observance of the principle of equality, the participation of all educational subjects and the respect of the rights of the child in the sphere of education. The current educational policy is also based on decentralisation, which gives local governments, based on the legal regulations passed in 2002 and 2003, a great number of essential powers (capital investment, equipment and maintenance of institutions and financing the professional training of teachers), which will ensure adequate support to schools which opt for the inclusive model. Legal regulations in the sphere of education (such as the Law on the Basis of the System of Education, 2003) stipulate equal opportunities for the education of children and pupils with development problems, the possibility of education under equal conditions and in economically underdeveloped areas and less stimulating environments in cultural terms. The switch from the culture of educational plans and programmes to the culture of curricula has also paved the way for creating a quality education system for all, which involves further development in the direction of fulfilling the individual development needs and abilities of the child. Space has been created for the professional autonomy of schools and teachers, which will make it possible to work in

accordance with the problems identified as hampering equality and the future development of inclusion. Trial projects for developing inclusion approved by MES will provide guidelines for further development of the model and work procedures, which will be included in the Law on Primary and Secondary School and decrees pertaining to the principle of equality in education and providing support to the development of inclusive schools.

The existing network of regular and special schools in Serbia is also a factor facilitating inclusion. Based on the legal regulations passed in 2002 and 2003, local governments established a network of pre-school institutions and schools in accordance with the criteria developed on the national level and the needs of the local pupil population. Special schools will represent valuable resources in the future, first of all as systems of support to regular schools where a considerable number of children with development problems are already being educated (services which will include experts from special schools providing support to regular schools in terms of staff, work methodology, equipment and teaching materials).

Numerous domestic and foreign non-governmental organisations have created a positive climate for educational reform through their efforts over the last ten years and numerous parent associations have stressed the importance of inclusion for the education of children with special needs in panel discussions and public appearances.

*Barriers to inclusion and equality* include the Law on Primary and Secondary School from 1992 and the Law on the Basis of the Education system from 2003, which do not stipulate the inclusive form of education, meaning that there is no legal basis for financing schools that express an interest in inclusion. Legal regulations in the sphere of the education of children with special needs have not been developed; a new Law on the Education of Children with Special Needs should be passed, as well as decrees regulating a number of issues, such as the enrolment and continuation of such pupils in the education system. The current Law also prevents adaptation of the national curriculum to the inclusive model of education, with individual curricula. Regulations do not exist to improve co-ordination of the ministries authorised to care for persons with special needs during their lifetimes; the differences in terms of economic development between educational regions (of which there are 12 in Serbia), administrative organisation and the level of readiness of a region to protect all the rights of a person with special needs, including the right to quality education. Local governments should be legally bound to register and provide education and rehabilitation for every person with special needs living on the territory of the local community. The parents of children with developmental problems should be legally bound to take their children, on a regular basis, to institutions for rehabilitation treatment, such that as many

children as possible be covered by early rehabilitation, a prerequisite for quality inclusion. The state should be obliged by law to spend a certain percentage of tax revenues on the procurement of aids for children and persons with development problems.

No mechanisms have been developed for providing support to schools with a view to making them accessible to all children or for the support to schools already accommodating children with development problems and other special needs. The roles and responsibilities of the participants in the educational process (principals, teachers, inspectors and monitoring organs) have not been sufficiently clarified to respect differences, children's rights and equality in education. Projects aimed at quality inclusion of children from culturally and materially deprived environments including simply for keeping them in school (particularly Roma children and the young) have not been sufficiently developed. The statistical and informational system pertaining to the collection of data about children with special needs has not been well developed; the lack of screening programmes in hospitals and health care institutions that would make it possible to gather data about the number of children with development problems from the earliest stage is a particular problem. Mechanisms and procedures for organising and providing early intervention and rehabilitation to the greatest possible extent have also not been developed. There are also no plans and programmes adjusted to the development of children with developmental problems at the pre-school level that would enable them to prepare adequately for quality inclusion in the regular education system.

The teaching staff (in regular and special schools) is still inadequately trained for work with children with special needs and defectologists are inadequately trained for the new practice in inclusive schools and the reformed special schools. Lastly, the attitude of teachers, the majority of pupils and their parents towards inclusion remains negative to a high degree. Even those students with high achievements are often discriminated against. For example, in the Secondary School of Medicine (Department of Physiotherapy), classes exist for students whose eyesight is impaired, taught by experts in specific professional areas, most of whom have *not* had additional training programmes. There are also no consultations with teachers who have been teaching these children before. The graduation certificate obtained by pupils with impaired eyesight does not enable them to go on to the Advanced School of Medicine, as opposed to the certificate obtained by pupils whose eyesight is not impaired.

Educational policy reform has contributed to the fulfilment of many of the conditions necessary for achieving inclusion of all children in the education system, but it is necessary for the health care, education and social welfare systems to establish a network for the purpose of jointly monitoring,



supporting and guiding children with development problems. This process needs to include all the relevant factors from the moment when a particular disorder is discovered to the moment the person in question is employed. The basic principle for introducing all changes should ensure that each new solution should be in the interests of all children, with or without developmental problems and that all the institutions of the education system should be prepared for the new forms of work<sup>27</sup>.

## Parental participation

If educational policy is to be developed in accordance with the recommendations of international documents such as the Salamanca Statement, parents need to be included as partners in the decision-making process. Parents should always be included in decisions about the education of the child and discussions about the resolution of problems during the child's educational career. Whenever possible, parents should be actively involved in programmes aimed at stimulating their child's development. The reform educational policy determines a partnering role for parents; however this is not yet in practice. Parents may participate in the work of the Board for Classifying Children with Development Problems by providing information about the child's development, potential, and abilities. Some parents do not attend Board meetings or do not participate actively. Parents have the right not to accept a recommendation to send a child to a special school, however if the child does not manage well in regular school, the classification procedure is repeated. The same applies for pre-school institutions.

## Statistics and indicators

In Serbia, it is thought that, in an *alarmingly high number*, children and youth with special needs are *excluded from the education system and from rehabilitation*. Though neither regular data collection nor a systematic register of the total number of pupils with disabilities in mainstream or special schools exists, a UNICEF study (2001) estimates that around 85% of children with special needs remain outside of the education system entirely; never having attended school at all. In-country data show that little more than 1% of the entire elementary school age population is attending *special*

<sup>27</sup>Document prepared by the subgroup for teacher training established within the framework of the Expert Group, 2003.

schools, and no data is collected on special needs children in mainstream schools. The estimate of MoES is that, from the total number of children with disabilities, a much higher percentage is included in the education system than the percentage of children left outside of the system. Roughly 15% are thought to attend special schools with the remainder either outside of the school system or in mainstream schools.

While research in this area is performed to just a small extent, results do show that success rates for these pupils are under the country average. In elementary education in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of 1 500 pupils in 32 regular elementary schools, 13% of pupils with disabilities had repeated a class, compared to 0.6% of pupils not showing developmental problems or disabilities and 4.5% of pupils in special schools<sup>28</sup>. Hrnjica (Education of Children with Special Needs in FRY, 1997 and 2000) states the results of a pilot study performed on a sample of 28 elementary schools in Belgrade territory, the primary causes of school failure were identified as: insufficiently developed mental capabilities, mainly mild or marginal cases- (3%), emotional problems and social maladjustment (6%), sensory and physical impairments (1%) and speech development difficulties (3%).

Most researchers, in Serbia and internationally, agree that the number of pupils who need continual help due to disabilities amounts to 7-10% of the overall population. Miljković (1982) gives the figure of 7%, while Hrnjica (1997), estimates the number of pupils with mild to medium developmental disorders varies between 14% and 40%. Only 10% of these children are included in some of the official educational and rehabilitation programmes through pre-school institutions, primary and secondary-school education, day-care institutions and institutions for the accommodation of children with multiple developmental disorders.

## Data collection categories and definitions

Based on the Decision on the Criteria for the Classification of Children with Development Problems (16/1986), children are classified by five basic types of impairments (physical disabilities, visual impairment, hearing impairments, intellectual impairments, and combined impairments) within which the type and degree of impediment is further defined:

(1) Severely physically disabled children are divided into three subgroups: children with severe and permanent disorders or damage to the locomotor system and with serious and permanent bodily deformity;

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<sup>28</sup> UNICEF, 2001

children with severe muscular diseases or damage (cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis); children with severe forms of chronic diseases and permanently impaired health.

(2) A child is considered to be blind if they have no sense of light; if their better eye has a remnant of vision of 0.05 with the help of corrective lenses; if their functional ability to see is so reduced that it prevents education by means of eyesight. A child has impaired eyesight if their sharpness of vision in the better eye is less than 0.4 with the help of corrective lenses.

(3) A deaf child has a hearing impairment over 90 decibels and cannot hear speech even with the help of a hearing aid. Depending on the age when the child experienced hearing loss and the degree of speech development, there exist four subgroups: a child who speaks well at the moment of classification; a child who has partially forgotten their speech due to a lack of practice; a child who has partially developed speech owing to special practice; and a child who has not developed speech, thus becoming deaf and mute. A partially deaf child is a child whose hearing impairment is 25 to 90 decibels and who is capable of speech, perhaps only partially; this category is also divided into four subgroups: a moderately deaf child with hearing loss (30-40 decibels), has not developed their own speech entirely; a seriously deaf child has hearing loss (40-60 decibels), significant speech impediments; a child with severe hearing loss (60-80 decibels), can hear speech with the help of a hearing aid and can be rehabilitated; and a child with very severe hearing loss (80-90 decibels), can be rehabilitated with the help of a powerful hearing aid.

(4) Intellectually impaired children may be divided into four subgroups: slight intellectual disability (IQ below 70, can be professionally trained and enabled for work under special conditions); moderate intellectual disability (IQ below 50, capable of being educated under special conditions; can be trained to perform simple work and to adapt to the basic requirements of the environment they live in); serious intellectual disability (IQ below 35, able to develop basic self-care and to perform simple tasks); and severe intellectual disability (IQ below 20, very limited mental ability and activities).

(5) A child with multiple impediments is a child with two or more impediments which cannot be classified.

The Ministry of Education and Sport gathers data annually, in September, about children in special schools, including the number of children with developmental problems, the type and degree of developmental problems and the number of teachers. So far, the Ministry has not gathered data about the number of children with special needs who

attend regular schools. The Republican Bureau of Statistics, like MES, gathers data *only* on children with development problems in special pre-school institutions, primary schools and secondary schools, also on an annual basis; the data include the type and degree of developmental problems, educational levels and gender.

In March 2003, the Ministry of Education and Sport formed the Department of Informatics and Educational Statistics, now in charge of the design, development, and upkeep of the information system. This should be a step forward towards better quality data collection, processing and analysis. For the time being, as mentioned above, only data about children with developmental problems who are in the special education system are gathered. Pilot research projects are the only source of data about children with special needs who are in regular schools. Unfortunately, due to limited funds, these projects usually have only limited samples, so that there are no data to present the exact number of children with special education needs in the regular education system nationally.

It would be necessary to develop a register of all pupils with special needs with each child should having their own file containing their activities, which should be updated every six months during the educational process. A register would be the best way of monitoring the overall development of the child and an excellent indicator of the success of the methods used in working with the children.

## Data on types of schools and numbers of students

Table 9.1 shows the number and type of special schools in Serbia.

**Table 9.1 Number of special schools in Serbia and their structure**

	Primary schools	Secondary schools	Total
Schools for intellectually impaired pupils	36	25	61
Schools for hearing-impaired pupils	8	6	14
Schools for visually impaired pupils	3	2	5
School for pupils with disturbance in social behaviour	2	1	3
School for pupils with physical disabilities	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>85</b>

Note: Of the 85 special schools in Serbia 5 schools are located in Kosovo

Source: Ministry of Education of Serbia

Other data on the school populations, not including Kosovo, shows that there were 8 829 pupils in special schools in Serbia during the school year 2000/2001 (Table 9.2). In the school year 2002/2003, there were 8 213 pupils receiving their education in these schools and 1 785 teachers, mostly defectologists, were included in the teaching process (Deljanin, 2003).

Table 9.2 Number of pupils in special schools in Serbia during 2000/2001 school year

	Number of pupils	Male	%	Female	%
Primary school	7 560	4 488	59,37	3 072	40,63
Secondary school	1 269	806	63,51	463	36,49
Total	8 829	5 294	59,96	3 535	40,04

Source: *ibid*

### *Special classes in regular schools in Serbia*

Table 9.3 Number of attached classes and pupils in the mainstream elementary schools

Number of schools with special classes	Number of special classes	Number of pupils
70	211	1 374

Source: *ibid*

### *Regular schools with children with special needs*

Research on a sample of 97 regular elementary schools in Serbia has shown that 8 099 pupils have some sort of developmental and learning difficulties of approximately 77 600 pupils<sup>29</sup> (or about 1%) and, in accordance with the classification according to developmental impairments and problems as ascertained by the Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing, they belong to the category of children with special needs. In these 97 mainstream elementary schools, 20 defectologists are employed in school professional services including: 17 logopedes, one oligophrenopedagogue, one somatopedist and one special pedagogue. Table 9.4 shows these data.

<sup>29</sup> This is only an estimate based on 800 pupils per school.

Table 9.4 Pupils with special needs in 97 elementary schools in Serbia

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	Total
Visual impairments	214	200	206	163	207	185	206	223	1 604
Hearing impairments	20	20	12	17	12	23	22	21	147
Physical handicap	12	20	23	19	37	32	35	30	208
Cerebral palsy	12	6	5	7	19	7	8	1	65
Mental retardation	70	58	70	61	77	43	52	41	472
Autism	10	0	1	3	13	5	6	6	44
Writing disabilities	186	166	137	110	137	102	67	49	954
Motor disabilities	62	43	32	48	25	28	19	20	277
Reading disabilities	211	157	152	121	138	123	81	72	1 055
Math learning difficulties	125	14	140	161	231	209	208	205	1 293
Emotional problems	139	125	106	102	155	143	161	148	1 079
Hyper kinetics syndrome	37	49	36	47	48	38	31	17	303
Other special needs	85	66	62	74	84	78	92	57	598
Total	1 183	924	982	933	1 183	1 016	988	890	8 099

Source: *ibid*

### *Pre-school education for children with disabilities*

Table 9.5 Pre-school groups for children with developmental difficulties in Serbia

	Number of pre-school groups	Number of children
Pre-school groups in special schools in Serbia	26	200
Pre-school mainstream institutions, in the territory of the city of Belgrade	14	100

Source: *ibid*

The data on number and locations of developmental groups in the Republic of Serbia are not complete.

## School organisation

The manner of enrolling pupils, the curriculum and the school network are significantly different in mainstream and special schools, contributing to the separation of children with development problems from their peers. The following brief discussion of differences between mainstream and regular schools will help clarify the current system and the reforms needed in the future.

The adjustment of the special-school system to the pupils' special needs is more established than in mainstream schools regarding teachers' education, specific teaching materials and methodology, and technical equipment. However, special schools have a tendency to keep children with special needs within this framework, which, in certain cases, is completely unjustified. The approach towards children with disabilities remains authoritative and working methods are more concerned about curriculum presentation than learning. New educational trends and achievements are not adopted, a problem still attributed to the decade-long isolation of Serbia. Educational follow-up and evaluation as well as psycho-social development evaluations are not available for individual pupils. Systematic assessment of the educational staff does not exist, nor is there support of quality pedagogy, which can discourage well-motivated and positive personnel who, under difficult conditions, still accomplish a great deal for children with developmental disabilities.

While children enter regular schools, for the most part, from the immediate vicinity of the school, children enter special schools on the basis of decisions made by the Board for Classifying Children with Development Problems. Since special schools are not evenly distributed geographically, children are therefore separated from their parents at an early age and accommodated in boarding-schools. When it comes to transferring pupils from the mainstream to the special education system, there exist no procedural barriers, however transfers from a special school to a mainstream school are more complex and therefore occur more rarely. This state of affairs is the result of a lack of willingness on the part of the mainstream system to keep a child with special needs within its confines and the outdated organisation, management and methods of special schools. Special schools do not have a developed system for monitoring pupils' achievements and therefore rarely suggest to parents that their children should be transferred to the regular school system; this tends not to happen even when a pupil's achievements are high. The most frequent reasons for this include a fear, perhaps ungrounded, on the part of defectologists that without their help, the child will fail in the mainstream education system that is not adequately equipped to deal with children with special needs.

Defectologists and special school management may also be concerned that a “pupil drain” may cause special schools to close down. Social workers, who provide information from the Law on Social Welfare referring to the help and care of others, financial support and short-term financial assistance, guardianship, home care programmes; they refer children and parents to Board for Classifying Children with Development Problems and specific educational institutions, but rarely provide the additional effort to place students in mainstream schools.

There are additional difficulties in terms of passing to higher grades. In regular primary school education, movement upwards towards secondary, advanced and higher education depends solely on the pupils’ achievements, however in special schools any movement is drastically limited. Secondary special schools train pupils in just a few areas, mainly orienting them towards manual labour (the exception being secondary schools for children with impaired eyesight). Graduation from special schools towards higher education is practically nonexistent.

Special schools are technically equipped with teaching aids befitting the types of development problems present in the school population and some have started acquiring computer equipment for the teaching process; still a rare practice in mainstream schools. In special schools, defectologists work as head teachers in lower grades and subject teaching in higher grades is taught by teachers with appropriate teaching education as well as some education in the field of defectology. Some legislation, regulations and acts allow defectologists to teach subject-specialised classes in some schools for pupils with disabilities and sometimes even at the high-school level of special education, although a defectologist, through her education, does not generally study these subjects. The salaries of special education staff are also higher by about 8% than those of the staff at regular schools. In all other respects regarding financing, the position of schools is entirely equal. In physical terms, the accessibility of special schools exceeds that of regular schools.

### **Education options for children with special needs**

The current education system for children and youth with special needs provides three options for schooling: (1) Special schools for children with mental, physical or sensory disabilities and for children with behavioural disorders. (2) Integrated special classes in mainstream schools and (3) Inclusive classes in regular schools where children with disabilities and other special needs are educated together with all other children. Pre-school upbringing and education of children with special needs is also organised in these three forms. However, the majority of children with special needs are



not included in any form of education until the age of six years, as few appropriate institutions are available, irrespective of the fact that special needs may have been identified very early on. In the last several years, mainstream pre-school institutions have begun forming developmental groups which include children with various types of disabilities. Many of these groups are organised as pilot projects, especially in the larger Serbian cities.

Schools for pupils with developmental problems are established on the basis of the type of developmental problem of the school population and are divided into: schools for children with mild intellectual impairments (whose IQ is between 50 and 69); schools for children with hearing impairments; schools for blind children and children with impaired eyesight; schools for children with physical disabilities and children suffering from cerebral palsy, for whom additional educational classes are organised while they are in special hospitals; and schools for children exhibiting emotional and social behavioural problems.

Of the 85 special schools in Serbia educating pupils with disabilities, there are 51 which offer primary courses and 34 with secondary courses, 33 schools offer both primary and secondary courses and there is just one special secondary school without primary courses. Schools for pupils with intellectual impairments represent the majority of special schools. Special schools are not equally distributed throughout the country; the large majority of schools are located in Belgrade and other large cities, thus children coming from smaller cities or rural regions are placed in boarding schools. Professional services in schools organise individual and group work with pupils, specialists include: 38 psychologists, 15 pedagogues, 64 speech therapists, 27 somatopedes, 40 therapists, 22 social workers, 40 nurses and 31 audiologists.

A total of 70 primary and 11 secondary schools in Serbia have attached classes. Some schools have only one attached class, but the majority of schools have more than one such class; there are a total of 81 mainstream schools with special classes. A total of 155 defectologists and 97 teachers who are educated in other subjects are teaching these classes.

## **School work plans and organisation**

The annual work plan is a document presenting the organisation of the school, including the profile of the teaching staff and the activities to be carried out in the course of the academic year. The annual work plan, prepared by the principal and adopted by the School Council contains: the general organisation of the school (calendar, schedule and exams), organisation of teaching, extracurricular activities, the school development

plan, the work plans for expert consultants and for management; the work of the libraries; and information on textbooks, materials; transportation and examinations. Teaching-related tasks include following the plan and programme; the schedule of optional subjects (the second foreign language starting from the third form; the national minority language with elements of the national culture); developing the plan and programme and updating educational materials; preparing classes and other tasks; keeping school records; and professional training of teachers and trainee professional examinations.

In mainstream schools, children with special needs are not singled out, which means that no particular accommodation is made in the schedule for pupils with special needs. Particular problems are created by the special school schedule, because the subject teaching and individual work on rehabilitation are carried out at the same time, which means that pupils are taken out of group classes for rehabilitation treatment.

Schools and other educational institutions are, for the most part, inaccessible to pupils in wheelchairs due to a great number of physical barriers. However, the adoption of *the Law on Planning and Building in the Republic of Serbia*, which stipulates the observance of European standards concerning the accessibility of the living environment, has created conditions for establishing higher standards of accessibility in existing schools and in schools being built.

## Pedagogy

In mainstream schools, the most frequent form of work is lectures with independent work with students relying on their own motivation to succeed. There is no systematic monitoring of individual educational progress or the general psycho-social development of pupils other than covering the programme and marking the pupils' work. In the majority of special schools, programmes from regular schools are used, adapted or simply shortened. Distinct pedagogical approaches should predominate in special schools matching the type of impairments of each child. Programmes of special schools, educational outcomes include acquisition of knowledge, skills and habits, but also life skills and social development. The Ministry of Education and Sport has approved several projects for developing interactive programmes connecting regular and special education.

At the pre-school level, no plans and programmes exist to enable children with special needs to be more adequately prepared for inclusion in

the regular education system. However the following methodologies define the activities of defectologists and pupils as envisaged by the planned programmes. At the pre-school level, methodology in working with blind children in special schools consists of play and games such as functional games, games of imagination, constructive games, sensory-motor activities, and orientation in space and time. Methodology of working with intellectually impaired children of pre-school age consists of: pedagogical significance of play, types of games and function of toys. With physically disabled children, methodology consists of adjusting the amount of play to the development level and mental age and guided activities.

In special primary schools for children with impaired eyesight, teaching is carried out according to the plan and programme of regular schools with the addition of special areas: rehabilitation and training in the use of remaining eyesight, orientation and moving in space and training in self-reliance. In the school for children with impaired eyesight *Veljko Ramadanović*, the teaching methods applied are: topognostic, verbal-textual, demonstrative-illustrative, and experimental or laboratory methods. In the new programme for the first form of primary school for children with impaired eyesight (2003/04) the following methods are listed: co-operative, creative, workshop, participative and active learning methods. Life skills, civic education and religious education have been introduced as optional subjects. Interactive, independent observation and deduction and a number of gaming activities including puppet games, drama games and vocal games are methods in the new programme (2003/04) at the school *Dragan Kovačević* (which means preservation of eyesight).

Schools for deaf and hearing impaired children use oral methods, speech-reading, auditory training methods and other non-verbal methods. In 2001, *Stefan Dečanski*, a school for children with impaired hearing became an experimental school, applying a new methodology -- integral development of children with impaired hearing -- which presents new subjects (sign language, musical stimulation, gestural stimulation, crafts and tools, and English language). Subjects are realised through new approaches to the mastering of their contents (Serbian language is instructed through functional speech, sign language through the performance of fairy-tales, mathematics is taught through adding and subtracting using computers and brain teasers, etc.). Co-operation with neighbouring mainstream schools is also realised and a course in sign language is also available for community members.

The primary school *Dragan Hercog* accommodates all children who have been unable to attend classes in local schools on account of illness, sometimes arranging courses in the hospital. The new programme for the first form lists the following methodologies: interactive, creative

participative, learning through discovery and problem solving. The following optional subjects have been introduced: religious education, civic education, life skills, Serbian language–language workshop.

In the case of the education of children with physical disabilities, the only problem singled out in regular schools is the existence of architectural barriers. The great variability of motor dysfunction in terms of onset and intensity, accompanied with the fact that these disabilities are often combined with intellectual, sensory-perceptual and speech problems prevents a uniform systemic solution for this segment of the population in education, rehabilitation or social integration programmes (Rapaić, D.). In view of the above, children with physical disabilities have additional education needs which also require special pedagogical support in terms of appropriate selection and arrangement of programme contents and special methodological approaches.

Teachers working in the above schools have attended a number of seminars on methodology: Active Teaching, Developing Educational Competence in Parents, Words are Windows or Walls, Implementation of the Curriculum, Creating School Programmes, Keepers of Smiles, Textbook of Children's Rights, and Drama Workshops. Seminars were held regularly in 2002 and 2003; usually two or three seminars for the same group of trainees. In 2004, there were fewer seminars, however in 2005 the number again increased. Seminars are offered by the Ministry of Education and Sport and NGOs. During studies at the Faculty of Defectology, students master how to shape the curriculum, the characteristics of the teaching process, teaching methods and teaching aids. However, these methods are applied solely in special schools. The methods applied by teachers when working with children with development problems should reflect their bio-psycho-social functioning. In class, teaching should be planned, organised and focused on the child; presupposing the application of different work methods.

In special schools, children have access to some teaching aids that contribute to a better acquisition of knowledge (models, scale models, relief pictures, clay, modelling clay and various didactic materials). School programmes stress the need for almost every teaching aid there is: visual aids for mathematics, cassette players, video recorders, boards, library collections and computers. But the percentage of special schools with modern equipment, (*i.e.* computers required for special groups of children, computers with speakers, TV, video recorder) is exceptionally low. In another special instance of teaching, in hospital wards and other healthcare institutions for chronically ill children, there are no classrooms and teaching is carried out in hospital rooms, while it is the teacher who provides limited teaching aids. As for textbooks, the use of uniform textbooks aimed at the

majority population of regular schools predominates. There is a pressing need for textbooks for children with special needs developed in accordance with their abilities, the teaching process and the reformed curriculum for all groups.

## Curriculum

All mainstream schools follow the national plan and programme taught through lectures (which does not acknowledge the cognitive, developmental and motivational differences of the pupils)<sup>30</sup>. Some special schools, *i.e.* for students with visual impairments, do not significantly depart from the national curricula, but only modify certain content to meet specific needs. However, special schools for children with more severe mental impairments follow curricula that contain only elements of the mainstream programme. The Board for Curriculum Development initially consisted of 15 experts at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade (Department of Psychology and Department of Pedagogy), the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, the Faculty of Teacher-training, Belgrade grammar schools and the Ministry of Education and Sport (Department of Educational Plan and Programme). As of 2002, the Board for Curriculum Development, with 339 members, has been in charge of the mainstream school curriculum, working within the framework of six boards on issues related to strategy development; language, literature and communication; social sciences and philosophy; mathematics, natural sciences and technology; art; and physical and health care education.

All work on the curriculum will be taken over by Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing in the Centre for Strategic Development and the Centre for Development of Programmes and Textbooks.

The plan and programme for special schools have not yet been reformed; it has been proposed that boards for specific educational areas and types and degrees of development problems should be formed within the framework of the Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing, which will take over work on education programmes. The teams developing new curricula, as described in a work plan for 2005 and 2006 within the

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<sup>30</sup>There is, however, an ongoing reform of the plans and programmes involving entirely new concepts that shift the focus of the educational process from the content to the objectives and outcomes of education.

Centre for Development of Programmes and Textbooks, include representatives of defectologists, teachers in specific educational areas employed in schools for children with development problems, experts from the Faculties of Defectology and Teacher-training, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Education and Sport. Parents of children with development problems have not yet been consulted in the course of developing curricula for special schools; nor have persons with impairments who have finished a special or regular school been consulted (primarily in connection with programmes pertaining to optional or extracurricular activities), nor have representatives of the labour market or the Employment Bureau been involved. There are no plans and programmes on the pre-school level adjusted to children with development problems either in regular or in special institutions.

### **Curricula for adjusted programmes**

“The General Basis of the Educational Programme”, a document officially adopted by the Educational Council in February 2004, proposes ways of adjusting programmes for the education of pupils with development problems including: defining optimum achievements; achieving appropriate outcomes by adjusting age limits; individualisation of educational activities and adjustment of teaching methods and techniques; selection of appropriate teaching aids; forming small groups within a class for more intensive work with these pupils; broadening assessment of progress and success from knowledge acquired to include social, cognitive and communicative progress of the pupils; offering appropriate optional subjects; involving expert associates in the preparation of individualised educational activities for these pupils and assessing and monitoring their efficiency and success; and undertaking other activities and procedures in line with school capacity in terms of staff and finances.

The reform of education for children with special needs will demand adjusting curricula to the trivalent educational model offered (inclusion, partial inclusion and reformed special schools). The plan and programme of the *inclusive form of education* should follow the general educational programme, but with a special strategic and methodological approach for children with all kinds of special needs. This presupposes a manner of teaching adjusted to special needs which can be realised with the help of assistants working in parallel with the teacher by separating children with special needs into groups or individually for work with specially trained teachers. Teaching aids and methodological procedures adjusted to special needs and an inclusive school ethos creating a general atmosphere of tolerance and respect for differences are also imperative. *Partial inclusion* means that children with special needs, grouped into a special class in

mainstream schools, are included in some educational activities ( *i.e.* art, music or physical education) and extracurricular activities together with other children. Another variant of partial inclusion presupposes separate classes in special schools whose pupils attend some subjects in a regular school and extracurricular activities. The programme of joint activities is developed within the framework of the national plan; as an important outcome, it features the development of tolerance and positive attitudes towards differences, as well as better socialisation and integration of children with development problems.

The plan and programme for the *new type of special education* is realised in special schools and all social welfare institutions such as day-care centres and institutions for the permanent accommodation of persons with developmental obstacles. The new form of special education presupposes the development of a new special curriculum that should represent close connections between education and rehabilitation. Special education will contain education programmes A, B and C, developed in accordance with the type and degree of impediment.

*Programme A*, following the general basis of the educational programme, includes preparation for the inclusion of a child in the regular education system. It belongs to the above-mentioned form of *partially inclusive education*. A child is educated within this model of education because they have pronounced special needs that are currently best satisfied in the special education system.

*Programme B* is the regular programme adjusted and reduced in accordance with the educational potential of children with development problems. The scope of the basic subjects (*i.e.* Serbian language or mathematics) is reduced and emphasis is placed on subjects involving skills, including through occupational therapy, which helps the acquisition of everyday life skills.

*Programme C* has been reduced to basic educational information, with the emphasis on occupational therapy activities aiming at outcomes to do with acquiring everyday living skills. With Programme C, education is introduced in day-care institutions and institutions for permanent accommodation of persons with severe impediments. Programme C presupposes the development of individual programmes only, created by experts from institutions for day care or permanent accommodation of persons with impediments in co-operation with the corresponding special school.

## Teacher training

Training programmes for teachers in mainstream and special schools have different strengths and weaknesses. While mainstream schoolteachers lack experience and knowledge about special needs children, some teachers in special schools have not had sufficient training in the subjects they will teach. This is the case in pre-schools as well as in primary and secondary schools. For example, while special pre-school institutions and special schools employ defectologists who have been trained to work with children with development problems in their studies of defectology, they are not specially trained for work in pre-school institutions. Defectologists are also not taught school subjects (*e.g.* Serbian language or mathematics) and yet they teach many subjects requiring specific expertise throughout primary and even secondary school.

According to the Statute of the Faculty of Defectology, courses are offered in the discipline of defectology, or special pedagogy, including logopedics, oligophrenology, prevention of behavioural disorders, somatopedics, surdology and typhology. The enrolment of candidates, who will study for four and a half years, is based on the results of an entrance examination covering biology, psychology and sociology. In the curricula of the basic studies at the Faculty of Defectology of 1999, the following employment possibilities of graduate defectologists are listed:

- *Graduate surdaudiologists* are employed in pre-school, primary and secondary schools for the deaf and the partially deaf, in boarding houses and clinics for the accommodation or rehabilitation of deaf and partially deaf children or in professional training workshops and professional associations.
- *Graduate typhologists* are trained to teach in schools for children with impaired eyesight, work in counselling centres, in offices for visual training and in other health care institutions.
- *Graduate oligophrenologists* are employed in pre-school, primary- and secondary-school education and institutions for the professional training of intellectually impaired children and young persons, in day-care centres, in homes for the accommodation of intellectually impaired adults, and in health care, management and expert services.
- *Graduate somatopedists* are employed in health care, educational and social institutions. In regular primary schools, somatopedists carry out programmes of preventive correctional exercises with children who exhibit slight psycho-motor disorders.



- *Graduate logopedists* are employed in health care, educational and social welfare institutions and in other activities where it is possible to treat the pathology of verbal communication.
- *Graduate special pedagogues* are employed in the area of internal affairs, the judiciary, social policy and social welfare, centres for social work and other social welfare institutions.

Defectologists may teach in schools for children with developmental problems after having studied Methodology of Educational Work and Methodology of Teaching Children with a Specific Type of Impediment. According to the Law on Primary and Secondary School, defectologists may *only* teach in schools for children with developmental problems, *not* in mainstream primary and secondary schools. According to the Rules of Professional Training, a defectologist may be additionally educated in specific areas or subjects, but this has not yet become common practice at any of the teaching faculties, which means that defectologists are likely to teach various subjects without having the necessary qualifications.

Teachers working in special schools who are not defectologists may be additionally trained at the Faculty of Defectology for working with children with developmental problems after several years of work experience in special schools. The current curricula establish subjects corresponding to a specific type of impediment that are to be taken by experts in addition to common core subjects. The common core subjects cover: introduction to defectology and general defectological diagnostics, neuro-psychology with re-educational methodology, medical and psychological basis of disability and defectological rehabilitation of handicapped persons. The following subjects are specific to the type of impediment: pedagogy and professional training of deaf and partially deaf persons with surdandragogy; pedagogy, methodology and professional training of teaching physically invalid persons; pedagogy, methodology and professional training of blind persons and persons with impaired eyesight; methodology of re-socialisation, pedagogy of intellectually impaired persons and methodology of teaching persons with behaviour disorders.

Pre-school teachers working in kindergartens attend the Academy for Pre-school Teachers for skills required when working with small children; they do not learn about the characteristics of children with development problems and the specific methods of working with these children but only about the basic subjects they will teach and the methodology for instruction of these concepts. Primary school teachers in mainstream schools, in the course of their basic studies, also do not systematically receive training for working with children with special education needs, even though they may encounter these children in their classes. Many faculties where teachers are

trained present little or no possibility for even superficial instruction about issues related to children with special needs. One exception is the curriculum for basic studies at the Faculty of Teacher Training in Belgrade, which stipulates that teacher-trainees learn the Methodology for Dealing with Persons with Mild Development Problems (an introduction to defectology) in their fourth year of studies. However, as this programme is conceived on the basis of experience in special, not regular schools, revision of certain key concepts should be undertaken in the future. Neither of the Faculties of Teacher Training and of Defectology offer programmes for teachers working with children who have developmental problems in mainstream schools. Special kindergartens (and special educational groups in regular kindergartens) employ defectologists who have taken a course entitled “Methodology of Pre-school Work with Children Exhibiting Various Types of Impediments” at the Faculty of Defectology. Teacher trainees have practical experience in these subjects in pre-school classes. However, subjects pertaining to children’s games, children’s literature and psychosocial development programmes are insufficiently represented in their education. There are no specific differences in the education of defectologists for work in pre-school education and primary- and secondary-school education.

The Ministry of Education and Sport has accredited 16 programmes for the training of pre-school teacher, and other school teachers and defectologists for working with children with special needs; these programmes have been offered to pre-school and school institutions. As of this year, a licence for teaching has been introduced, requiring a specific quota of obligatory hours of training for each teacher in either special or mainstream education<sup>31</sup>.

Expert teams in mainstream schools are made up of a psychologist and a pedagogue who are likely to have taken a course on the Psychology of Persons with Development Problems and may have learned about at risk children through other courses. A defectologist is very rarely a member of the expert team in regular schools; in a sample of 97 schools in Serbia, just 20 defectologists were thus employed.<sup>32</sup> As a member of the expert team, a defectologist does not teach courses. In special schools, experts such as pedagogues, psychologists and social workers employed are trained by attending programmes for working with children with development problems at the Faculty of Defectology for one year.

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<sup>31</sup> Catalogue of Programmes of Professional Training in Education for the Academic Year 2003/04

<sup>32</sup> Reform of the Education of Pupils with Special Needs, 2004

During 2003/04, the Ministry of Education and Sport prepared the project *ISKORAK* “Stepping out”, introduced the first in a series of educational courses which should prepare defectologists for work in the new special school and the future inclusive school. Within the framework of this project, the first educational seminar for 150 defectologists from all regions in Serbia was taught in February 2004. The two-day seminar, involving 14 and a half hours of work, consisted of theoretical lectures and small-group workshops about the reform of education in Serbia in general and about new concepts of education of children with special needs. The workshop dealt with the preparation for team work, development of positive attitudes and the elimination of prejudices towards changes in education and the inclusive form of education, and preparation for the new role of defectologists in the future reformed special and inclusive schools.

Parents have not yet been involved in the work of the school to a great extent; their involvement has mostly consisted of membership in the School Board and the Parents’ Council. In the reformed school, a much more important place is envisaged for parents. A representative of the parents in the reformed special school and the future inclusive school will be a member of the school team for development planning and a consultative member of the expert team engaged in preparing an individual curriculum for their child. It will also be possible for the parent to become involved in the teaching process as an associate or assistant. It is also envisaged that parents be involved in making all essential decisions concerning the education of their children.

## Conclusion

Serbia has undertaken considerable reforms covering democratisation and decentralisation of the education system in the past several years, attempting to bridge the gap experienced in the field of education during several years of isolation from the world community. Achievements in developing definitions of integration and inclusion along with reform plans including specific proposals for inclusive education and special education lay the ground work for positive steps in the future. Within the scope of reform of education of children with special needs and developmental problems, the proposition of a trivalent model, officially adopted by the Council for Reform in February 2003, is a unique conception of education for children with developmental problems, which will be applied in Serbia. The development of inclusive options in the education system will require gradual change in order to be successful, since these developments demand

a well prepared system of experts and professionals along with changes in the broader social community. Consequently, this process will take time.

Activities that will encourage implementation of inclusive education can be divided into four goals:

- Creation of the strategy for reform of education for children with special needs with developed strategic steps, as well as a conceptual elaboration of certain reform segments (2005).
- Providing institutional and legal frameworks for reform implementation (2005).
- Preparation of schools, staff, curricula and local communities and mechanisms for connecting special and mainstream schools; contributions to the reform of the Faculty of Defectology to increase education of future schoolmasters, pedagogues and teachers for children with developmental problems; and systematic data collection of numbers of children and adults with developmental problems (2005-2007).
- Gradual implementation of the inclusive model, during a transitional period, including pilot projects in special and mainstream schools and pre-school institutions (2005-2007).

The Institute for Improvement of Education and Upbringing in co-operation with the Institute for Evaluation of Quality Education and Upbringing and the Ministry of Education and Sport will develop, realise and evaluate these suggested activities, whose basic goal is quality education of children with developmental problems.

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# Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe

**BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, BULGARIA, CROATIA, KOSOVO, FYR OF MACEDONIA, MOLDOVA, MONTENEGRO, ROMANIA AND SERBIA**

This publication is part of the project on Education Development for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe. This project was carried out by the OECD within the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. It contributes to the countries' efforts to adjust their education reforms to the EC principles as outlined in the EU "Detailed Work Programme on the Follow-up of the Objectives of Education and Training Systems in Europe". More specifically, the countries' efforts focus on the objective of widening access to quality education and ensuring equal opportunities for all. The respective country reports are supplemented by a general overview on the situation of special needs education in South Eastern Europe.

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