GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT

2021

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

Inclusion and education:

ALL MEANS ALL

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Global Education Monitoring Report

Network of Education Policy Centers

EUROPEAN AGENCY for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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The Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action specifies that the mandate of the *Global Education Monitoring Report* is to be 'the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs', with the responsibility to 'report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review'. The report is prepared by an independent team hosted by UNESCO.

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ABOUT THE EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR SPECIAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) is an independent organization that acts as a platform for collaboration and agent for change for the ministries of education in its member countries. EASNIE was originally established in 1996, reflecting the need for a permanent and systematic structure for European collaboration in the field of special needs and inclusive education. The organisation is currently maintained by 31 member countries, covering 35 jurisdictions, across Europe. Their shared ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers. To achieve this vision, EASNIE helps its member countries improve their educational policy and practice. Combining the perspectives of policy, practice and research, EASNIE provides member countries and stakeholders at the European level with evidence-based information and guidance on implementing inclusive education. All EASNIE work is in line with and directly supports international and European Union policy initiatives on education.

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ABOUT THE NETWORK OF EDUCATION POLICY CENTERS

The Network of Education Policy Centers is an international non-governmental membership organization that gathers 27 members from 21 countries from Eastern and south-eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It was founded in 2006. Its members are public and civil-society organizations dealing with education at different levels, from education research and policy analysis to teacher training and school-based activities. The mission of the Network is to promote flexible, participatory, evidence-based, transparent education policies reflecting open society values, which mean proactive policy initiatives as well as advocacy and monitoring activities of governments and national education systems. The Network addresses the need for independent and information-based policy analysis, advocacy for equity, and effective, sustainable solutions in education. The geographic complexity in which it operates enhances a qualitative comparative approach as well as the attitude to explore new topics and trends in education, such as the extent of hidden or informal private payments for public education, the equity dimensions of private tutoring, the ways in which history and social studies teaching and learning materials promote (in)tolerance, the models of minority education, and the developments of education for sustainability in the region.

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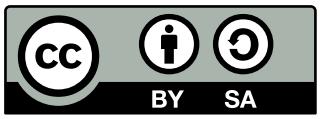

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2019 Arab States – Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls

Cover photo: UNICEF/UNI42671/ Roger LeMoyne

Caption: Children clap to music in a preschool at the Social Services and Child Protection agency in Istanbul. The agency provides adult literacy classes, runs an early childhood development centre and offers parent-education courses using materials developed by UNICEF's Family and Child Training (FACT) programme.

Infographics by blossom.it
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This publication and all related materials are available for download here:
Bit.ly/Eurasia2021inclusion

Foreword

by the Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

COVID-19 has made the cracks in our education systems wider and deeper. These cracks were apparent the world over before the pandemic, including in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. But, without a doubt, the momentum to make a change had already taken seed. While institutional care still exists in the region, it is far less extreme than it was only a decade ago; while Roma children in Central and Eastern Europe are often still unfairly and disproportionately excluded, their protection and rights are increasing; where those with disabilities once had no chance of finding a place in mainstream education, many now do.

Examples abound in this report of progress for inclusion happening across education systems in the region: in governance, teacher education, data collection, finance and textbooks. This progress must be fast-tracked if we are to fight our way back to a stronger education system after COVID-19.

The challenge remains to fully do away with an approach to disadvantaged groups at risk of exclusion, on account of displacement, nomadic way of living, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, which saw diversity as a problem to be fixed, not a strength to be celebrated and benefit from. Medical approaches to the education of learners with disabilities still influence these learners' school placement and education experience. Exclusionary mechanisms and administrative barriers remain. In 18 countries, admissions to schools still depend on medical-psychological assessments and other selection procedures.

Legacies of segregated education, for instance, and a well-intentioned approach to defending the right to a mother tongue education mean that fully inclusive mainstream schools will take stronger commitment from governments concerned. Every single country in this region still segregates children from particular groups into separate schools. Every country, therefore, needs to plan for change.

Let the unjust implications of COVID-19 be the impetus to address this need. History in the region shows that change is possible. Out-of-school rates have halved in the past 20 years. Recently, eight countries have moved to create resource centres shared between schools to shift to full inclusion of those with special needs. Resources and logistics have been rallied to open school doors to the refugees who have arrived in some corners of the region.

We were caught short by COVID-19, and our eyes have been opened to the need for greater resilience to future shocks around the corner. Despite its many difficulties, the pandemic has forced us to reassess the way we live, the way we treat other people and the type of future we want to build once it is over. All of us need the knowledge and skills to change mindsets that can build a caring and green economy; build resilience to disinformation; and foster awareness and responsibility towards a stronger, more inclusive and democratic society built on solid community values.
Yes, COVID-19 interrupted education in a way we have never seen before. Now we must make sure this break is a pause for much-needed reflection about the societies we want to build, and the education we need to build them.

Stefania Giannini
Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

Foreword

by the Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe

Sustainability is sometimes reduced to an issue of environmental sustainability and climate change. There is something to be said for this view: If we do not manage to limit climate change, if we do not make our physical environment sustainable, the other issues we discuss will quickly become moot.

We should not deduce from this, however, that if "only" we can stop climate change, we will have won the battle for sustainability. Humanity will thrive only if we make our societies environmentally, socially, societally, culturally, politically and economically sustainable.

Achieving social inclusion is one of our most difficult challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic adds to the challenge. We cannot rise to it without making education a centerpiece of our efforts. This regional report covers 23 of the Council of Europe's member states. Its topic, however, is crucial to all countries.

How we understand quality is key. Nobody can be against it, and nobody can admit to aiming for second best. But we tend to think of quality as something predefined.

Yet quality is not neutral. If we see quality as synonymous with elites and reduced numbers, it can be used to exclude. But we can see quality as a measure of how well we provide as many as possible with decent opportunities. It can be used to include. In the Council of Europe view,[1] an education system cannot be of high quality unless it is inclusive. A system that leaves many students by the wayside cannot be good.

Inclusion, then, is a *conditio sine qua non* for education itself. It is also a key aspect of education's broader societal role. Education must provide students and graduates not only with knowledge and understanding but also with an ethical compass that makes exclusion and marginalization unacceptable to us as individuals and as societies. We must provide education, not just training.

Education must fulfil its full range of purposes: preparation for the labor market, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, personal development, and the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base.[2] Education must help develop a culture of democracy: the set of attitudes and behaviors that enable our institutions and laws to be democratic in practice. This requires commitment to providing everyone with equal opportunities.

As education cannot be of high quality without being inclusive, societies will not be sustainable if they are exclusive. And our societies cannot be sustainable unless education provides us with the competences we need to make them inclusive. Only then will we develop and maintain the kind of societies in which we would ourselves want to live.

Sjur Bergan
Head, Education Department
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1 See Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on ensuring quality education.

2 See Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research.

Foreword

by the Deputy Director, Centre for Educational Initiatives Step by Step, Bosnia and Herzegovina

If all children are to reach their full potential in life, they must have an equal chance of receiving an education of good quality. The critical importance of education for the prospects and prosperity of individuals, communities and entire nations is recognized in Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with SDG 4 calling for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. However, too often, the most marginalized children are left behind, including girls, ethnic and linguistic minorities, migrants and refugees, children with disabilities, and those from low-income families or living in remote areas. Yet education's unique power to act as a catalyst for wider development goals can be fully realized only if it is equitable.

If all children are to be fully included in education, we need to understand the factors that inhibit and exclude the most vulnerable from learning. The 2021 Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia report on inclusion and education aims to fill key knowledge gaps and provide evidence-based recommendations to assist governments and other key education stakeholders in strengthening inclusion and SDG 4 implementation across the region.

The report illuminates the determined efforts by countries throughout the region to introduce reforms that will improve access to quality education, reflecting their firm commitment to Agenda 2030. It sets out the current education challenges to inform data-driven policy and planning that can address children's unmet learning needs. The report could not be more timely, as it sheds light on country preparedness to organize digital access even before the surge in online learning triggered by the COVID-19 crisis, which revealed the limits of education in general, especially as regards children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The move towards inclusion will not happen unless communities are on board. Grassroots organizations and youth play an essential role in raising awareness about inclusion and acting as watchdogs to monitor government commitments concerning the right to inclusive education. Young people's involvement, engagement and development in strengthening the foundations of inclusive education systems is an end in itself, as well as a means for young people to actively influence and shape education reforms. The report highlights the need to recognize young people and communities as partners for change in Agenda 2030 implementation.

My hope is that the report will be a catalyst for change benefiting some of the most marginalized children in the region. The report's 10 messages are precisely the call to action we should all heed as we seek to strengthen education systems in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as the world enters the final decade of action to achieve SDG 4 and fulfil its commitment to inclusive education. We all have a responsibility in making this happen. We honestly do not have any other option.

Nedim Krajišnik, youth and education activist
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Education system profiles

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3 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

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4 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

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Contents

KEY MESSAGES

Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia has made progress towards a rights-based approach to inclusive education.

- In the past 20 years, out-of-school rates fell by half.
- Two in three education systems have a definition of inclusion that embraces multiple marginalized groups.
- Countries have been moving away from the medical model. The percentage of children with disabilities in special schools fell from 78% in 2005/06 to 53% in 2015/16. The percentage of children in residential institutions fell by 30% in the same period.
- Schools are making their support systems broader and more flexible. Among the 30 education systems reviewed, 23 offer counselling and mentoring, 22 learning assistance and 21 specialist and therapist support.

But the shift to inclusion is far from complete.

- One in three students with special needs in Central and Eastern Europe is still placed in special schools.
- In Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, the share of youth with disabilities in the out-of-school population is twice as large as the share of the in-school population.
- In 15 of the 30 education systems, school admission depends on medical-psychological assessment and other selection procedures.
- What is considered in some countries to be inclusive pedagogy may instead be a medically defined focus on disability. In Belarus, integrated classes use two curricula: a standard one for general education and another for special education; joint instruction is limited to a narrow list of subjects.

Other forms of segregation and discrimination persist, hindering inclusion.

- About 60% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth in the Balkans do not attend upper secondary school. Members of these groups are also disproportionally diagnosed with intellectual disabilities. In Slovakia, Roma constituted 42% of those in special schools in 2018.
- In Mongolia, 94% of the richest but only 37% of the poorest complete secondary school.
- Turkey, which has the world's highest number of refugees, absorbed more than 600,000 Syrians in its public schools but 37% of Syrian refugees are still out of school.
- In 22 of the 30 education systems, there are separate schools or classes for linguistic minorities. This parallel provision often works against inclusion.
- In several countries, a traditional gender lens reinforces gender stereotypes.
- Just 7 of 23 countries have policies or action plans explicitly addressing and prohibiting school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Countries must deploy a range of policies boosting inclusion.

- Policies to accelerate a move towards inclusion in education are particularly urgent, as the COVID-19 education crisis, which fed on existing inequality, is creating new gaps.
- Inter-ministerial collaboration on data exchange needs to be strengthened.
- Management responsibilities for local authorities and schools promote efficient resource use but require clear mandates and adequate resources.
- Only one in two teachers in the region feels prepared to teach in mixed-ability settings and one in three in multicultural settings. The ageing of the teaching force makes this need more pressing.
- Students and parents need to be involved more; only the Republic of Moldova reported engaging students in curriculum design. Students' voices are rarely accommodated in policy design.

Students participate in a German lesson at a school with Roma and non-Roma students in Nagyecsed, Hungary, on 22 September 2016.

CREDIT: Akos Stiller/Open Society Foundations

CHAPTER

1

Introduction

Transforming our World, the foundation document of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, brought together aspirations of poverty reduction and environmental sustainability, underpinned by a drive for social justice that builds on the human rights instruments of the past 70 years. It refers extensively to equity, inclusion, diversity, equal opportunity and non-discrimination. It calls for empowering vulnerable people and meeting their needs. Several of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) refer to inclusion and equality. SDG 4, the international community's commitment to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', has both at its heart and is one of the clearest examples of the overall pledge to leave no one behind.

As unequal distribution of resources and opportunities persists, equity and inclusion have become the central promises of the 2030 Agenda. Characteristics commonly associated with inequality of distribution include gender, remoteness, poverty, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and religion and other beliefs and attitudes.

Some mechanisms contributing to inequality are universal while others are specific to social and economic contexts, as in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Advantage and disadvantage are transmitted over generations as parents impart resources, including income, skills and networks, to their children. Organizations and institutions may favour some groups over others and propagate social norms and stereotypes that exclude more vulnerable groups from opportunities. Individuals form groups that extend advantage to members and deny it to others. Public institutions may be designed to correct imbalances or may be beholden to vested and powerful interests (UNDP, 2019).

INCLUSION IN EDUCATION IS NOT JUST A RESULT, IT IS A PROCESS

Low rates of entry, progression and learning are just the final, most visible outcomes of socio-economic processes that marginalize, disappoint and alienate children, youth and adults. A 'toxic mix of poverty and discrimination' results in them being 'excluded because of who they are' (Save the Children, 2017, p. 1). Powerful social, political and economic mechanisms related to the distribution and use of opportunities, especially early in life, have major, lasting effects on inclusion in education. Education system mechanisms that play out daily in classrooms, schoolyards, parent–teacher meetings, community gatherings, local government coordination structures and ministerial councils also have an impact.

An 'inclusive and equitable' education is at the core of the SDG 4 ambition. Defining equitable education requires distinguishing between equality and equity, two terms that are occasionally misunderstood. In a cartoon that has appeared in various versions, a panel labelled 'equality' shows children of varying heights standing on identical boxes trying to write on a blackboard, the shortest ones struggling. In the 'equity' panel, they stand on boxes of different sizes and all are able to write comfortably. However, this representation is misleading (**Figure 1.1**). In fact, equality is present in both panels: equality of inputs in the first, equality of outcomes in the second. Equality is a state of affairs (what): a result that can be observed in inputs, outputs or outcomes, for example achieving gender equality. Equity is a process (how): actions aimed at ensuring equality.

FIGURE 1.1:
A popular representation of equality and equity is misleading

Inclusion is more difficult to define. As used in this report, it mirrors equity. It is a process: actions and practices that embrace diversity and build a sense of belonging, rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and should be respected. Yet inclusion is also a state of affairs, a result, with a multifaceted nature that makes it difficult to pin down.

While SDG 4 envisions inclusive education as encompassing all children, youth and adults, such education has historically been associated with, and often conceptualized as, education for children with disabilities. The struggle of people with disabilities has therefore shaped the understanding of inclusion.

> "An 'inclusive and equitable' education is at the core of the SDG 4 ambition"

The experiences of people with disabilities have helped shape perspectives on inclusion

Education was recognized as a human right in 1948. In 1960, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education specified what governments must do to prevent 'nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education' (Article 1). It focused on ensuring that all learners enjoyed equal access to, and quality of, education with respect to human dignity but did not include disability among characteristics that could lead to 'distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference' in education. In 1994, the Declaration of the World Conference on Special Needs in Salamanca, Spain, made a strong and clear case for inclusive education. The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) guaranteed the right to inclusive education. Article 24, aiming to realize the right to education of people with disabilities 'without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity', committed countries to 'ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning'.

The article's first paragraph captured its spirit: Inclusive education would ensure the development of the 'sense of dignity and self-worth' of people with disabilities and of 'their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential' to enable them to 'participate effectively in a free society'. The second paragraph contained the key means of fulfilling the right, including access to education 'on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live' and 'support required, within the general education system' (United Nations, 2006).

Although absent in earlier drafts, the commitment to inclusion in school placement not only broke with the historical tendency to exclude children with disabilities from education altogether or to segregate them in special schools, but also distinguished inclusion from integration. Ensuring access to mainstream schools but placing children with disabilities in separate classes for much of the time, not providing them with needed support or expecting them to adapt to available services is at odds with the goal of inclusion, which involves changes in school support and ethos (de Beco, 2018). This approach reflected radical changes in perception of disability over the last 50 years that led to the social model of disability, which the CRPD takes as its foundation (**Box 1.1**).

BOX 1.1:

The evolving interpretation of disability has shaped education provision

Evolving perceptions of people with disabilities shaped three approaches to their education (Al Ju'beh, 2015). The charity model viewed people with disabilities as victims or objects of pity. They were considered uneducable and excluded from education, although some religious institutions provided education alongside care.

The medical model saw disability as a problem stemming from impairment that made some people differ from what society widely considered normal and need treatment to meet societal expectations. The perceived challenges of learners with disabilities arose from their deficits rather than school and classroom organization, curriculum and teaching approaches that might be inadequate and lack the flexibility to offer needed opportunities and support. Consequently, such learners are often categorized and labelled by type and severity of disability and placed in separate provision, where they are educated through specialized approaches. The medical model can give rise to the idea that medical personnel should lead assessment of such learners and that only teachers with training in special education can provide for them. This reinforces the perceived need for separate provision and individual approaches that often carry lower expectations throughout learners' school career. The language associated with the medical model includes terms such as special needs, therapy, rehabilitation, handicap, defect, disorder and diagnosis.

Starting in the 1970s, the social model contrasted the biological condition (impairment) with the social condition (disability). In this approach, disability is not an individual attribute. It emerges because individuals face barriers they cannot overcome in certain environments. It is the system and context that do not take the diversity and multiplicity of needs into account (Norwich, 2014). The social model is linked to the rights-based approach to inclusion and the idea that education needs to be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable (Tomaševski, 2001). Functioning and capability approaches are central to its focus on what a person has difficulty doing. Society and culture determine rules, define normality and treat difference as deviance.

In 2001, the World Health Organization issued the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, which synthesized the medical and social models of disability. Although it listed 1,500 disability codes, it stated that disability resulted not only from physical conditions and biological endowment but also from personal or environmental contexts (WHO, 2001). A shift towards the social model must be accompanied by a change in language, which moves from medical and needs-based terms towards language placing learners' rights at the centre of planning and decision making in a model that prioritizes identification and removal of attitudinal, physical and organizational barriers.

All stakeholders need to understand the underlying thinking related to inclusion. The concept of barriers suggests many people are at risk of education exclusion, not just people with disabilities. Social and cultural mechanisms drive exclusion on the basis of ethnicity or poverty, for instance. In education, the concept of barriers to participation and learning is replacing that of special needs and difficulties. Yet awareness raising remains a challenge in many countries.

The CRPD stopped short of a precise definition of inclusion in education. The term therefore remains contentious, lacking a tight conceptual focus, which may have contributed to ambivalence and confused practices (Slee, 2020). While the CRPD endorsed actions that could lead to enrolment in mainstream schools, it did not suggest that special schools violated the convention (De Beco, 2018). Some argue that, in favouring an anti-discrimination perspective over a needs-based one, Article 24 privileged 'mainstream educational environments as its presumed substantive standard rather than the provision of quality instruction in an appropriate setting (including specialized settings) tailored to the particular educational needs of each individual student' (Anastasiou et al., 2018, pp. 9–10). Reports to countries by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities confirm that inclusion is the 'governing paradigm' for special and segregated education (Cisternas Reyes, 2019, p. 413).

Ultimately, the CRPD gave governments a free hand in shaping inclusive education, which may be seen as implicit recognition of the dilemmas and tensions involved in overcoming obstacles to full inclusion (Forlin et al., 2013). While exclusionary practices by many governments in contravention of their CRPD commitments should be exposed, the difficulties in making mainstream schools and education systems flexible should be acknowledged.

In addressing inclusion in education as a question of where students with disabilities should be taught, there is potential tension between the two desirable goals of maximizing interaction with others (all children under the same roof) and fulfilling learning potential (wherever students learn best) (Norwich, 2014). Other considerations include the speed with which systems can move towards the ideal and what happens during transition (Stubbs, 2008), and the trade-off between early needs identification and the risk of labelling and stigmatization (Haug, 2017).

Rapid change may be unsustainable, potentially harming those it is supposed to serve. Including children with disabilities in mainstream schools that are not prepared, supported or accountable for achieving inclusion can intensify experiences of exclusion and provoke backlash against making schools and systems more inclusive. Advocates for exceptions have also appropriated the language of inclusion, generating confusion (Slee, 2020).

Inclusion in education means education of good quality for all

These ambiguities led the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to issue General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 in 2016, following a two-year process involving submissions from countries, non-government organizations (NGOs), organizations for people with disabilities, academics and disability advocates. It defined inclusion as involving

> a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion. (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, p. 4)

The committee described the right to inclusive education as encompassing

> a transformation in culture, policy and practice in all formal and informal educational environments to accommodate the differing requirements and identities of individual students, together with a commitment to remove the barriers that impede that possibility. It involves strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. It focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized. Inclusion involves access to and progress in high-quality formal and informal education without discrimination. It seeks to enable communities, systems and structures to combat discrimination, including harmful stereotypes, recognize diversity, promote participation and overcome barriers to learning and participation for all by focusing on well-being and success of students with disabilities. It requires an in-depth transformation of education systems in legislation, policy, and the mechanisms for financing, administration, design, delivery and monitoring of education. (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, p. 3)

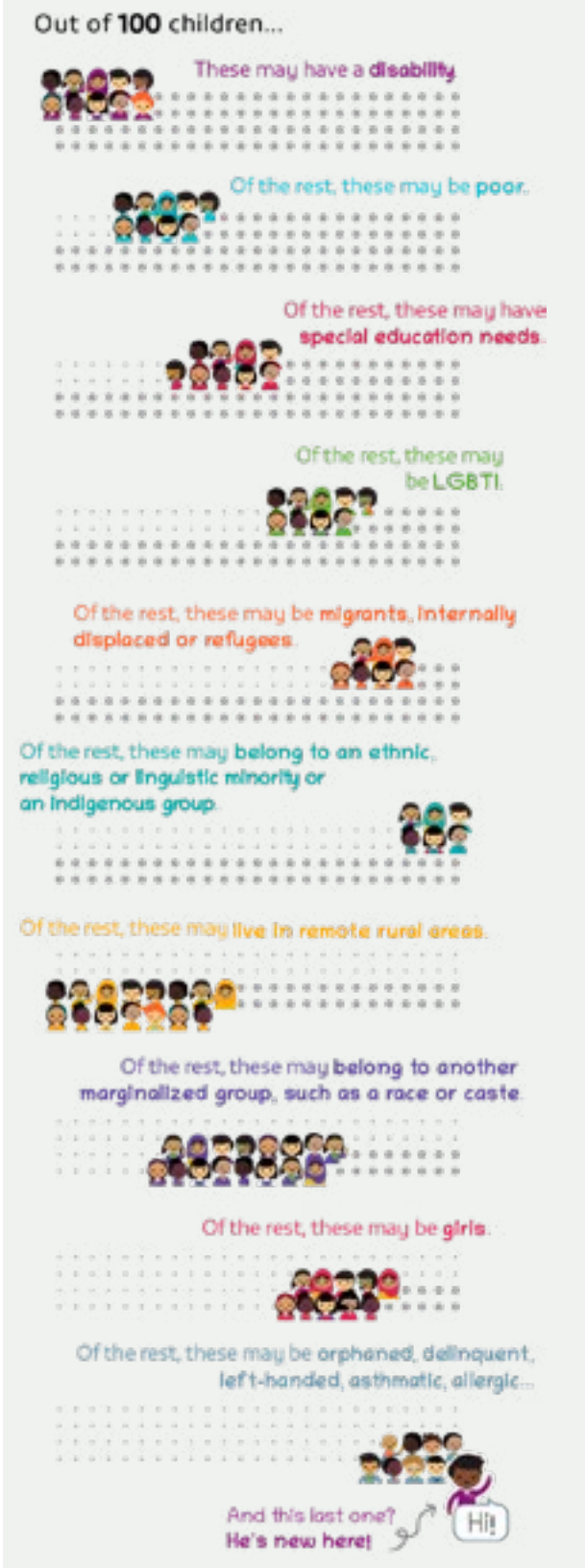
Two key points from General Comment No. 4 are central to this report. First, as the description of the requirements makes clear, inclusive education involves a process that contributes to the goal of social inclusion. The attainability of this goal should not affect the resolve of those responsible for implementing this process or those holding them accountable for fulfilling their commitment. Inclusive education should embody the principles of dialogue, participation and openness, bringing all stakeholders together to resolve emerging tensions and dilemmas. Decisions should be based on human dignity, without compromising, discounting or diverting from the long-term ideal of inclusion.

The efforts of policymakers and educators should not override the needs and preferences of those affected. Beyond upholding the fundamental human rights and principles that provide moral and political direction for education decisions, fulfilling the inclusive ideal is not trivial. Delivering sufficient differentiated and personalized support requires perseverance, resilience and a long-term perspective.

Moving away from education systems whose design suits some children and obliges others to adapt cannot happen by decree. Prevailing attitudes and mindsets must be challenged; otherwise, 'inclusive education may prove intractable even with the best will in the world and the highest possible level of commitment' (De Beco, 2018, p. 410). 'The correct approach is not to seek justification for the limits to the goal of inclusive education, but rather to establish the legitimacy of making efforts towards that goal despite such limits (De Beco, 2018, p. 408).

The second key point of General Comment No. 4 is that inclusive education is much broader in scope. It entails a 'process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults' (UNESCO, 2009), to eliminate barriers to the right to education and change the culture, policy and practice of mainstream schools to accommodate and effectively include all learners. It is not only learners with disabilities who are excluded through discriminatory mechanisms or who would benefit from improved teaching and learning opportunities. For instance, the disproportional referral of minorities to special education indicates how cultural biases are

FIGURE 1.2:
All means all



embedded in identification of special needs. All over the world, layers of discrimination deny students the right to be educated with their peers or to receive education of the same quality (**Figure 1.2**).

Belief in the principle of inclusion should not obscure the difficult questions and potential drawbacks raised by including groups of learners at risk of exclusion. In some contexts, inclusion may inadvertently intensify pressure to conform. Group identities, practices, languages and beliefs may be devalued, jeopardized or eradicated, undercutting a sense of belonging. The right of a group to preserve its culture and the right to self-determination and self-representation are increasingly recognized. Inclusion may be resisted out of prejudice but also out of recognition that identity may be maintained and empowerment achieved only if a minority is a majority in a given area. Rather than achieve positive social engagement, exposure to the majority may reinforce dominant prejudices, intensifying minority disadvantage. Targeting assistance can also lead to stigmatization, labelling or unwelcome forms of inclusion (Silver, 2015).

Another example of difficulty in providing inclusive education relates to the role of parents of children with disabilities. They are often motivated to send their children to mainstream schools to build social relations, hoping they will develop contacts with neighbourhood children that will teach them how to handle social situations and be included in the local community. However, if the children end up socially isolated, it may harm their social-emotional development and even make them victims of bullying. Often, teachers tend to overestimate the extent to which students with special education needs are socially included and underestimate the degree of bullying.

HISTORY HAS WELDED TOGETHER NATIONAL EDUCATION EXPERIENCES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

Education systems do not exist in a void. They are influenced and shaped by the social, cultural, economic and political structures in which they are embedded and to which they contribute. Thus, they reflect and risk reproducing historical and current patterns of inequality and discrimination. Education systems both depend on and create the societies in which they exist: While unequal and intolerant societies may create unfair, segregated and discriminatory education systems, more equitable and inclusive education systems can help bring about fairer and more inclusive societies.

The geographical area covered in this report is vast. Indeed, it is questionable whether the Baltic Assembly countries; the Central European Visegrád countries; south-eastern Europe; Belarus, Ukraine and the Russian Federation; Turkey and the Caucasus; the Central Asian republics; and Mongolia constitute a region. In the SDG classification, for instance, they belong to four different regional groups. However, except for Turkey, they were brought close historically in 1945 when state socialism welded them into a region with similarities in social and economic organization, including in their education structures and approaches.

The transition paths they followed after 1989 were varied, but defined with reference to this shared experience. Many of them continued to share experiences and compare records during the highs and lows of transition. While their education development accelerated in the second half of the 20th century, their education systems had weaknesses and needed to adjust rapidly to new social and economic realities. An immediate priority was removal of certain curriculum content. More substantive reforms later focused on democratization, decentralization, competence-based curricula, external assessment at the end of general education and liberalization of teacher professional development, often with the influence and support of international organizations (Anderson and Heyneman, 2005; Berryman, 2000; Fiszbein, 2001; Radó, 2001; UNICEF, 2007).

Implementation of reforms varied greatly across the region. Both destructive and constructive forces were released. On the one hand, the number of countries in the region tripled in the 1990s, in some cases peacefully, in others tragically through violence and war. Some tensions remain unresolved. As no country is homogeneous from an ethnic, linguistic or religious perspective, many reforms focused on peacebuilding, interethnic understanding, and minority and other human rights. Countries also went through one or several economic shocks that affected governments' capacity to finance and deliver education of good quality.

On the other hand, a common point of reference for many countries has been the aspiration to either fully integrate or engage more closely with the structures and systems of their western European neighbours.

> "A major shift towards an inclusive and rights-based approach to education is taking place throughout the region"

In total, 11 countries of the region joined the European Union (EU) between 2004 and 2011, 6 are candidates or potential candidates, and another 6 participate in the European Neighbourhood Policy. EU accession aims to ensure that 'inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination prevail' (European Commission, 2020). Countries subscribe to common strategic objectives and take part in open policy coordination processes, including on education. A 2018 recommendation notably commits countries to promote common values and inclusive education (European Council, 2018). Association and partnership agreements are far less binding but can also directly or indirectly influence education systems.

All but five of the countries covered in this report are members of the European Higher Education Area, which aims to increase higher education system coherence. All but six are members of the Council of Europe, an intergovernmental organization that promotes democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and is known for actions related to protection of minorities. Its education programme sets standards on quality education and on democratic citizenship and human rights. All countries in the region belong to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which commits members to a 'human dimension' of security that includes full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, rule of law, democratic principles and tolerance.

Education systems in the region are trying to shed the legacy of the medical model

This region, more than any other, has had to overcome the legacy of the medical model, which was applied to children with disabilities during the socialist regime. They attended special schools and were segregated by type of disability (Phillips, 2009; Mladenov, 2017). Children with mild and severe intellectual disabilities or psychiatric diagnoses were even denied education. The language used was full of discriminatory terms. Teachers were prepared for special education in so-called defectology departments; in some countries the term persists to this day. They were prepared to provide high-quality support to children with a particular need, but not skills that would help them be included in social and economic life (Lenskaya, 1995).

This report shows that a major shift towards an inclusive and rights-based approach to education is taking place throughout the region. Policies increasingly place a duty on schools and other education providers not to discriminate against any learners, whether in terms of admission into or exclusion from mainstream education or in terms of actual education provision. New legislation in many countries describes the concept of inclusion and its requirements, and some countries are producing

appropriate curricula and examination materials. Initial teacher education programmes are being revised or restructured and professional development programmes have been designed for teachers who had not received training in this field.

Yet, while most countries in the region are transitioning from the medical to the social model of support to all learners, in which needs are addressed predominantly in mainstream schools, the rate of change is slow. The number of special schools is falling but the number of mainstream schools providing high-quality support to children with special education needs is not growing at the same rate. The role of teacher assistants is becoming increasingly important but is not always properly defined in national legislation or in practice. Many changes are happening on paper, while deep-held beliefs and actual practices remain little altered.

Systems in the region also need to address other types of exclusion

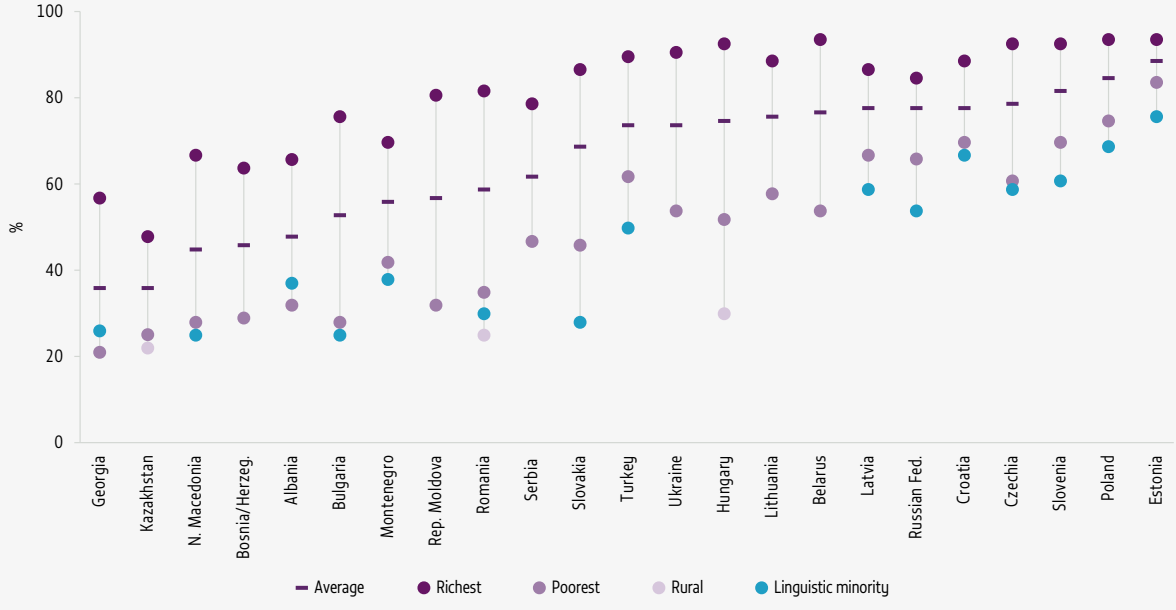
Education system responses to the needs of children with disabilities is just one of several signs of government commitment to inclusion. Many countries in the region participate in large-scale cross-national learning assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This offers another viewpoint on the broader challenge of inclusion. Among 15-year-old students in 23 countries in the region, 71% achieved minimum proficiency in reading, on average, in PISA 2018. However, the average was 57% for students in the bottom 20% of a socio-economic status index (defined in terms of home belongings, parental education and occupation), compared with 84% for the top 20%. In Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova, the gap was almost 50 percentage points. In some countries, particular disadvantaged groups did even worse than the bottom 20%: in the Russian Federation and Turkey, those who did not speak the language of the test at home averaged 12 percentage points less than those who did, and in Slovakia the gap was 18 percentage points. In Hungary and Romania, fewer than 3 in 10 students living in rural areas achieved the minimum level (**Figure 1.3**).

This analysis, moreover, does not include the entire population of 15-year-olds and underestimates the extent of inequality in learning. In their attempt to be effective and efficient, standardized learning assessments contain the seeds of exclusion. First and foremost, PISA excludes those who left school before age 15 or did not manage to reach at least grade 7 by that age. Its sample does not include remote and special schools. It excludes students with an intellectual disability or a moderate to severe physical disability that would not allow them to perform in the testing environment, along with those with limited proficiency in the language of the test. Other exclusions

FIGURE 1.3:

There are wide disparities in learning outcomes in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

Percentage of 15-year-old students who have achieved minimum proficiency in reading, by socio-economic status, location and language spoken at home, 2018



Source: World Inequality Database on Education, based on 2018 PISA data.

were agreed with participating countries. Overall, 14% of 15-year-olds in the 23 countries, mostly from disadvantaged groups, were excluded. In Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the share reached about 25%. Only in the Czech Republic, the Republic of Moldova and Slovenia were less than 5% excluded.

An education of good quality should not just deliver academic success; the right to be in good physical and mental health, happy and connected with others is as important as the right to learn. Alongside family, schools are a key environment for development of children's well-being. A positive classroom atmosphere, where teachers recognize and support students' effort, can have a positive effect (Huebner et al., 2004). A sense of belonging to the school and the peer group is vital, especially for vulnerable children at greater risk of exclusion. Social diversity in schools is necessary for children to interact with peers from different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and to strengthen social cohesion. Yet schools are sometimes a place where differing perspectives on society clash.

A discussion of exclusion thus needs to address the barriers that a broader range of the population faces. **Poverty** is the most important. It is estimated that 9% of people in eastern and south-eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia live on less than US$5.50 per day, but poverty rates are around 40% in countries including Armenia, Georgia and Tajikistan, ranging up to 61% in Kyrgyzstan. The economic fallout from COVID-19 is bound to increase adversity: Poverty rates are expected to rise by six percentage points in Albania and North Macedonia (World Bank, 2020). Even before the recession, children in poor families were more vulnerable to the pandemic's education repercussions as they were less likely to have access to distance learning, being disadvantaged in terms of internet connection, device ownership, home support and living conditions. And children are more vulnerable to start with: in Romania and Turkey, they are over 1.5 times more likely to be poor than adults (UNICEF, 2017).

Most, though not all, countries have laws to protect the education and other rights of **ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities** (Rechel, 2010). The laws provide, among other things, for the home language to be used for instruction in schools. Some minorities enjoyed this right even before 1989, but others are still denied it. Ethnic tensions in several countries have politicized the right to education in the home language, which in turn reinforces segregation or self-segregation rather than promoting social cohesion. Further suspicion and tensions arise when curricula make minorities invisible or stereotype them.

Ethnic and religious tensions often resulted in **conflict** over the past 30 years. Wars in the former Yugoslavia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, the south and north Caucasus, and Tajikistan devastated education systems and displaced millions internally or over borders. The Syrian crisis led to the world's largest wave of refugees; most were hosted by Turkey, but people from Syria and other countries traversing south-eastern and Central Europe sent ripples across most education systems. Governments in the region have been coming to grips with the challenge of including in public education systems displaced children who face trauma, loss and fear; discrimination and stigmatization; weak health; poverty; risk of exploitation and abuse; and restricted access due to barriers such as language of instruction and certification of learning (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). On the other hand, a much lower share of the population than in western Europe has an immigrant background, as the region has been a source rather than a destination of migrants.

The **Roma** remain by far the most vulnerable community in the region. They have limited access to education. What education they do receive tends to be of low quality, often in segregated settings, with inadequate support and little if any use of their language or recognition of their history in textbooks. Roma education has drawn attention and concrete steps have been taken to improve Roma learners' situation, commonly by using teacher assistants (Council of Europe, 2017; Óhidy and Forray, 2019; UNICEF, 2011). Countries with significant Roma populations have some of the world's most segregated education systems, comparable with those in Latin America (see **Chapter 3**).

Children living in **remote** areas often have limited access to appropriate education services. In some cases, children of nomadic families were historically forced to leave their families at an early age and go to boarding schools (Bloch, 2004), although sometimes the decision to go to such schools was voluntary. Mongolia established a well-functioning boarding school system with a tradition for child-friendliness. However, it was poorly maintained after 1989 and lost many features (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2005). Despite increased migration to urban areas, 35,000 children remained in dormitories in 2016/17, of which 72% were herder children. Some dormitories have poor heating, water and sanitation (Batkhuyag and Dondogdulam, 2018), and communication between parents and teachers can be challenging (Sukhbaatar and Tarkó, 2020).

Youth deprived of liberty make up a small but vulnerable population. Many countries have introduced independent youth justice systems (Dünkel, 2018), and international

commitments require them to use detention as a last resort, the preference being such alternative measures as probation and community service (Goldson, 2018). But over 6,000 prisoners in the region (about 0.5% of the total) are under 18 (World Prison Brief, 2020) and their education opportunities can be limited. Romania, where 1.1% of prisoners are juveniles, has two detention centres and two education centres for minors (Andreescu, 2018). Both have schools providing primary education on the premises, but provision of secondary education varies (APADOR-CH, 2014). In Turkey, 1.2% of prisoners are juveniles, accounting for 53% of the region's total. Many are in open prisons where they can continue their education: 1,200 in open schools, offering adult education curriculum, and 800 in public education centres (Turkey Permanent Mission to the UN, 2015). But there are limits to education opportunities for youths in closed prisons (McKinney and Salins, 2013).

The region enjoys **gender** parity in secondary education enrolment, a legacy of the progress made before 1989. Among the 26 countries with UNESCO Institute for Statistics data, the widest disparity is found in Turkey, where 95 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys, and Croatia, with 95 boys enrolled for every 100 girls. However, household surveys suggest greater disparity at the expense of girls in Tajikistan and of boys in Mongolia. Gender and education has become a contested topic in recent years. In Hungary, Poland and Romania, curricula do not recognize the principle of gender equality, textbooks feature gender stereotypes and pressure groups campaign in support of the status quo, seeing threats to family and traditional values. Education ministries have acquiesced to such pressure (Juhász and Pap, 2018). While 85% of Hungarians believe men and women should have the same rights, public opinion in the region overall is decidedly more equivocal: Only 69% in Poland, 62% in Lithuania, 57% in Ukraine and 54% in the Russian Federation hold similar views (Wike et al., 2019). The Caucasus and some countries in south-eastern Europe have been blighted by female infanticide, the most extreme form of gender bias (Michael et al., 2013; UNFPA, 2015).

Another dimension of this debate in education is related to **sexual orientation and gender identity**. In the region, 47.5% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and intersex youth reported having been 'ridiculed, teased, insulted or threatened at school', primarily by their peers; about 23% reported feeling rarely or never safe at school (Richard and MAG Jeunes LGBT, 2018, p. 11). Yet several countries take no measures to ensure the safety of affected students and a learning environment that embraces diversity. In the Russian Federation, the authorities invoke 'spiritual and moral values' and 'historic and national-culture traditions' to oppose introduction of comprehensive sexuality education (Human Rights Watch, 2018), reflecting public opinion. In all countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, except the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a majority opposes same-sex marriage. Less than 5% support it in Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Fully embracing the concept of inclusion in education, when it runs against deeply held and divisive views on issues such as disability, ethnicity, religion or sexuality, requires teachers to become agents of change and overcome social biases and prejudices. In turn, this necessitates considerable autonomy in development of pedagogical practice in learners' best interest. Autonomy is 'intertwined with other aspects such as professional judgement, trust and ethics' (Sachs, 2001). It requires resilience and an ability to acknowledge mistakes as opportunities for development. This is often possible only if teachers in a school act as a team. Teacher collaboration is one of the most reliable tools for effective education (Hattie, 2012).

Yet teachers' professional identity has often been built on another basis, especially in the case of those not trained as specialist educators. Pre-service teacher education curricula are often not adjusted to match policy change, and professional development opportunities may be infrequent and not responsive to teacher demand. The trend towards greater teacher autonomy is quite recent in the region and policy documents mention it relatively rarely (Eurydice, 2008). Teachers seldom have the confidence to act autonomously in classroom management. Heavily overloaded curricula also limit their autonomy and opportunities for teaching the whole class. Teachers seldom mention peers as partners or a source of knowledge transfer. For teachers to be resilient agents of change for inclusion and social justice, countries need to rethink the concept of teaching as an individualistic activity.

WHY DOES INCLUSION IN EDUCATION MATTER?

Careful planning and provision of inclusive education can deliver improvement in academic achievement, social and emotional development, self-esteem and peer acceptance. Including diverse students in mainstream classrooms and schools can prevent stigma, stereotyping, discrimination and alienation. Ensuring that classrooms and schools are well resourced and well supported implies costs: to adapt curricula, train teachers, develop adequate and relevant teaching and learning materials and make education accessible. There is increasing evidence (European Agency, 2018) suggesting a link between provision of high-quality inclusive education and longer-term social inclusion, in

particular as concerns education, employment and living in the community. Given this potential, it is crucial to consider inclusion a cross-cutting issue necessitating cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approaches.

There are potential efficiency savings from eliminating parallel structures and using resources more effectively in a single, inclusive mainstream system. As few systems come close to the ideal, reliable estimates of the full cost are scarce. An economic cost–benefit analysis is therefore difficult, not least because the benefits are hard to quantify and extend over generations. An economic justification for inclusive education, while valuable for planning, is not sufficient. It has been argued that debating the benefits of inclusive education is equivalent to debating the benefits of abolishing slavery (Bilken, 1985) or apartheid (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997). Inclusion is a moral imperative and a condition for achieving all the SDGs, particularly sustainable, equitable and inclusive societies. It is an expression of justice, not of charity, whatever the differences, biological or otherwise, and however they may be described. Thinking about the education of students with special needs should be tantamount to thinking about what all students may need. All students require teaching methods and support mechanisms that help them succeed and belong.

Inclusive education promotes inclusive societies, where people can live together and diversity is celebrated. It is a prerequisite for education in and for democracies based on fairness, justice and equity (Slee, 2020). It provides a systematic framework for identifying and dismantling barriers for vulnerable populations according to the principle 'every learner matters and matters equally' (UNESCO, 2017, p. 12). It counteracts education system tendencies that allow exceptions and exclusions. Evaluating schools along a single dimension, such as reading and mathematics scores, to determine resource allocation risks forcing schools to be selective or to label students likely to perform below average.

GUIDE TO THE REPORT

This regional report recognizes the variety of contexts and challenges that countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia must address in their efforts towards inclusive education. It considers the groups at risk of being excluded from education and the barriers facing individual learners, especially when multiple characteristics intersect. It also takes into account the fact that exclusion may be physical, social (in interpersonal and group relations), psychological or systemic (since systems may exclude, for instance, disadvantaged groups through regulations). Key elements in addressing or exacerbating the challenges and in fostering inclusion of learners at the local and system levels include laws and policies; data collection systems; governance and finance; curricula and textbooks; teachers; schools; and communities. Accordingly, this report has seven main chapters.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 analyses the role of legal tools in supporting the development of inclusive education. Laws often express the national interpretation of international conventions, which have formulated the commitment to inclusion, but also the adaptation of these concepts to reflect the complexities and barriers specific to their contexts. The chapter also addresses vague or contradictory laws and policies that can hinder inclusion and universal access to the different levels of education.

Chapter 3 assesses challenges in collecting data on and for inclusion in education. It reviews experiences of defining vulnerable groups, including learners with disabilities, and challenges of identification and labelling. It then considers aspects such as segregation, administrative data and qualitative measures of inclusion.

Chapter 4 addresses governance and finance. Education ministries must be at the heart of inclusion efforts, but to fully achieve their aims, they need to work with ministries and agencies in other sectors, as well as subnational education authorities and NGOs. Success in inclusive education rests on good governance of all these complex partnerships but also on equity-oriented funding.

Chapter 5 discusses the politically complicated issue of how curricula and learning materials are adapted to the principles of inclusive education. It looks at the stakeholders involved in curriculum and textbook development and how groups at risk of exclusion are neglected, under-represented or misrepresented. Assessment mechanisms may not fulfil their formative role, leading to exclusion.

Chapter 6 looks at ways teachers can support the case for inclusion, considers their needs, and examines how well governments help them prepare to meet the inclusion challenge. It also considers education support personnel, examining the extent to which they are available and how they relate to teachers in ensuring inclusive practice.

Chapter 7 examines school-level factors. Head teachers must be prepared to promote a whole-school approach based on an inclusive ethos as a prerequisite for inclusion. They need to link their school to a broader system of specialist support. Physical accessibility and universal design principles increase functionality and are adaptable to everyone's needs.

Chapter 8 examines communities' crucial role in achieving inclusive education and protecting students from discriminatory attitudes, which affect school climate as well as students' safety, well-being and learning. Parents of vulnerable children, like other parents, may support more inclusive education but also be apprehensive about its implementation. Grassroots and civil society organizations have promoted inclusion through education service provision, advocacy and scrutiny of government actions.

Chapter 9 looks at all the main inclusion challenges through the lens of COVID-19. The pandemic has forced education ministries to respond under extremely challenging circumstances, which has led to considerable reliance on distance learning solutions. This chapter considers whether such solutions have respected the principle of 'doing no harm' to marginalized populations that may have been left out. Governments need to ensure not only the continuation of education, helping those disadvantaged catch up, but also support students' well-being.

Finally, Chapter 10 offers a conclusion and recommendations.

A note on methodology

This regional report draws on analysis of primary data collected in 30 education systems of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia: those of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo,[1] Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Although Turkmenistan is also in the region, it was not possible to include a description of its education system.

Drawing on the approach of the 2020 *Global Education Monitoring Report* on inclusion and education and the expertise of two partner organizations, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) and the Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC), a template for data collection was developed to explore national policies and practices on inclusion and education in the seven areas covered by the report. Piloted in Mongolia, Poland and Turkey, the template was then completed by national experts and government representatives from December 2019 to March 2020. Representative examples by geography, demography and policy approaches were identified and explored in more depth. EASNIE country or affiliated local representatives and NEPC-affiliated local organizations or individual experts reviewed and validated the information.

A summary of evidence from the 30 education systems is available in an annex. Full descriptions of all education systems are available on the regional report website and are the key reference for most examples used. They expand considerably, and add to, the country profiles that originally informed the 2020 *Global Education Monitoring Report*, which are available at the Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER) website.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic during the development of this regional report, data coverage was extended to include information on education system responses. A survey by NEPC in selected countries was complemented by desk-based research to inform Chapter 9.

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Children with learning difficulties fully included into a regular kindergarten in Belarus.

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CHAPTER

2

Laws and policies

KEY MESSAGES

International conventions have been widely adopted but are not always integrated in national laws to ensure that all learners' rights, both to education and within education, are fulfilled.

- The United Nations conventions on the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have been adopted in the region and influenced laws and policies promoting a rights-based approach to inclusive education, for instance in Estonia and Ukraine. Azerbaijan is moving from a needs-based, medical model to rights-based language, highlighting learners' education needs and personal development.
- Despite the strong message of General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – that inclusive education is not compatible with sustaining both mainstream and special systems – separate provision, based not only on disability but also on ethnicity and language, persists throughout the region. The learners with the most complex disabilities are educated in institutions, in special schools or at home.

Countries are beginning to develop laws and policies for inclusive education that extend beyond special education needs and disability to cover multiple marginalized groups.

- Of the 30 education systems reviewed in the region:
  - 27 have a definition of special education needs in laws or other documents; of those, 19 link the definition primarily with disability and 12 include a variety of other potentially disadvantaged learners, although these tend to be mainly gifted learners.
  - 23 have a definition of inclusion in documents; of those, 20 focus on marginalized groups beyond learners with special education needs or disabilities.
  - 27 guarantee the education rights of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.
  - 27 have some form of gender equality law in place.
- Anti-discrimination laws and plans to counter bullying against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students are lacking. Just 7 of 23 countries have policies or action plans explicitly addressing and prohibiting school bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and/or variations in sex characteristics.

A more strategic approach is needed to achieve more coherent and sustainable inclusive education policy development that moves from compensatory towards preventive measures.

- Policy must be supported by a strategy or plan that clearly sets out intentions and the actions and resources required to achieve them. Strategies or action plans for inclusive education exist in 21 of the 30 education systems reviewed in the region.
- Examples include the 2019–23 Kyrgyz concepts and programmes for development of inclusive education and the Republic of Moldova's 2011–20 inclusive education development programme. In Tajikistan, the inclusive education strategy adopts a broad understanding addressing disability, ethnicity, migration and gender.

Laws and policies often remain disconnected from school and classroom practice realities.

- Actions to follow up on laws, policies and plans depend on national context, political will to include disadvantaged groups, action to overcome resistance to new forms of education provision, development of positive attitudes, and capacity in terms of resourcing, coordination and workforce development. Wide stakeholder involvement is key to ensuring ownership and shared understanding of inclusive education principles.
- Planning is often weak and fails to put learners at the centre. In Turkey, despite a full legislative framework for inclusion, implementation is challenged by negative attitudes, deficient physical infrastructure and teachers' lack of knowledge and skills.

Laws and policies set the framework for achieving inclusion in education. At the international level, binding legal instruments and non-binding declarations, led especially by the United Nations (UN) but also by regional organizations, have expressed the international community's aspirations. They have strongly influenced the national legislative and policy actions on which progress towards inclusion hinges.

Despite the good intentions enshrined in many laws and policies on inclusive education, governments often do not take the follow-up actions necessary to ensure implementation. Barriers remain high for access, progression and learning, and they disproportionately affect more disadvantaged populations. Inside education systems, these populations face discrimination, rejection and reluctance to have their needs accommodated. Exclusion is most often seen in the segregation of learners with different needs into separate classrooms and schools.

This chapter discusses how international instruments and declarations have been adopted in the region and how national definitions, legislation and policy frameworks on inclusive education vary among countries. The analysis is based largely on the results of a systematic mapping that captures how every country in the region approaches inclusion in education through its laws and policies.

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND DECLARATIONS HELP SHIFT INCLUSION TOWARDS A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

International instruments and declarations introduced in the past 60 years have supported education as a right of children, adolescents and youth (especially members of disadvantaged groups) and as a means for individuals and society to attain other basic rights and freedoms.

A variety of instruments and declarations have shaped the debate

While the right to education was first expressed in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it was the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education that specifically obliged countries to address explicit and implicit barriers in education. It was ratified by 25 of the 30 education systems in Central and

Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It defined discrimination as 'any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth', results in individuals being treated unequally in education (Article 1).

The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which all countries in the region signed, included two articles on the right to education. In addition, a separate article referred to education for children with disabilities, recognizing the 'special needs of a disabled child' and calling on 'assistance ... provided free of charge' and 'designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education ... in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development' (Article 23) (United Nations, 1989). Turkey registered reservations on articles 17, 29 and 30 of the CRC, affecting access to information; minority groups' right to share culture, language and religion; and education's role in developing mind, body and talents and respect for others' rights.

The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All, adopted in Jomtien, Thailand, called on countries to commit actively 'to removing educational disparities'. 'Underserved groups: the poor; street and working children; rural and remote populations; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous peoples; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; refugees; those displaced by war; and people under occupation, should not suffer any discrimination in access to learning opportunities' (Article 3, §4). People with disabilities were not included in the list but were mentioned where the declaration called for steps to 'provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system' (Article 3, §5). The declaration thus distinguished between disabled persons and the underserved (UNESCO, 1990).

The Statement and Framework for Action of the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, further established the principle that 'schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions' (Framework, p. 6) and urged states to 'adopt as a matter of law or policy inclusive education' (Statement, p. ix) . It recognized the need for schools to 'include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs' (Preface, p. iii) and helped shift the focus from learner to system, recognizing that schools would need to be restructured (UNESCO and Spain Ministry of Education and Science, 1994). The 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, acknowledged that inclusive education emerged 'in response to a growing consensus that all children have the right to a common education in their locality regardless of their background, attainment or disability' (UNESCO, 2000, p. 18).

> "The 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education was ratified by 25 of the 30 countries in the region"

In 2006, the right to inclusive education was established in the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which has been ratified by 181 countries and signed by 9 others, including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; 8 have declined to sign. Article 24 specified that 'States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels' aimed at the 'full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity' and the development by people with disabilities 'of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential' (United Nations, 2006).

Article 24 was hotly debated, for instance on questions related to the 'best interest' of the child, scope and coverage and where education should take place (UNDESA, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d). During negotiations in final drafting, the text shifted from children with disabilities' right to education (maintained until the sixth session) to their right to inclusive education. However, the issue of placement, or where education should take place, was not settled, and the final text does not include an obligation to educate children with disabilities in mainstream schools (Kanter, 2019).

Such tensions led the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in September 2016, to formulate General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016). It acknowledged the persistent discrimination against people with disabilities, which denies many the right to education; a lack of awareness about barriers that impede fulfilment of the right to education and a lack of knowledge about inclusive education, its potential and its implications; and the need for clarification and definition of inclusive education and strategies for implementation (Hunt, 2020). It also stated that the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the general education system should be prohibited, including through any legislative or regulatory provisions that limit their inclusion on the basis of their impairment or the degree of that impairment or 'by alleging a disproportionate and undue burden to evade the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation' (Section 2, §18).

The view of inclusion as a dimension of education of good quality for all learners was also taken in the Incheon Declaration of the World Education Forum 2015, which confirmed the international community's support of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on education and its call to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' by 2030. The declaration stated:

> 'Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. No education target should be considered met unless met by all. We therefore commit to making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, to ensure that no one is left behind' (Article 7).

This approach, which recognized that mechanisms of exclusion were common, regardless of background, ability or identity, underpinned the use of the term 'inclusive' in the formulation of SDG 4.

European Union policies have influenced many countries in the region

While the responsibility for education and training systems lies with individual countries, the European Union (EU) has played a key role supporting not only member states but also candidates and potential members as well as, to some extent, its eastern neighbours in developing inclusive education capacity through financial support and policy cooperation.

In the case of EU member states, the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights established good-quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning as a right, a priority and a shared endeavour, while respecting the diversity of education traditions (European Commission, 2020a). The principles of an equitable, high-quality education for all have been reinforced through communications and recommendations covering support for teachers and school leaders and more effective and efficient governance, as well as action plans targeting specific groups, such as migrants and those of migrant background (European Commission, 2020b).

The EU open method of coordination, a non-binding policy dialogue process based on benchmarking and peer learning, which applies in a range of policy areas, was used in education through the Education and Training 2020 framework. An annual European Education and Training Monitor followed progress towards quantitative targets for the European Union as a whole and in agreement with individual member states, in line with SDG 4, and was a basis for identifying challenges. This process is to be strengthened through the establishment of a European Education Area by 2025.

The role of education in EU external policy is growing through cooperation in programmes such as Erasmus+ and regional dialogue on education and training. The Western Balkan countries, in particular, benefited from increased funding in 2019 and 2020.

Realization of the right to inclusive education in the region varies by country

Countries in the region have fulfilled the right to education, as enshrined in international instruments and declarations, in their constitutions, laws, policies and programmes in a variety of ways. Some, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, have focused narrowly on the right to education while others refer to inclusive education as an integral part of this right (e.g. Bulgaria) or stress equal access to an inclusive system of education for all (e.g. Georgia). Kazakhstan refers to children's right to attend school at their place of residence and to receive assistance with psychological, medical and education issues.

The CRC is being integrated in national documents. Albania's national agenda on child rights, a multidisciplinary framework, aims to have all national and local action reflect the convention's provisions. Mongolia's 2017–21 national programme supporting children's development and participation sets out to create a child-friendly environment where all children develop their talents and skills, where children are listened to and respected, and where they can participate in policy development, implementation and evaluation. In Romania, the 2014–20 National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights focuses on the most disadvantaged children.

> "The 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights establishes good-quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning as a right, a priority and a shared endeavour, while respecting the diversity of education traditions"

The CRPD has had a distinct influence, as the case of Ukraine attests (**Box 2.1**). In total, 29 of the 30 education systems reviewed include rights of people with disabilities in their constitution and/or in laws on education, non-discrimination, social protection and social inclusion. In Bulgaria, a 2015 action plan on CRPD implementation and the promotion of inclusive education was expected to have an impact on legislation. Lithuania, Romania and Serbia focus on non-discrimination, tackling segregation in particular. Other countries, including Latvia, the Republic of Moldova and Slovenia, focus on rights within education, e.g. the right to supports such as sign language interpreters.

Despite the strong message of General Comment No. 4 that Article 24 is not compatible with sustaining both mainstream and special or segregated systems, tensions remain. In striving to provide parental choice, ministries may be reluctant to close special schools, reflecting a view that separate provision is not of inferior quality.

The Azerbaijan State Programme on Inclusive Education promotes inclusive education in name, but in practice supports 'integration' of people with disabilities and still advocates special education in the delivery of vocational training for learners with disabilities. Belarus intends amendments to its Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities to include the concepts of reasonable accommodation and universal design, together with a revised approach to disability that moves away from the medical model, which relies on medical diagnoses to categorize students and determine their access to special support and services.

Kyrgyzstan's law on rights and guarantees for people with disabilities provides an interdisciplinary approach to education of children with disabilities, in collaboration with social protection and health care services. However, it includes the possibility of studying in special schools or at home. In Mongolia, there is a lack of coherence in the use of terminology on special education between the Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Law on Primary and Secondary Education.

> "In total, 29 of the 30 education systems reviewed include rights of people with disabilities in their constitution and/or in laws on education, non-discrimination, social protection and social inclusion"

Romania's law on protection and promotion of rights of people with disabilities regulates access to all forms of education for this group and the right to education support. Strategies and programmes relating to the CRPD have also been developed in Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Kosovo,[1] Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia and Ukraine, and some include costed action plans.

A move towards a rights-based approach considers both the right to education and rights within it (for example, the right to reasonable accommodation and necessary support measures), which require equitable allocation of resources, experience and expertise to increase all schools' capacity to respond to learner diversity.

BOX 2.1:

The CRPD has prompted Ukraine to move to a rights-based approach to inclusion

Since Ukraine ratified the CRPD in 2009, it has made many changes to move on from a long tradition of special pedagogy and special schools, which was based on the medical model of disability. The move towards a rights-based approach affects all system levels: legislation, policy, and structures and processes, such as teacher education. It involves a focus on children's strengths and interests rather than their disabilities.

Former psychological-medical-pedagogical centres have been transformed into Inclusive Resource Centres (IRCs) that assess and support inclusive schools and preschools methodologically, advise parents and promote inclusion in local communities. To date, 545 IRCs have been established.

In 2018, regional In-service Teacher Training Institutes set up resource centres to support IRCs. Ukraine made a further step towards understanding disability based on the biopsychosocial model, which is the core of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.

Recognizing the need to support human resources and ensure understanding of the new concept, the Ministry of Education and Science organized training for representatives of regional resource centres with support from UNICEF and the International Renaissance Foundation. A manual for IRCs was also developed and published with UNICEF support. In November 2019, the ministry developed a framework training programme for IRC specialists, which is offered by the regional In-service Teacher Training Institutes.

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

THE REGION IS BROADENING ITS DEFINITION OF INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

Globally, 68% of countries have a definition of inclusive education, but only 57% of those definitions cover multiple marginalized groups. To make progress regarding legislation and policies for inclusive education, leaders and decision makers must develop and communicate a clear vision and concept of inclusion. Among the 30 education systems reviewed in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, 15 refer in their general education laws to the rights of multiple groups, 7 to disability and special education needs and 6 to the right to support, protect and use minority languages or prohibit segregation.

In many countries in the region, such conceptualization has grown out of discussions on segregated provision, integration and mainstreaming. The relationship between inclusive and special education is still widely debated. In all, 22 countries refer to special education in specific laws and/or in other education laws, while 9 refer to integration. Of the 15 mentioning inclusion, 9 link it to disability and special education needs (**Figure 2.1**). Such overlap of laws hinders a shared understanding of inclusive education and can obstruct implementation.

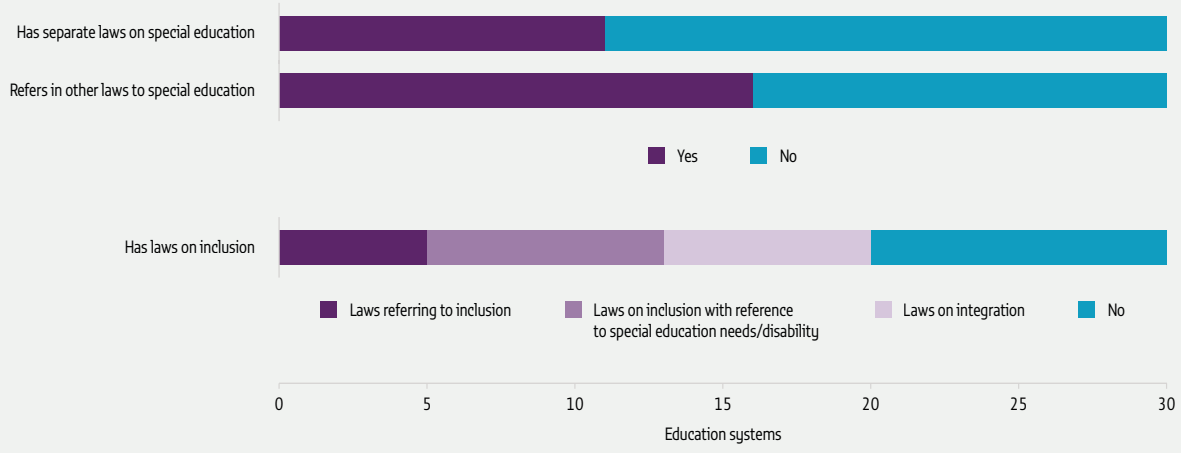
> “The relationship between inclusive and special education is still widely debated in the region”

Despite a growing trend towards inclusion, countries rely on various combinations of special education, integrated provision and inclusive settings to educate children and youth with disabilities.

Some countries, including Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, continue to adhere to the medical model, relying on diagnosis and categorical descriptions of disability to determine eligibility for special education. This can lead to arbitrary decisions.

Estonia has recognized this challenge and is attempting to address it (**Box 2.2**). Azerbaijan is trying to move on from a concern about placement and to distinguish between integration and inclusion. In Mongolia, a lack of understanding exists regarding the difference between inclusive education and special education as a system of support for regular education. Slovenia is moving from a deficit medical model to a pedagogical discourse.

FIGURE 2.1:
Laws covering inclusion in education for multiple groups are relatively uncommon
Number of education systems with laws on (a) special education and (b) inclusion, by focus



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Definitions of key terms are further proof of ongoing debates. In the region, 27 education systems have a definition of special education needs in laws or other formal documents. Of those, 19 link this definition primarily with disability, and only 12 include a variety of other potentially disadvantaged learners. The latter tend to be primarily gifted learners, although learners experiencing social disadvantage are also mentioned.

As education systems strive to become more inclusive of all learners, they need to shift the terminology from needs to rights. In Armenia, terms such as 'diagnosis' are used in education settings instead of 'assessment'. In Azerbaijan, terms highlighting children's education needs have replaced medical terms in laws on children's rights, education and social protection of children with disabilities. Going a step further, Mongolia and Ukraine have signalled their intention to move from a needs-based medical model to a rights-based approach.

To some extent this shift is reflected in formal definitions of inclusion in national documents: 20 of the 23 education systems with such a definition focus on multiple marginalized groups, going beyond learners with special education needs and/or disability. Lithuania, Poland and Uzbekistan are working to develop a definition that is likely to be included in national law, while Slovakia is working to revise its definition, taking a broader approach (**Figure 2.2**).

BOX 2.2:

Estonia has introduced reforms to achieve inclusive education

The Constitution of Estonia states that everyone has the right to education. The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, which entered into force in 2010, made provision of inclusive education an overarching principle of Estonian education. According to the law, high-quality general education must follow the principles of inclusive education and be equally accessible to all people, regardless of their social and economic background, nationality, gender, place of residence or special education needs.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Research commissioned a study of how the principles of inclusive education had been implemented. It showed that implementation had been hindered by attitudes and by the lack of knowledge and flexible resources for support services. Categorization based on medical diagnoses and separate special classes were counter to inclusive education principles. Support services were not always available to those in need. Recommendations included increased funding and flexibility, support from external advisory teams and improvement to the Estonian Education Information System (Räis et al., 2016).

A 2018 amendment to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act has created opportunities for schools to organize learning based on individual needs and to put support systems in place. There have been four key changes (Estonia Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). First, the education budget increased significantly. Teacher salaries rose and financial support to schools now covers enhanced and special support for students and employment of support specialists. In 2017, 'less than half of all schools had a speech therapist and a social pedagogy therapist' and 'less than a third had a psychologist or special education teacher' (European Commission, 2018; p.6), while too few professionals graduate from the respective programmes (European Commission, 2019a).

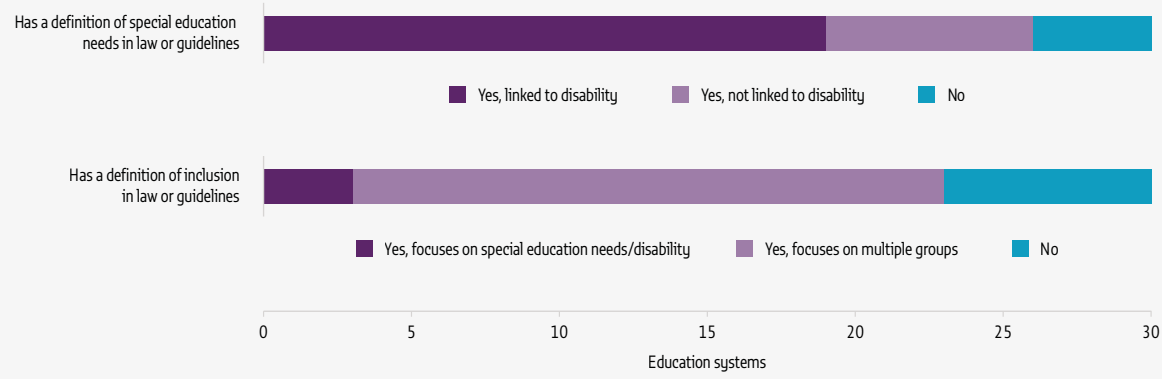
Second, more flexible opportunities to organize learning for each student were created. The rigid distribution of special classes and occupancy limits were abolished. Students needing support can study in a regular class, take part-time individual study or study in a special class or school.

Third, procedures for organizing learning and support services were rearranged. Recommendations for these areas are provided by external advisory teams, available in each county at Pathfinder Centres, which offer a range of services from career counselling to special education guidance.

Finally, support specialists' remuneration was increased. Operating expenses, paid from the state budget, can be used to cover labour costs for support specialists as long as they are guaranteed the equivalent of the minimum teacher salary. In addition, like teachers, support specialists working in a school for the first time can apply for a beginner's allowance. Since 2017, the specialists' average gross salary has increased by more than 30% and their number by 32%.

Remaining challenges include development of teacher and school leader skills, knowledge and attitudes; availability of support services; development of study materials for learners with disabilities and special education needs; and expansion of the learner-centred approach, particularly during transitions between levels or types of education.

FIGURE 2.2:
Two-thirds of education systems in the region have a definition of inclusion that focuses on multiple groups
Number of education systems with definitions of (a) special education needs and (b) inclusion, by focus



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

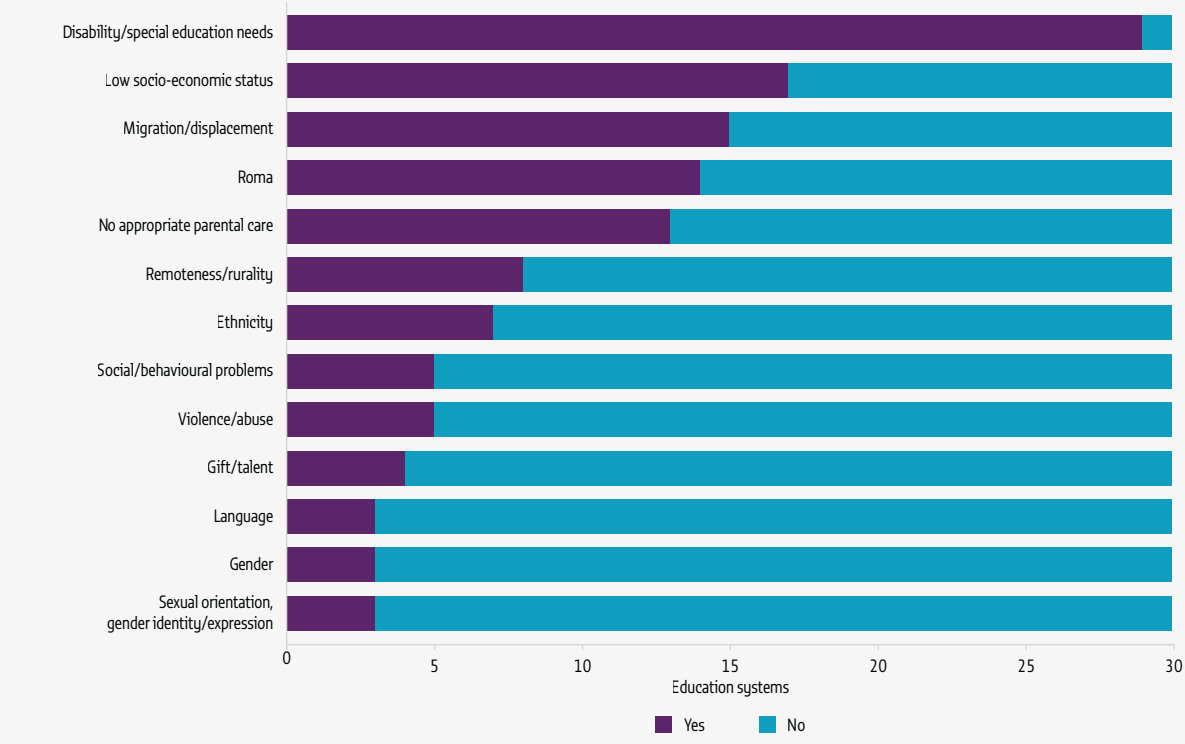
> As education systems strive to become more inclusive of all learners, they need to shift the terminology from needs to rights

However, some countries, including Belarus and Croatia, use broad definitions of inclusion but continue to focus primarily on special education needs and disability. Countries say the lack of a clear definition of inclusive education leads to inconsistent legislation and disconnected policy implementation. Policy change requires a shared understanding of key ideas and concepts associated with inclusive education. Otherwise new terms may replace old ones with little or no change in the thinking behind the policy or practice (European Agency, 2013, 2015). In some cases, such as those of Albania and Turkey, countries use a definition originating in project work, usually led by non-government or international organizations, without fully understanding the concepts.

The move to define inclusive education not just in terms of disability but as high-quality education provision for all learners is supported by documents recognizing multiple groups' education rights. Almost all education systems in the region link disability and special education needs to vulnerability in national laws and plans for education. But social protection, child rights, housing and other characteristics are also receiving attention (**Figure 2.3**).

At least 27 countries and territories guarantee the education rights of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities through laws on education in minority languages; freedom of choice regarding religion and belief; the need to foster ethnic identity, history and culture in education; and prohibition of segregation by ethnic group. Segregation is explicitly considered a form of discrimination, as recommended by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the independent human rights monitoring body of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe Commissioner on Human Rights, 2017). Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Slovakia have focused on providing access to mainstream education and reducing segregation. For instance, North Macedonia's 2019 law on primary education explicitly prohibits discrimination, encourages interethnic integration and envisages education mediators for Roma children from socially vulnerable families.

FIGURE 2.3:
Vulnerability is predominantly associated with disability in national documents
Number of education systems identifying various characteristics as associated with vulnerability in their laws and plans



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Among the 30 education systems reviewed, 27 have some form of gender equality law in place. Others refer to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, or to non-discrimination, in other legislation.

References to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, a controversial issue in the region, are less common. In fact, some countries have experienced a backlash against the basic right to non-discrimination with respect to these characteristics (Leez and Janta, 2020) (**Box 2.3**).

BOX 2.3:

Acceptance of diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity and expression remains a challenge

Globally, 42% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and intersex (LGBTI) youth reported having been 'ridiculed, teased, insulted or threatened at school' (Richard and MAG Jeunes LGBT, 2018, p. 11) because of their sexual orientation and gender identity status, primarily by their peers. Legislation can reinforce discriminatory behaviour or make it impossible to address issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation in education. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts (Mendos, 2019).

In 2016, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly called on member countries to promote respect and inclusion in this area and disseminate objective information (Council of Europe, 2016). As of 2018, 14 of 23 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus had an anti-discrimination law addressing at least one of three characteristics: sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and variations in sex characteristics. But just 7 of the 23 countries had policies or action plans explicitly addressing and prohibiting school bullying based on at least one of these characteristics (IGLYO, 2018) (**Figure 2.4**).

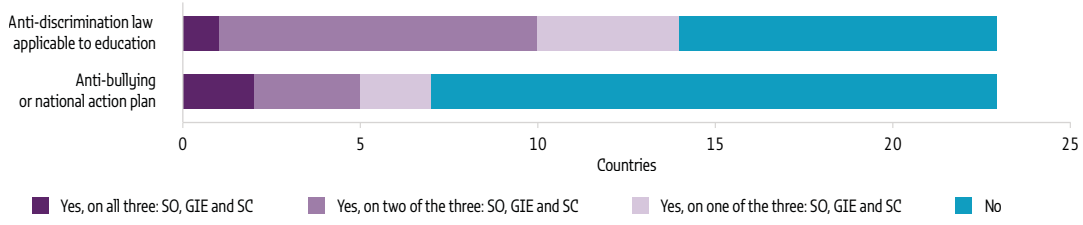
Nine countries have neither an anti-discrimination law nor an action plan. In the Russian Federation, a 2013 amendment to the child protection law was accompanied by guidelines specifying that positive portrayal of people with 'non-traditional sexual relations' could be punished by fines and administrative sanctions. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has argued that the amendment may stigmatize and discriminate LGBTI children and children from LGBTI families (UNESCO, 2016). In Turkey, an online survey of LGBT individuals found that 67% of respondents had experienced discrimination due to their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression at school and 52% had experienced negative comments or reactions at university (Göçmen and Yılmaz, 2017).

Even when countries move towards recognition of the rights of people with diverse gender identities, incoherent laws and policies persist. In Lithuania, while the 2017 Law on Equal Treatment obliged secondary and post-secondary education institutions to guarantee equal opportunity for all students regardless of sexual orientation, an article of the 2011 Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information prohibited dissemination of information on concepts of marriage and family values that differed from those in the Constitution and Civil Code (LGL, 2018).

FIGURE 2.4:

Most countries lack anti-bullying measures or national action plans for LGBTI inclusion in education

Number of countries with anti-discrimination laws and inclusion policies or action plans referring to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or variations in sex characteristics, 2018



Notes: The data refer to 23 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. SO: sexual orientation; GIE: gender identity and expression; SC: variations in sex characteristics.
Source: IGLYO (2018).

Just 7 of the 23 countries
in Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus had policies or action plans explicitly addressing and prohibiting **school bullying** based on at least one of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and variations in sex characteristics

Other vulnerable groups, mentioned less frequently, include young offenders and children of prisoners, institutionalized children, victims of substance abuse and addiction, victims of trafficking and exploitation, children living/working on the street, pregnant students/single parents without support, religious minorities, children whose parents work abroad, those caring for sick/disabled family members, learners who have experienced grade retention or have unrecognized needs, and children of mobile workers, agricultural workers and herders. Discrimination in learning may occur along multiple axes, which often overlap and interact with each other to influence inequity in complex ways (Leez and Janta, 2020). It is thus crucial for laws and policies associated with specific groups not to overlap or have unintended consequences that increase inequality.

THE RECORD ON ADOPTING INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS IN NATIONAL LEGISLATION IS MIXED

In line with their evolving definitions, countries in the region have been attempting to translate international commitments to rights and freedoms for all into national legislation. The rights-based approach, which focuses on children's best interests, helps avoid the fragmentation that can occur when separate laws attempt to address different groups' rights, especially since the characteristics that expose children to the risk of exclusion intersect.

In Bulgaria, the 2016 Preschool and School Education Act includes the following principle: 'equal access to high-quality education and inclusion of every child and every pupil; and equal treatment and non-discrimination in preschool and school education'. In North Macedonia, the 2019 Law on Primary Education notes that inclusive education entails 'a common vision and conviction that the state is under the obligation to provide education to all children'. The Republic of Moldova has established a framework for inclusive education with a clear funding structure, coordination, and accountability between central and local levels of administration.

While there is a trend towards referring to inclusive education in education laws or developing specific laws for this area, all countries in the region retain separate schools for certain groups. All countries have special schools (including boarding schools/institutions, hospital schools and rehabilitation centres) for learners with disabilities or special education needs.

Other separate schools are based on language and ethnicity. Twenty-two education systems have separate schools for linguistic minorities. North Macedonia's curriculum is taught in separate primary schools for

learners from the Albanian, Bosniak, Serbian and Turkish communities. Kazakhstan has schools for Russian, Tajik, Uighur and Uzbek ethnic and linguistic minorities. In Slovakia, learners from the Hungarian and Ukrainian minorities may attend schools and classes providing education in their language.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, displacement during and after the 1990s war in the former Yugoslavia homogenized several areas of the country by ethnicity. As part of efforts to encourage the return of refugees and internally displaced people in a fraught post-war environment, the Two Schools under One Roof policy was established to gather in a single building children of different ethnicities who had previously studied separately. This temporary solution was considered a first step towards full integration, but 56 schools still segregate children on the basis of ethnicity, offering distinct curricula on the same school premises (OSCE, 2018; Surk, 2018).

Although mother tongue schooling supports the rights-based approach, it can lead to segregation or self-segregation (Golubeva et al., 2009; Golubeva and Korbar, 2013), which can be exacerbated when the majority is not taught about the minority to enhance intercultural learning.

Other examples of separate schooling include schools for Roma (**Box 2.4**) and other ethnic minorities in the Czech Republic, Mongolia, Montenegro and Slovakia, and schools in prisons and 'colonies' for youth in Georgia, Hungary and the Russian Federation. Other countries with specialized schools for arts, sports, mathematics and foreign languages or separate facilities with specialized curricula for gifted and talented learners are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Mongolia, the Republic of Moldova and Romania.

Inconsistencies, noted earlier with regard to definitions, also occur in the development of laws. In Azerbaijan, the State Program on Inclusive Education has recommended that the education law be amended to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system. However, a separate law on special education and eligibility for it involves a psychological-medical-pedagogical commission.

In Serbia, the Law on the Foundation of the Education System stipulates that 'education must be provided for all children, students and adults equally, based on social justice and the principle of equal opportunity without discrimination. The education system must provide equal rights and access to education to all children, students and adults, without discrimination and separation of any kind'. Yet learners with special education needs can be enrolled in special schools upon the parents' request with a recommendation from an inter-sectoral commission involving medical as well as education personnel.

PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSION NEED TO BRIDGE LEGISLATION AND POLICY

As legislative frameworks take time to establish, policies tend to be issued ahead of legislation. But the relationship between international commitments and national policy and practice is not straightforward. Policies need to be supported by strategies or plans that set out intentions and the actions and resources required to achieve them. Plans must take a long-term view and not be affected by short-term political considerations. Small initiatives and pilot projects, especially when funded by numerous sources, need to be placed in a strategic framework to ensure sustainability and equal consideration of the rights of all groups at risk of exclusion.

In the region, 19 education systems have long-term strategic plans for education as a whole. They refer to strengthening of inclusive education (Hungary), learner-centred approaches (Estonia), equitable access to education (Albania), equal opportunities (the Czech Republic and the Republic of Moldova), improving school capacity for children with special education needs (North Macedonia) and building a tolerant society that supports diversity and accessible education of good quality (Ukraine).

Romania's 2015–20 National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction defines the main vulnerable groups and aims to reduce gaps, including between rural and urban areas. The strategy includes access to early childhood education and care for all children, a national programme for children at risk of dropping out of primary and secondary education, monitoring systems for children at risk, second-chance programmes and access to education for children with special education needs and disabilities.

> "While there is a trend towards referring to inclusive education, all countries in the region retain separate schools for certain groups"

BOX 2.4:

Roma children are frequently segregated in education

The Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, numbering between 10 million and 12 million, of which two-thirds live in Central and Eastern Europe (UNICEF, 2020). They often live in poverty and suffer prejudice, intolerance and discrimination (FRA, 2014). Their education attainment is low. Across six countries in 2016, the median early childhood education participation rate among Roma was 36% compared with a national average of 86%. The secondary school completion rate of Roma aged 18 to 24 was 40% among men and just 28% among women (FRA, 2016).

Roma children suffer various forms of segregation in education. The share of those attending classes in which all or most learners are Roma ranges from 29% in Romania to about 60% in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. In Bulgaria, 27% of Roma children attended schools where all their classmates were Roma, according to the Second Survey on Minorities in Europe (FRA, 2016). In Hungary, segregation has increased: the proportion of basic schools with a Roma population of at least 50% rose from 10% in 2008 to 15% in 2017 (European Commission, 2019b). Roma children were also segregated on separate floors or in separate classes (Albert et al., 2015).

Roma children are disproportionally diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and placed in special schools, as in Hungary (Van den Bogaert, 2018) and Slovakia (Amnesty International and European Roma Rights Centre, 2017). A Council of Europe position paper on fighting school segregation through inclusive education drew attention to new forms of discrimination, such as Roma-only private schools (Council of Europe, 2017). In 2013, European Council recommendations on integration measures obliged EU member states to end 'inappropriate placement' of Roma students in special schools (European Council, 2013, Para. 1.3). Nevertheless, in 2016, 16% of Roma aged 6 to 15 in the Czech Republic and 18% in Slovakia attended special schools (FRA, 2016).

In line with its 2000 Racial Equality Directive, which prohibited discrimination in education on racial and ethnic grounds, the European Union started infringement procedures against the Czech Republic (2015), Slovakia (2015) and Hungary (2016), telling them to end discrimination against Roma children in education and ensure equal access to high-quality education (European Commission, 2016). A letter of formal notice was sent to Slovakia in 2015, and the European Commission concluded in October 2019 that measures taken had been insufficient to redress the situation and warned the country that if it did not take further action by the end of 2019, the matter could be referred to the European Court of Justice (European Commission, 2019c).

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has raised concerns about segregation in education of Roma children in the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia. In 2019, Croatia, Lithuania and Slovakia updated their action plans for implementation of national Roma integration strategies, and implemented some measures targeting specific aspects of segregation in education.

Litigation is increasingly used to fight discrimination and inequality. The European Court of Human Rights adopted a vulnerability approach to redress structural inequality on grounds of sex, sexual orientation, disability, race and ethnicity. D.H. and Others vs Czech Republic was brought in 2000 by 18 Czech Roma students assigned to special primary schools with simplified curricula. The court ruled the students had been denied their right to education because enrolment criteria did not take into account characteristics specific to Roma, resulting in racial discrimination and segregation (European Court of Human Rights, 2007). Later rulings included Oršuš and Others vs Croatia, which called for the state to provide linguistic support enabling Roma children to enter mainstream classes, and Horváth and Kiss vs Hungary, which found that Roma children were misdiagnosed because of 'socio-economic disadvantage and cultural differences' (Broderick, 2019). The ruling obliged the country to 'undo a history of racial segregation' (European Court of Human Rights, 2013, p. 34), but local actors have been trying to undermine the decision (Zemandl, 2018).

A joint EU and Council of Europe project, Inclusive Schools: Making a Difference for Roma Children, targets schools attended by Roma children in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. It aims to increase understanding of the benefits of inclusive education among teachers and the public, set up support mechanisms and resources for pilot inclusive schools, provide support to teachers to practice inclusive teaching, and support removal of barriers for vulnerable groups, including through legislative changes (Council of Europe, 2019).

In the Russian Federation, the Education 2019–2024 project contains a roadmap with indicators and key objectives for the development of the education system in priority areas. It includes 10 federal projects addressing areas including school upgrading; extracurricular activities, including online courses, for students with special needs; networks of support centres; psychological, pedagogical and consulting assistance to parents provided by regional non-government organizations (NGOs); and digital opportunities for rural schools.

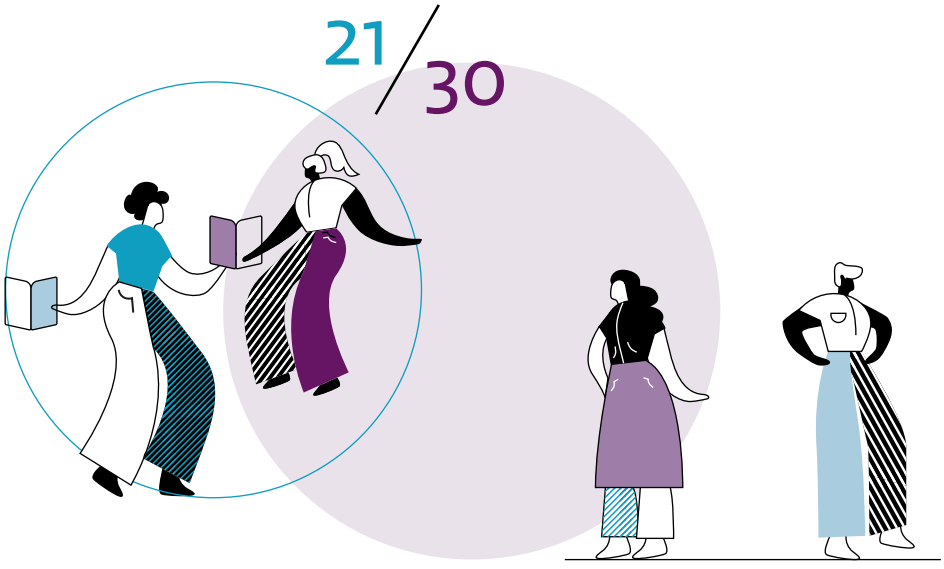
Strategies or action plans for inclusive education exist in 21 of the 30 education systems, with target areas including non-discrimination, equal opportunity and school dropout. Examples include the 2019–23 Kyrgyz concepts and programmes for development of inclusive education and the Republic of Moldova's 2011–20 development programme for inclusive education.

Other countries are moving in this direction. Armenia is developing an action plan on universal inclusive education in two regions. The policy framework is expected to be revised by 2025 to enable inclusive education in all regions. The US Agency for International Development has supported a draft strategic vision and roadmap on inclusive education for 2019–25. In Tajikistan, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences are developing a strategy for inclusive education provision taking into account an expanded understanding of the terms 'inclusive' and 'vulnerable'. The strategy addresses disability, ethnicity, migration and gender.

Does all mean all?

A key dilemma in inclusive education involves maintaining a focus on all learners while addressing the needs of specific groups that may be particularly vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. While attaching labels to particular groups can have negative consequences, countries risk not responding to the education interests of the most disadvantaged if they emphasize only what learners have in common (Norwich, 2002). The Learning Slovakia plan notes that 'the so-called ordinary pupils and their needs are often overlooked … at the same time, they are also unique individuals with diverse potential' (p. 16).

There is often a perception that learners from disadvantaged groups cannot benefit from mainstream school organization, curricula and teaching approaches. Approaches focused on individual support for learners with disabilities and special education needs, often based on a medical diagnosis, can result in individual teaching, separate interventions and segregated provision,



Strategies or action plans
for inclusive education exist in **21 of the 30 education systems**
in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

> Strategies or action plans for inclusive education exist in 21 of the 30 education systems reviewed

which reduce opportunities and lead to fragmented, resource-intensive initiatives that cannot be sustained in the longer term. The individual focus becomes a way to manage diversity in an inflexible system in which differences are seen as problems to be fixed. In some systems, learners may be excluded through a 'readiness' approach that requires them to have particular skills or levels of independence that will enable them to 'fit into' the system.

Many governments focus efforts on groups at high risk of exclusion: 27 of the 30 education systems reviewed have plans focusing on disability and special education needs, while 18 focus on Roma or other ethnic minorities. Some, influenced by EU policies, focus on learners at risk of dropping out or leaving education early (Albania, Kosovo,[2] the Republic of Moldova, Serbia). In Hungary, a medium-term 2014–20 strategy for early school leaving aimed to reduce the number of school leavers without a qualification and improve transition to the labour market for socially disadvantaged learners, especially those from the Roma community. Actions to support vulnerable groups include providing assistants, particularly for learners with disabilities or from the Roma community (Albania, Croatia, Poland, Serbia), adapting learning environments and providing additional equipment to enable access to mainstream education (Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation) and providing guidance for teachers (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania).

Few countries make special reference to learners with multiple disabilities, including severe intellectual disabilities, who have the most complex support needs and may be in institutions or special schools or educated at home. Hungary's 2015–25 National Disability Programme is intended to improve support for children with severe and multiple disabilities. Children with severe disabilities in Montenegro are rarely included in mainstream classrooms. Referrals to special school or home education are seen as legal exemptions from compulsory education. In North Macedonia, some students with complex needs attend classes in primary schools with a resource centre. In the Republic of Moldova, children with disabilities are being deinstitutionalized and the funds used to create community and support services for children with severe or multiple disabilities and autism. Other countries focusing on deinstitutionalization include Belarus and Ukraine. As learners with multiple disabilities are particularly vulnerable to segregation and exclusion, they should be central to any strategy for inclusive education.

Inclusive policies need to balance compensation with intervention and prevention measures

There are three approaches to inclusive education policies (European Agency, 2018). First, those focusing on compensation address omissions in the system that exclude learners, using measures such as separate provision, support to failing schools and second-chance programmes. Second, those focusing on intervention provide high-quality, flexible support for mainstream schools. Third, those focusing on prevention of exclusion in education and in the longer term introduce anti-discrimination legislation that promotes a rights-based approach, and avoid policies leading to gaps in provision and qualification acquisition.

Instead of providing compensatory support to learners who do not benefit from existing education opportunities, legislation and policy must enable schools to reorganize their provision, teaching approaches and classroom environments so as to respond equitably to all learners.

Policies and measures in Bulgaria's 2013–20 strategy on early school leavers fall into all three approaches: measures to compensate for the effects of early school leaving include programmes on reintegration and validation of competences gained through informal training; measures related to intervention include initiatives to increase parental involvement; and preventive measures include attention to school climate and relationships. Similarly, Latvia's 2014–20 Education Development Guidelines support both preventive and compensatory measures for learners to continue their education in general and vocational schools where they can finish their studies and obtain a qualification. The action plan of the Strategy for Development of Education in Serbia establishes a system of early identification of learners at risk of leaving education or at high risk of not being included in education and envisages a system of prevention, intervention and compensation measures in case of early dropout.

A clear sign of commitment to inclusive education is emphasis on prevention and early intervention measures, with compensation measures used in specific instances

2 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

and as a last resort. Systems moving away from special provision (compensation) to develop resource or support centres in mainstream schools are taking an intervention approach. Eight countries are developing such centres, often building on existing special schools. In Kosovo[3] and Turkey, resource or support rooms are designed to improve support to learners in mainstream schools.

The gap between policy and practice needs to be addressed through stakeholder involvement

Even where laws are enacted and policies announced, follow-up actions to achieve inclusion depend on national context; political will to include disadvantaged groups; action to overcome resistance to new forms of education provision; development of positive attitudes; and capacity in terms of resourcing, coordination and workforce development. Policy planning that lacks a strategic approach can result in inconsistency across the system and inability to implement plans. In Albania, despite a high level of commitment, implementation lags due to capacity and resource gaps in curriculum development, school organization and teacher education. In Turkey, despite a comprehensive legislative framework supporting inclusion in education, implementation challenges include negative attitudes, deficient infrastructure and teachers' lack of knowledge and skills (Hande Sart et al., 2016).

Inclusive education practice depends on changes in culture and in how society views education (De Beco, 2016). Actions must overcome exclusionary factors embedded in systems, structures and practice that lead to the marginalization, non-recognition and alienation of certain groups in schools (MacRuairc, 2013).

Including the voices of hard-to-reach groups in all consultations on laws and policies is essential. Stakeholder involvement is crucial to secure ownership and a clear view of the link between underlying principles or assumptions and long-term aims. Without coherent policy and strategic planning that considers cause and effect and communicates clear aims and tasks to all involved on realistic timescales, the chance of success will be significantly reduced. As noted earlier, lack of conceptual clarity on inclusive education remains a significant obstacle. Belarus and Kosovo are working to improve stakeholder involvement. In Mongolia, disability and other NGOs and parents' associations are active in promoting rights-based and participatory policy to be reflected in decision making and monitoring.

Bringing equity and inclusion principles into education policy and practice also requires engaging other sectors, such as health, social welfare and child protection, not least to ensure a common legislative framework (UNESCO, 2017). Cross-sector collaboration at all system levels and clear policies, plans and protocols are particularly important in the case of poverty. Montenegro's 2019–25 Strategy for Inclusive Education is one attempt to achieve such collaboration, intended to improve cooperation of relevant public agencies and civil society.

Monitoring and evaluation strategies need to have a clear view of how success should be judged at national, regional and local levels, within education and across other sectors that contribute to an inclusive education system. If monitoring mechanisms are narrowly constructed it can impede development of a more inclusive education system. Some countries, including the Republic of Moldova and Serbia, have developed or plan to develop standards taking a broader view.

CONCLUSION

Laws, policies and associated plans for inclusive education should celebrate difference. They should treat it as an opportunity to enrich learning by using it as a catalyst for innovation to benefit all learners and also as a basis for ensuring equal entitlement for all groups in society as a matter of human rights. Ultimately, fulfilment of rights by addressing specific barriers can succeed only when joined by measures to address wider disadvantage and inequality linked to poverty, gender, ethnicity, language, location and disability. While the influence of international commitments has been of fundamental importance, gaps remain in understanding of key concepts. Bridging these gaps requires engaging multiple stakeholders, including learners and members of disadvantaged groups that will be most affected by a combination of prevention, intervention and compensation measures.

> “Including the voices of hard-to-reach groups in all consultations on laws and policies is essential”

3 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Save the Children supports the work of five drop-in centres in the north-west Balkans. Many Bosnian families lack the financial resources to send their children to school or even ensure basic means of living. In the drop-in centre the children are supported to enroll in school, are provided with school materials and warm meals, learn how to read and write, and receive support in doing their homework and, most importantly, they can use their leisure time to play with other children.

CREDIT: Imrana Kapetanović-Save the Children

CHAPTER

3

Data

KEY MESSAGES

What data are collected and how they are used determine whether inclusion is served.

- Historically, the region has focused data collection efforts on learners with special education needs and disabilities. But inclusion-related data collection must cover inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes on all learners and for uses other than just resource allocation.
- Identifying groups makes those from disadvantaged populations visible but can reduce children to labels, which can be self-fulfilling. Not all children facing inclusion barriers belong to an identifiable or recognized group, while others belong to more than one.

Household surveys help disaggregate education outcomes at population level.

- Household surveys, available for practically every country, disaggregate education data. In Mongolia, 92% of the richest youth but only 22% of the poorest complete secondary school.
- Surveys also show intersecting characteristics: Among the poorest, girls in Turkmenistan but boys in North Macedonia are more likely to complete secondary school.
- About 60% of Roma youth in the Balkans are out of school. In Montenegro, no poor Roma youth complete secondary school. In Georgia, internally displaced youth are seven percentage points less likely to complete secondary school than their non-displaced peers.
- Formulating questions on nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity can touch on sensitive personal identities. No question on ethnicity or language has been asked in the Turkish population census since 1965.

Statistical measurement of disability is catching up with the social model.

- In nine education systems that applied the Child Functioning Module, the share of 5- to 17-year-olds with a functional difficulty in at least one domain was 7.5%, on average. In Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, the share of youth with disabilities in the out-of-school population is twice as large as their share of the in-school population.
- Not all children with disabilities have special education needs, nor do all children with special education needs have disabilities. The share of students identified with special education needs ranges from 3.3% in Poland to 13% in Lithuania. Such variation is related to differences in country definitions, which stem from political decisions with historical roots.

School-level data point to persistent exclusion and segregation.

- One in three students identified with special needs in Central and Eastern Europe is placed in special schools. Serbia reduced the share of children enrolled in special schools from 100% to 36% in 7 years, and the Republic of Moldova from 77% to 9% in 10 years.
- In Slovakia, Roma constituted 63% of all children in special classes and 42% of those in special schools in 2018.
- In the 2018 PISA results, schools in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia were the least inclusive in the region, and among the least inclusive in the world, in terms of diversity of student populations by economic, social and cultural status.

It is necessary to monitor students' experiences.

- Cross-national learning achievement surveys show that about 2 in 10 children feel like outsiders in school, on average, with shares ranging from 1 in 10 in Albania to 3 in 10 in Bulgaria.
- To foster inclusion, monitoring should not only serve the function of collecting data on inclusion but also be inclusive in methodology. The Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia has been integrated within the overall school quality assurance policy.

Data are critical to support inclusion in education. First, data can highlight gaps in education opportunities and outcomes among learner groups. They can identify those at risk of being left behind and the barriers to inclusion. Second, with data on who is being left behind and why, governments can develop evidence-based policies and monitor their implementation (e.g. via resources, equipment, infrastructure, teachers and teaching assistants, anti-bullying strategies, parental involvement) and results (European Agency, 2011, 2014; Hollenweger, 2014b).

In defining results, few inclusion-specific outcomes can be distinguished from general education outcomes (Armstrong et al., 2010). For instance, data on where learners are being educated are needed. In addition, feelings of belonging, mutual respect and social esteem should be monitored (Watkins et al., 2014). Qualitative data on such experiences can capture fine-grained information that paints a drastically different picture than quantitative categorical data. Unlike population- or system-level indicators, such measures should describe learners' individual experiences rather than those of learner groups or categories. One approach to a set of indicators involves systematically examining levels of authority, from schools to education ministries, and a range of results, including not just outputs and outcomes but also inputs and processes (**Table 3.1**).

Information on processes is difficult to collect and even more difficult to compare among schools or groups, let alone among countries. Frameworks for voluntary self-evaluation by schools or for programme evaluations are not necessarily suitable for official country-level monitoring of inclusion. Measuring inclusion is tied to how countries define it. While some aspects are part of most definitions, such as whether all students feel welcome in school, no single list of indicators is suitable everywhere. Criteria need to be locally determined and account for context, as vulnerabilities vary by place (Ainscow, 2005).

This chapter reviews the promise and potential obstacles of various approaches to collecting and analysing data to identify exclusion and to prompt action. It then looks at how countries collect data to monitor the effects of actions to make education systems more inclusive.

> “Feelings of belonging, mutual respect and social esteem should be monitored”

TABLE 3.1:
Potential indicators of inclusion in education, by level of authority and result

Level	Result		
	Inputs	Processes	Outputs and outcomes
System	Policy	Climate	Participation
	Teacher education	School practice	Achievement
District	Professional development	Collaboration	Post-school outcomes
	Resources and finances	Shared responsibility	
School	Leadership	Support to individuals	
	Curriculum	Role of special schools	

Source: Loreman et al. (2014).

DATA ON INCLUSION: THE GROUPS COUNTRIES MONITOR VARY

Countries face a dilemma in deciding what data to collect on inclusion. On the one hand, the concept should not be fragmented by group because inclusion cannot be achieved one group at a time. 'In the process of pointing to the exclusion of specific groups, attention is focused on the "markers of difference" and thus difference is in fact created by comparison to an implicit norm' (Armstrong et al., 2010, p. 37). Education systems and environments become inclusive by breaking down barriers for the benefit of all children. Such barriers may be higher for some groups than for others. In any case, many types of vulnerability are not outwardly apparent, and it is thus impossible to distinguish neatly between students with and without disabilities or special needs.

On the other hand, categorizing students is important to shine a light on specific groups and help make them visible to policymakers (Florian et al., 2006; Simon and Piché, 2012). Certain groups of children may be excluded not only when they are omitted from textbooks, placed at the back of the class or never called on, but also by lack of explicit recognition in data collection. Lack of data both results from and contributes to their invisibility.

Resolving this dilemma requires different kinds of data at different levels. Outcomes can be monitored at the population level; service delivery can be monitored at the student level through administrative systems. Understanding the purposes and types of inclusion-related data can therefore ease dilemmas of identification: Identifying groups for statistical or policy purposes need not create a false dichotomy between 'normal' and 'special' groups that distorts efforts at inclusion. For instance, collection and use of administrative data can occur without assigning corresponding labels in the classroom. In some high-income countries, voluntary equal-opportunity questionnaires collect information on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and other characteristics. Results are used only to monitor diversity in universities or workplaces.

Censuses and surveys provide insights into inclusion in education

Administrative data have been the mainstay of efforts to monitor access to and participation in education. Universal primary and lower secondary education have been achieved in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, with an average out-of-school rate of 3% in the subregions. With respect to youth of upper secondary school age, substantial progress has been achieved: Between 1999 and 2019, the out-of-school rate halved in both the Caucasus and Central Asia (from 31% to 14%) and in Central and Eastern Europe (from 25% to 12%). Much of the latter fall is due to Turkey, where the out-of-school rate dropped by 75% in 15 years (**Figure 3.1**).

Still, this leaves about 850,000 children of primary school age (down from 1.5 million in 1999), 850,000 adolescents of lower secondary school age (down from 2.3 million in 2002) and 2 million youth of upper secondary school age (down from 5.5 million in 1999) who were out of school in 2019. Turkey accounts for 1.5 million or just over 40% of the out of-school population in the region. Such data do not capture the extent to which children may be attending non-mainstream schools or may be home-schooled.

> "Understanding the purposes and types of inclusion-related data can ease dilemmas of identification"

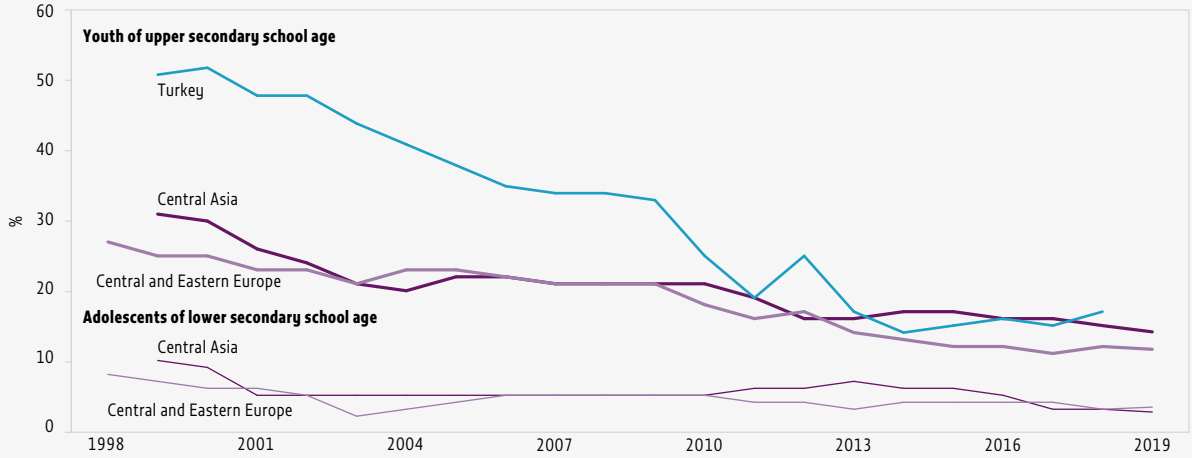
Administrative data sources indicate there is no gender disparity in enrolment in mainstream schools, but are silent with respect to other potential systematic patterns of exclusion from school participation. Population censuses and household surveys can provide information on the education status of those at risk of being marginalized, but, like any tool, they also have disadvantages.

Censuses aim to cover all residents and, done properly, do not intentionally exclude any group from the count. They have advantages over surveys, which miss some populations because of their small sample sizes or by design (e.g. prisons and orphanages tend not to be sampled) (United Nations, 2005). However, even they are known to undercount marginalized populations, such as

FIGURE 3.1:

Out-of-school rates have halved in the region in the past 20 years

Out-of-school rate of adolescents and youth, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey, 1998–2019

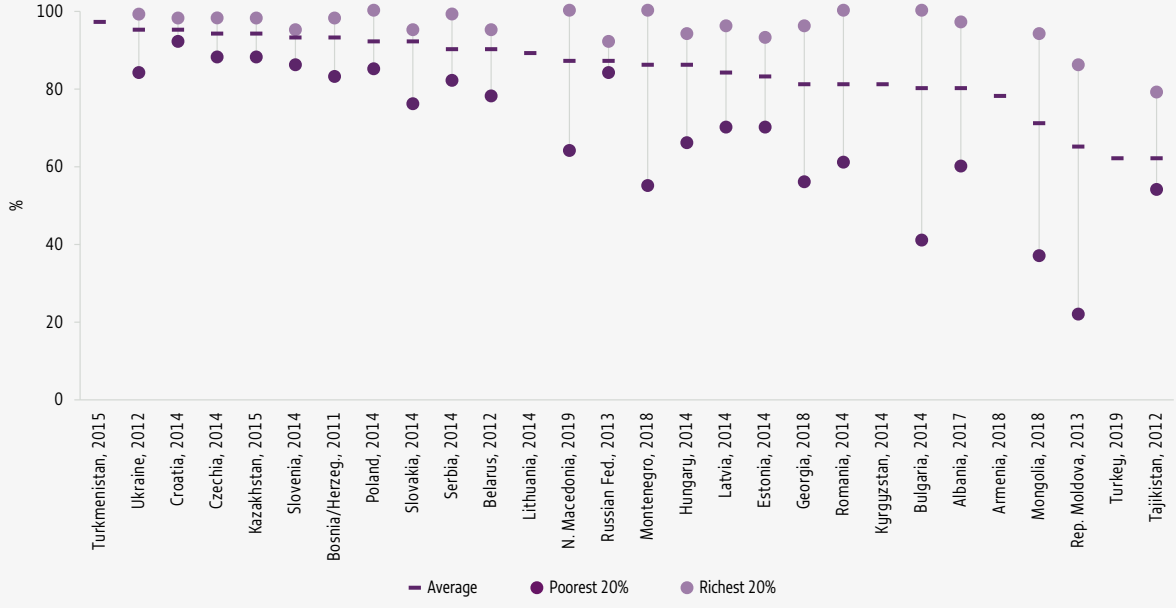


Source: UIS database.

FIGURE 3.2:

Surveys allow education attainment to be disaggregated by wealth

Upper secondary school completion rate, by wealth, selected countries, 2012–19



Sources: World Inequality Database on Education. The value for Turkey is from Eurostat (2020).

nomads, seasonal and migrant workers, the homeless, and those living in areas affected by conflict or insecurity, who are often among the poorest (Carr-Hill, 2013). More generally, censuses are costly and therefore infrequent and contain few questions.

Surveys, especially those from cross-national and hence more standardized programmes, have put a spotlight on the education progression of population groups defined by single characteristics or their intersections. Survey data, which are available for almost all countries in the region, can be disaggregated by various characteristics, notably wealth, a measure of socio-economic status. While secondary school completion rates exceed 90% in 10 out of 23 countries in the region with disaggregated data, on average, for youth in the richest 20% of households they exceed 90% in all countries except the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan. In Mongolia, 94% of the richest youth, but only 37% of the poorest, completed secondary school in 2018 (**Figure 3.2**).

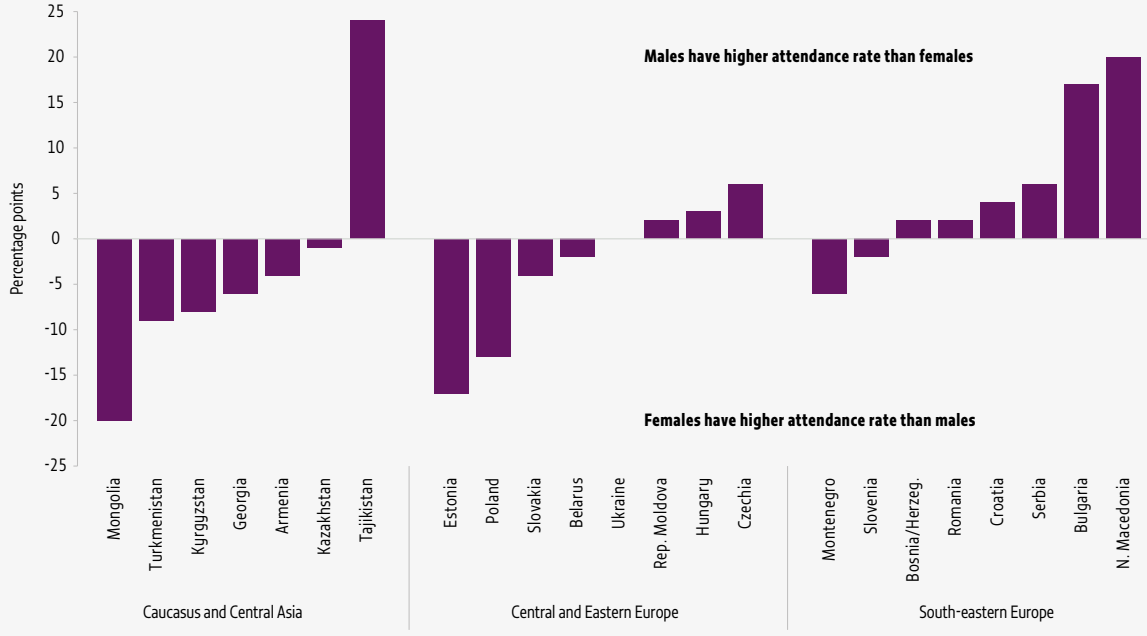
Multiple characteristics can intersect to push people deeper into education disadvantage. There are gender gaps among those already disadvantaged by poverty,

> “Multiple characteristics can intersect to push people deeper into education disadvantage”

for instance. Analysis of World Inequality Database on Education data shows that secondary school completion rates among the poorest 20% vary by sex. In countries with nomadic populations in Central Asia, young men are at a disadvantage, except in Tajikistan, where, for instance, the gender gap between the poorest rural males and females was 22 percentage points in 2017. The poorest males have a disadvantage of about 15 percentage points in Estonia and Poland but an advantage of up to 20 percentage points in Bulgaria and North Macedonia (**Figure 3.3**).

Many countries identify specific groups as vulnerable in constitutions, social inclusion legislation, education legislation or documents directly related to inclusive education. The group most identified is people with disabilities, but ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural and

FIGURE 3.3:
Among the poorest, there are considerable gender gaps in secondary completion
Difference in upper secondary school completion rate between poorest male and female youth, selected countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, 2011–18



Source: World Inequality Database on Education.

remote populations, migrant and displaced people, and the poor are also commonly recognized. Few countries link recognition of specific groups with a mandate to collect data on their inclusion in education, however.

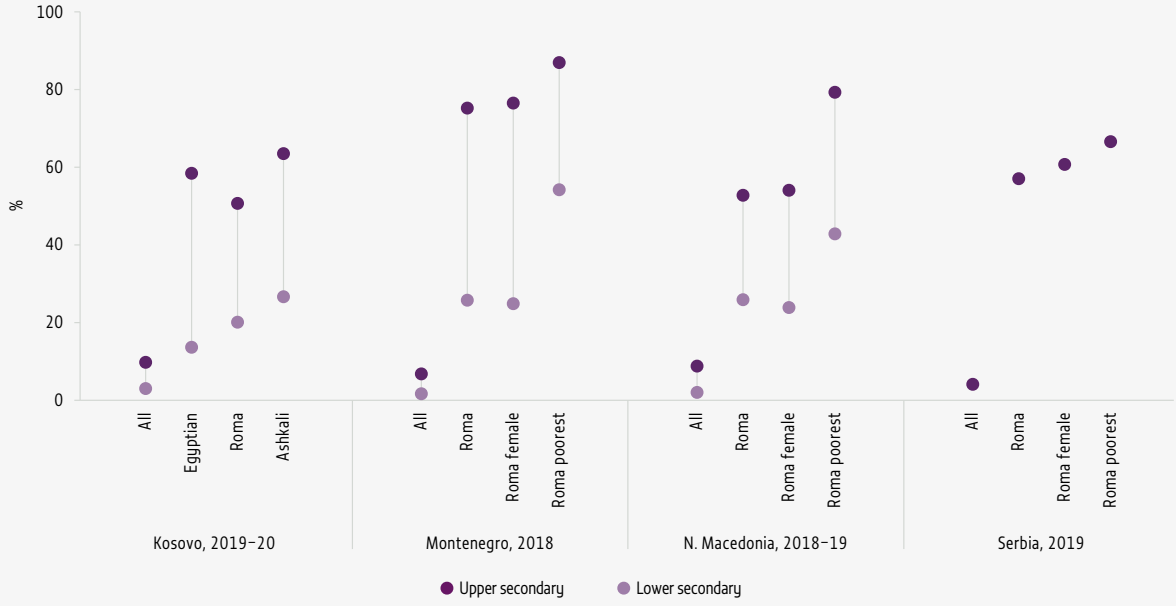
Who is recognized in a census or survey may reflect political power and representation. Data that highlight inequality among groups are not always welcome for political reasons; groups in power may question their reliability and worry that drawing attention to such gaps will fuel resentment among the disadvantaged. A global analysis of 138 censuses in the 2000 round showed that more than one-third included no ethnic classification (Morning, 2008). Political changes can have a major impact on how groups are captured.

Household surveys have served an important function in highlighting the relative education progress of various ethnic groups. The UNICEF Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICS), for example, have cast light on Roma populations' exclusion from education in south-eastern Europe, especially at the upper secondary school level. In Kosovo,[1] almost 60% of youth among the Ashkali, Egyptian and Roma communities were not attending upper secondary school in 2019/20, with practically no change observed since 2014. In Montenegro, 75% of Roma youth living in Roma settlements did not attend upper secondary school in 2018, while the national average was 6% (**Figure 3.4**). Just 3% of Roma youth completed secondary school, compared with the national average of 86% (Montenegro Statistical Office and UNICEF, 2019).

Questions on nationality, ethnicity or religion touch on sensitive points of personal identity and can be intrusive. They may also trigger fear of persecution. No question on ethnicity or language has been asked in Turkey since the 1965 population census. However, a question on Kurdish ethnicity has been asked in successive rounds of the Demographic and Health Surveys (Koc et al., 2008), while learning assessment surveys, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), identify students who do not speak the language of instruction at home.

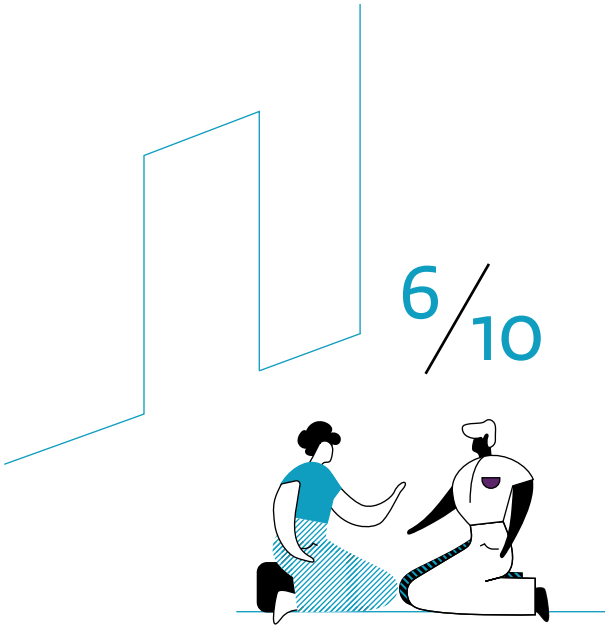
Various factors hamper identification of immigrant and refugee populations for policy purposes, especially when those populations are transient. Statistical offices use techniques to adjust overall census results, but these cannot replace fine-grained mapping of such populations,

FIGURE 3.4:
About 60% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth in the Balkans do not attend upper secondary school
Out-of-school rate among adolescents of lower secondary and youth of upper secondary school age, by ethnicity, Kosovo,[1] Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, 2018–20



Source: MICS Survey Findings Reports.

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

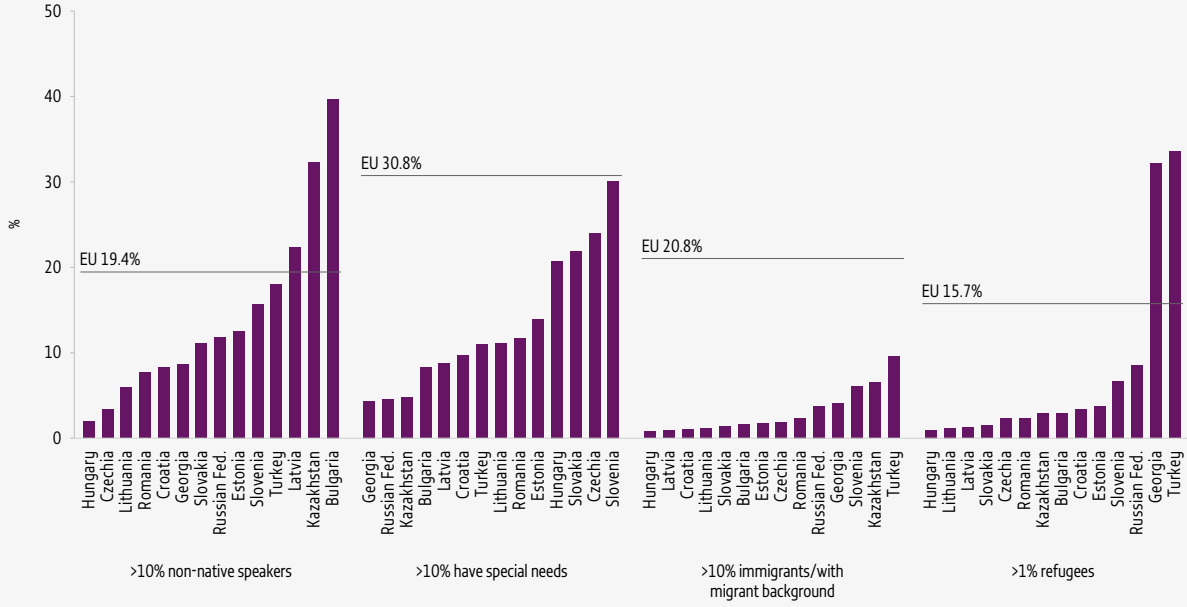


About 60% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth in the Balkans **do not attend** upper secondary school

which are often marginalized. One approach for hard-to-reach populations is snowball sampling, in which respondents provide leads to further participants. This technique was used to rapidly assess migrant and refugee education levels in Europe, where further studies confirmed the results' robustness. For instance, two waves of migrant and refugee surveys along the Balkan corridor found that 76% of those aged 25 to 64 in 2015 and 2016 had secondary or tertiary education, matching the findings of a formal longitudinal survey in Germany, the principal destination country (Aksoy and Poutvaara, 2019).

Overall, student populations in schools and classrooms in the region are more homogeneous than in EU countries. Analysis of lower secondary school teacher responses in the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey in 14 countries in the region shows that only Bulgaria, Kazakhstan and Latvia had a higher share of linguistically diverse classrooms than the EU average and only Georgia and Turkey had a higher share of classrooms with a large number of displaced children (**Boxes 3.1 and 3.2**). National shares of classrooms with a large number of students with special needs and, especially, migrant background were much lower than the EU average (**Figure 3.5**).

FIGURE 3.5:
Classrooms in the region are more homogeneous than in EU countries
Percentage of lower secondary school teachers who reported that their classroom had the following student population composition, selected countries, 2018



Source: OECD (2019c).

BOX 3.1:

Turkey and Serbia have made efforts to register and include refugee children in public education

In recent years, the region has witnessed large flows of migrant and displaced populations as a result of the Syrian civil war. This has challenged countries located along the route of these flows.

Turkey hosts 3.6 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2020a), 1.1 million of whom are of school age. The first refugees crossed into the country in 2011, immediately spreading beyond camps. Non-government and faith-based organizations established informal schools, staffed by volunteer teachers, offering instruction in Arabic and using a modified Syrian curriculum. These temporary education centres (TECs) were largely unregulated, operated outside the national system and had limited quality assurance or standardization of certification at the end of grades 9 and 12.

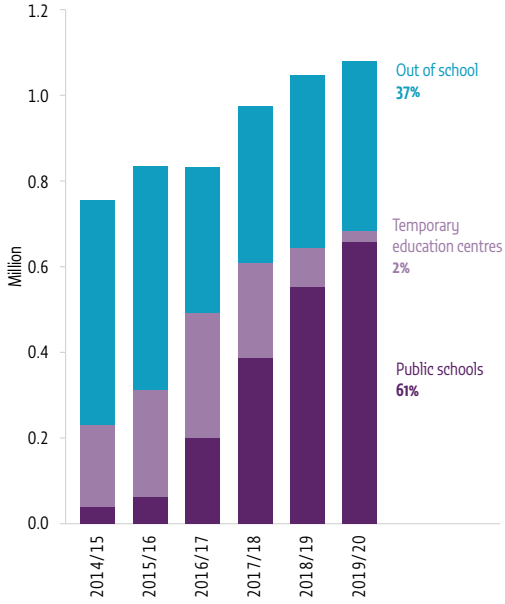
In late 2014, the Ministry of National Education established a regulatory framework for TECs. Syrian families could choose enrolment in TECs or public schools (Turkey Ministry of National Education, 2014). TECs not meeting regulations were closed. In August 2016, the government announced that all Syrian children would be integrated into the national education system. Among those enrolled, the share of Syrian children in TECs fell from 83% in 2014/15 to 4% in 2019/20. The government required all TECs to offer 15 hours of Turkish language instruction per week to prepare students for transition to Turkish schools.

Children with a foreigner identification number were entered into the main management information system, e-Okul, while those with a temporary protection identification document were entered into a tailor-made system, YÖBIS, which was compatible with e-Okul. YÖBIS was first used in TECs in 2015 (Turkey Government and UNICEF, 2019). Subsequent improvements, such as its linkage with the Integrated Social Assistance Information System, allowed its attendance records to be used as an eligibility criterion for awarding a conditional cash transfer for education (Ring et al., 2020) (see **Chapter 4**) .

The inclusion process has been supported by Promoting Integration of Syrian Children to the Turkish Education System, a project that received EUR 300 million as part of the European Union's EUR 3 billion Facility for Refugees in Turkey (Delegation of the European Union in Turkey, 2017). Two-fifths financed school construction; the rest was allocated to Turkish and Arabic language courses, catch-up education and remedial classes, free school transport, education materials, an examination system, guidance and counselling, training of 15,000 teachers and hiring of administrative personnel (Arik Akyuz, 2018). However, there is still a lot left to do. The percentage of out-of-school children fell rapidly, from 70% in 2014/15 to 38% in 2017/18, but was still at 37% two years later (**Figure 3.6**).

Refugee and asylum-seeker movements along the so-called Balkan corridor reached their peak in 2015. While the challenge there was on a much smaller scale than in Turkey, governments had to find education continuity solutions for thousands of children about whom neither the education trajectory nor the intention to stay in the country were known.

FIGURE 3.6:
Turkey included Syrian refugee children in public schools within five years
Distribution of enrolled Syrian refugee children in Turkey by school type, 2014/15–2019/20



Source: Turkey Government and UNICEF (2019).

In Serbia, in collaboration with UNICEF and the Centre for Education Policy, the government piloted an approach in two municipalities and 10 schools in 2016/17. In 2017, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development adopted instructions for inclusion of refugee and asylum-seeking students into the education system, with schools obliged to prepare and implement support plans at the school and individual levels. These plans cover aspects such as adaptation and stress relief, intensive learning of Serbian, participation in regular syllabus and extracurricular activities and adaptation of school attendance schedule and teaching materials. By 2018/19, about 2,500 or 98% of pre- and primary school-age children in reception centres had been placed in public schools (Serbia Government, 2019). However, an independent study by the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights estimated that just 14% of refugee and asylum-seeking children attended regularly, an indicator not monitored by the information management system (ECRE, 2019).

BOX 3.2:

Contextual factors affect estimates of the internally displaced and their education in Georgia and Ukraine

In conflict-affected countries, internal displacement puts a huge strain on already struggling education systems. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), there are 2.6 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in the region (IDMC, 2020). However, estimates are often contested as a result of social and political context. In Ukraine, for instance, where IDP registration is necessary to be eligible for access to social benefits, the IDMC estimate of 730,000 IDPs reflects those living in government-controlled areas, while the government estimate of 1.5 million includes those living in areas that it does not control (IDMC, 2018; UNHCR, 2020b).

Conflict has heavily affected education infrastructure: 280 education institutions in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions had been damaged by October 2015 (UNICEF, 2016). In the cities of Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kiev and Zaporizhzhia, which host the most IDPs, education institutions faced challenges such as shortage of classroom space and lack of resources to provide food and transport. While grassroots volunteer organizations, civil society and host communities responded to IDPs' immediate needs, poverty reduced the likelihood of youth attending upper secondary and tertiary education. IDP households earned 30% below the subsistence level set by the Ministry of Social Policy (IOM, 2017).

Government responses included creating additional preschool and secondary places, moving 18 state universities from the east of the country and Crimea, and simplifying IDP admission and transfer procedures (Right to Protection et al., 2017). Under legislation passed in May 2015, the government partly or fully covered tuition for registered IDPs below age 23 and provided other incentives, such as long-term education loans and free textbooks and internet access (Council of Europe, 2016). A 2016 Cabinet of Ministers circular approved a unified IDP information database under the Ministry of Social Policy to shed light on displaced populations' needs (Right to Protection et al., 2017). The 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan focuses on actions in areas within 5 kilometres of the area the government does not control and throughout the area it does. Provision of equipment to damaged schools, social and emotional learning, and teacher training on stress management are among the activities envisaged. The plan also involves efforts to recognize the certification of all students whose education was interrupted (UNOCHA, 2020).

Crimean Tatar IDPs have been widely dispersed throughout Ukraine. Official procedure dating from 2002 states that there should be at least eight children learning a national minority language for a school to organize classes. This limits Tatar children's opportunity to be taught in their language (OSCE, 2016).

In Georgia, the IDMC estimate of 300,000 IDPs is difficult to verify. Some returnees may still be counted as IDPs because IDP status, as in Ukraine, entitles people to some benefits (IDMC, 2009). In the case of those displaced from Abkhazia, the government established separate IDP schools in segregated neighbourhoods and even a separate education administration in the mid-1990s. This approach was criticized for deepening the Abkhaz population's exclusion and offering lower-quality education (Loughna et al., 2010). A 2007 strategy aimed to gradually close these schools and shift their students to mainstream schools (IDMC, 2011), but data on IDP enrolment rates have been hard to obtain. The only sources of data on IDPs have been learning achievement surveys (Machabeli et al., 2011) and household surveys, such as the 2013 Integrated Household Survey and the 2018 MICS. According to the latter, IDPs represent just below 5% of the population. While children and adolescents have the same primary and lower secondary completion rates as their non-displaced peers, 74% of IDPs complete upper secondary education, compared with 81% of non-IDPs (Georgia National Statistics Office, 2019).

Measurement of disability has evolved along with its definition

While formulating appropriate questions on ethnicity or gender identity in censuses and surveys is often a question of politics, the main issues in the case of questions on disability have been attitudes and knowledge. For instance, if disability is seen as bringing shame to the family, certain questions trigger fear of stigmatization and elicit unpredictable responses. Agreeing a valid measure of disability has been a long process. The 2001 International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and the 2007 ICF for Children and Youth were important in moving from a medical to a social model of disability. The two classifications were merged in 2012. The ICF is a neutral framework that describes levels of functioning in various domains related to health, including 'major life areas' such as education (Hollenweger, 2014a). It does not define disability or specify data collection methods, however.

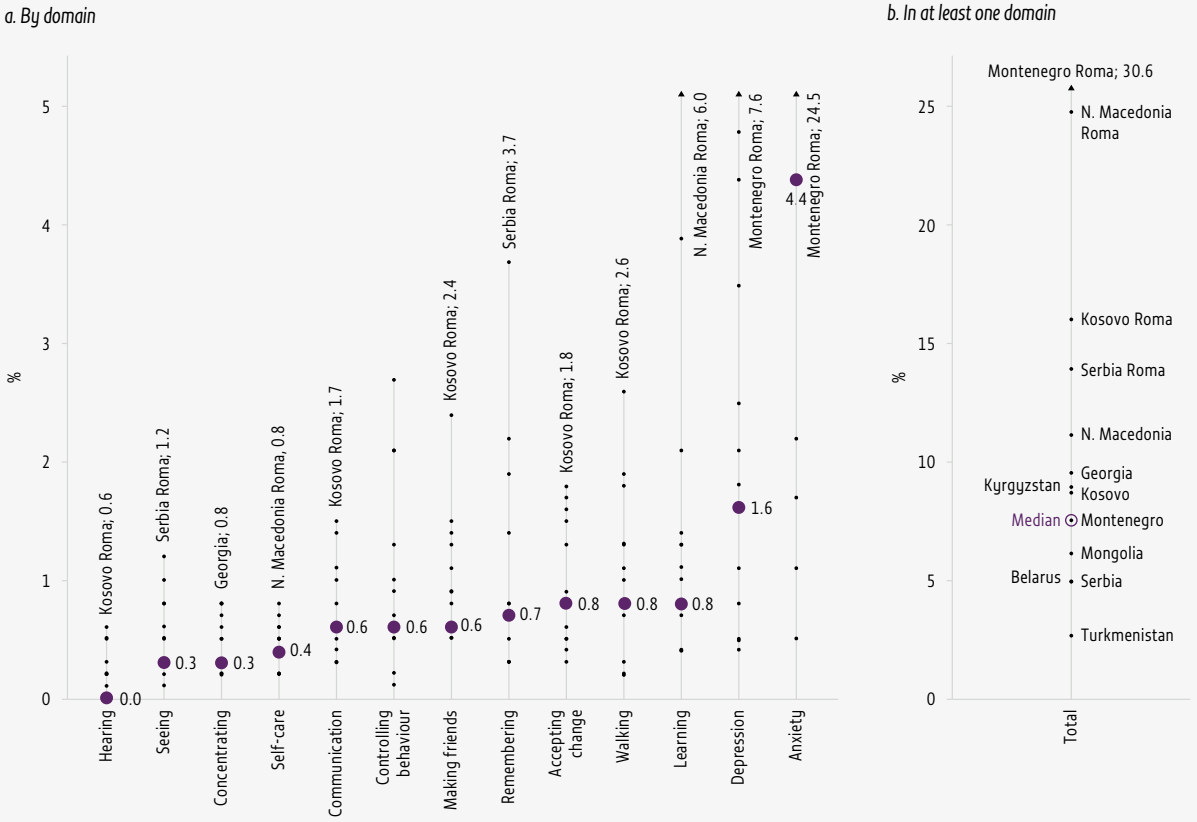
The UN Statistical Commission set up the Washington Group on Disability Statistics in 2001. Its Short Set of Questions, aligned with the ICF and suitable for inclusion in censuses or surveys, was agreed in 2006 (Groce and Mont, 2017). The six questions cover critical functional domains and activities: seeing, hearing, mobility, cognition, self-care and communication. For instance, the cognition question is, 'Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?' Response options for all questions are 'No – no difficulty', 'Yes – some

difficulty', 'Yes – a lot of difficulty' and 'Cannot do at all' (WHO and World Bank, 2011). Broad-based adoption of the Washington Group questions would not only bring disability statistics into line with the social model but might also resolve the comparability issues that have plagued global disability statistics (Altman, 2016). Estimates of disability prevalence currently vary with differences in definitions and methodology (Mont, 2007; Singal et al., 2015).

One limitation of the Short Set of Questions was that it was developed for adults and did not adequately capture developmental disabilities in children. After extensive consultation and testing, a Module on Child Functioning was developed in collaboration with UNICEF (Loeb et al., 2018). Crucially, the module asks about difficulties with learning and recognizes the importance of freedom from anxiety and depression (Braddick and Jané-Llopis, 2008).[2]

Its first large-scale application is in the sixth wave of the UNICEF MICS, in which nine countries and territories in the region have participated since 2018. Prevalence estimates of functional difficulty among 5- to 17-year-olds vary by domain and, within each domain, by country.
In the sensory domain, the average prevalence of seeing difficulties was 0.3%. In the mobility domain, walking difficulties affected 0.8% of children. Cognitive and psycho-emotional difficulties were far more common.
In total, 1.6% of children and adolescents were depressed and 4.4% suffered from anxiety (**Figure 3.7a**). The share of those with a functional difficulty in at least one domain was 7.5%, on average, varying from 2.5% in Turkmenistan to 11% in North Macedonia (**Figure 3.7b**).

FIGURE 3.7:
Cognitive and psycho-emotional difficulties are the most common disabilities among children and adolescents
Prevalence of functional difficulties among 5- to 17-year-olds, selected countries and territories, 2018–20



Note: References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).
Source: MICS Survey Findings Reports.

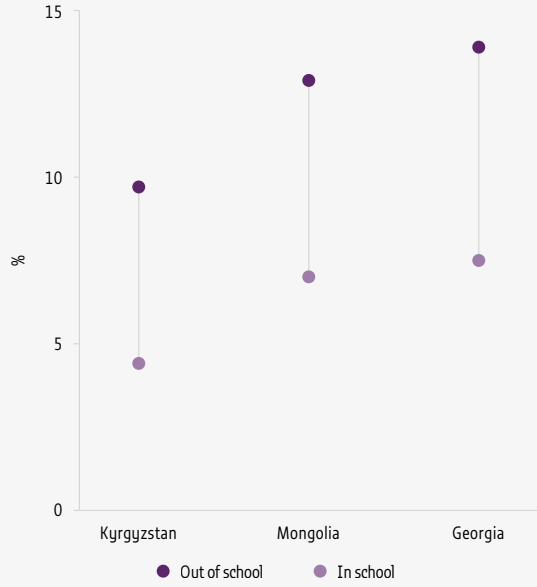
2 An additional module developed by UNICEF covers a broader range of inclusion and participation dimensions, such as attitudes, accessibility, transport and affordability (Cappa, 2014). The aim is to understand the prevalence of disability and education outcomes, the education environment and specific barriers to education.

However, functional difficulty levels are much higher in Roma settlements in four Balkan countries and territories: Kosovo,[3] Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. For instance, walking difficulties were mentioned by twice as many children and adolescents (1.5%) and anxiety by three times as many (12%). The share of those with a functional difficulty in at least one domain was 20%, on average, varying from 14% in Roma settlements in Serbia to 31% in Montenegro.

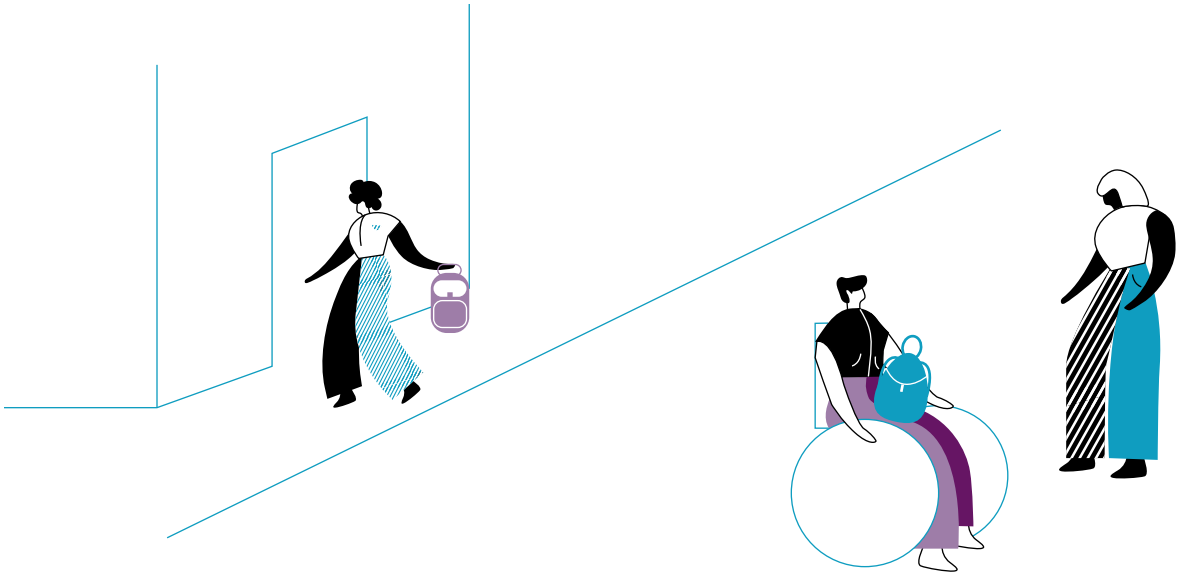
Youth with disabilities are over-represented in the out-of-school population. In Georgia, they account for 7.5% of the in-school youth population but 13.9% of the out-of-school youth population. Across Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, the share of youth with disabilities in the out-of-school population is twice as large, on average, as the share within the in-school population (**Figure 3.8**).

The education disadvantage associated with sensory, physical or intellectual disability increases at higher levels of education. In Mongolia, the out-of-school rate of children of primary school age without functional difficulties is 2.7%, while among those with functional difficulties it is 9.1%. Having a sensory, physical or intellectual disability increases the out-of-school rate by 2 percentage points. For adolescents of lower secondary school age, the gap is 4 percentage points, while for youth of upper secondary school age, the gap is 11 percentage points (**Figure 3.9**).

FIGURE 3.8:
The share of youth with disabilities in the out-of-school population is twice as large as that in the in-school population
Percentage of youth with functional difficulties in the in-school and out-of-school populations, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, 2018



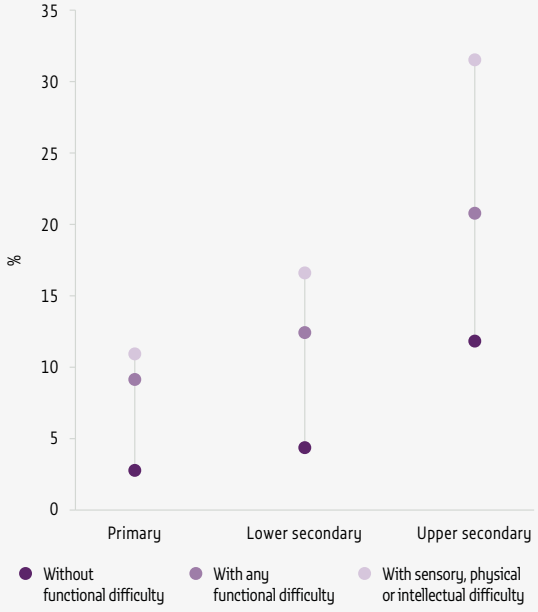
Source: GEM Report team analysis based on MICS data.



Across **Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia**,
the share of youth with **disabilities** in the **out-of-school population** is on average
twice as large as the share of the in-school population

3 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

FIGURE 3.9:
The education disadvantage for those with a sensory, physical or intellectual difficulty is higher at the upper secondary level
Out-of-school rate by age group and functional difficulty, Mongolia, 2018



Source: GEM Report team analysis based on MICS data.

Life at the intersections of disability with ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity is more than the sum of each vulnerability (Connor, 2014). From a statistical point of view, sample size is a challenge for analysis of intersecting disadvantage. Standard household surveys suffer from rapidly shrinking samples and larger estimation errors as the focus shifts to individuals with multiple specific characteristics. But it is important not to underestimate the risk that, for instance, poor people with disabilities may be twice excluded: from society generally and also within the disability movement.

Intersecting vulnerabilities may mean some go unaddressed. Language difficulties and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties often coincide (Hartas, 2011). Yet bilingual students with disabilities, for instance, are likely to be in classrooms that address their academic or linguistic needs but not both (Cioè-Peña, 2017). In studies of children and adolescents with epilepsy, one-quarter met criteria for depression (Ettinger et al., 1998) and half for learning difficulties (Fastenau et al., 2008). Children identified as gifted and talented often experience emotional difficulties coping with their exceptionality and social distance from peers. Giftedness may not be recognized in children with autistic spectrum disorders.

Assessment criteria to identify special education needs can be arbitrary and contentious

Not all children with disabilities have special education needs, nor do all children with special education needs have a disability (Keil et al., 2006; Porter et al., 2011). While a consensus approach on defining disability in surveys improves cross-national comparisons of population-level estimates, countries focus on special education needs for their national policy discussions: Who has special education needs, where are they educated and what is the quality of that education? Special needs identification is distinct from disability measurement and entails less consensus.

The share of students identified as having special education needs varies widely. In Europe, it ranges from 1% in Sweden to 21% in Scotland (United Kingdom); in Central and Eastern Europe, it varies from 3.3% in Poland to 13% in Lithuania (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018) (**Figure 3.10**). Such variation is mainly explained by differences in how countries define special education needs, a political decision linked to history. Institution, funding and training requirements vary, as do policy implications. The variation in approaches also presents measurement and data challenges.

Comparing the prevalence of disability, difficulties and disadvantage across education systems and over time is problematic, even for clinical diagnoses. For example, in the case of autism spectrum disorder neither medical nor education considerations give unambiguous guidance on the point at which a behaviour becomes a disorder. The determination partly depends on context. Whatever the underlying biochemistry of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), in some settings the boundary of orderly behaviour determines the diagnosis. Pre-primary and even early childhood education settings have become more academic. Moreover, measurement difficulties compromise the comparability of global data or limit their availability. For instance, the mean prevalence rate of autism spectrum disorder is 0.6% in EU countries among children aged 2 to 17, but among the 16 countries reporting data, the average treatment rate was 0.08%. Likewise, with an estimated ADHD prevalence rate of 5% for children aged 6 to 17, the average treatment rate was 1.6% (Wittchen et al., 2011; Aleman-Diaz et al., 2018).

> “The share of students identified as having special education needs varies from 3.3% in Poland to 13% in Lithuania”

With the exception of learning difficulties, diagnostic criteria for disabilities are not inherently related to education. Accordingly, they have no particular implications for curriculum and teaching (Norwich, 2014). There is wide variation in education ability and behaviour within categories of disability (Florian, 2014). Many conditions, including epilepsy and other chronic health conditions, are diagnosed outside education and for non-education purposes.

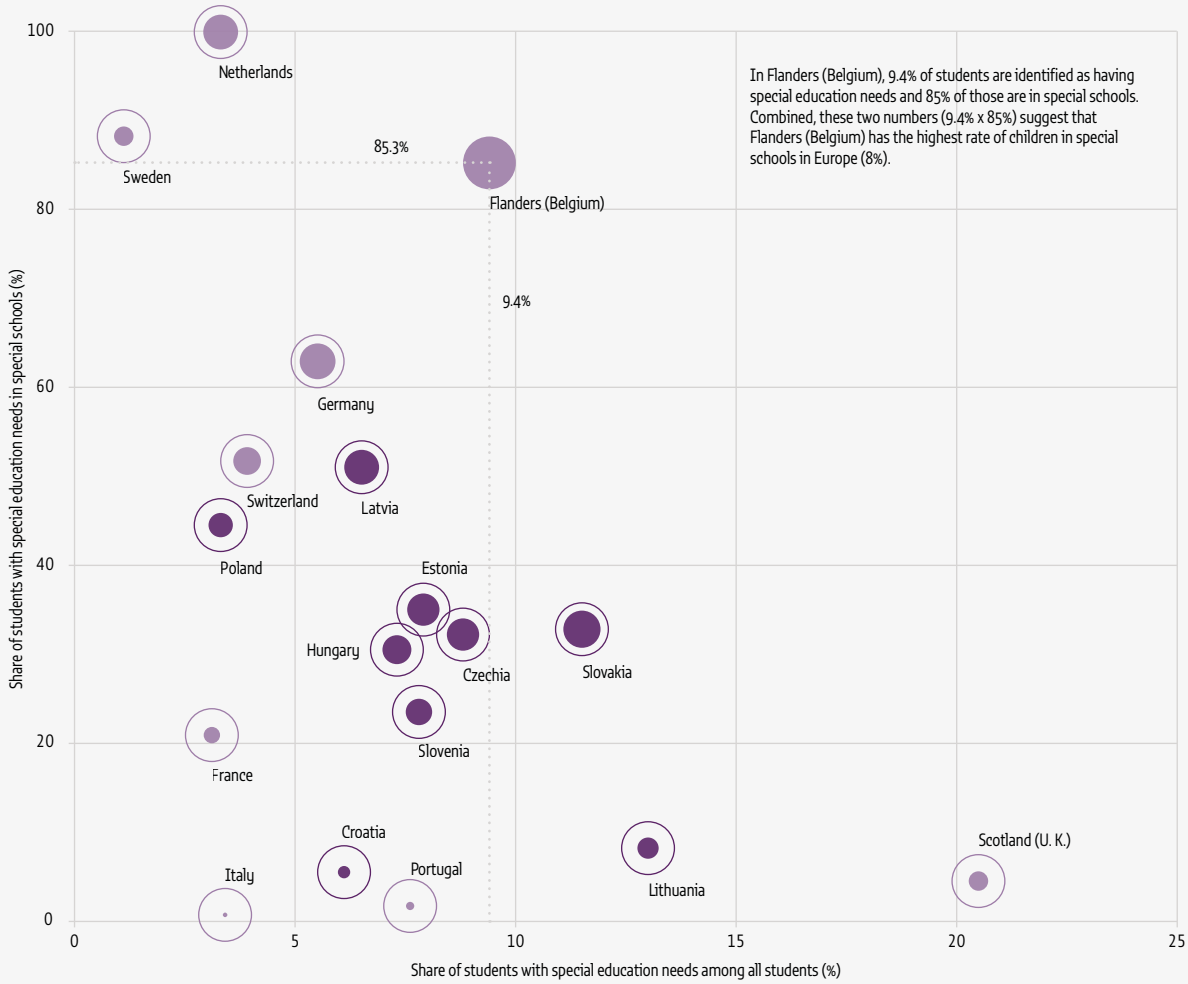
Labels affect those labelled and are self-confirming

Data collection must be carefully conducted to do no harm. Identification of children with special education needs must strike a balance. On the one hand, identification can inform teachers of student needs. Schools rely on this information to target accommodations. In some countries, identification guides individualized education plans for learners with special education needs. In the Czech Republic, assessment bodies indicate the degree of special education support needed, while head teachers are responsible for ensuring appropriate learning conditions. Some countries respond to parental requests for assessment, involve parents in the process and rely on parental approval for any decision on education placement.

FIGURE 3.10:

The share of students with special education needs in special schools varies greatly across Europe

Share of primary and secondary school students designated with special education needs among all students and in special schools, selected European education systems, 2014/15



Note: The share of the circle filled represents the share of students in special schools in relation to the highest value, recorded in the Flanders region of Belgium (8%).

Source: European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (2018).

On the other hand, there is a risk of peers, teachers and administrators reducing children to a label and behaving towards them according to stereotypes (Virkkunen et al., 2012). Low expectations triggered by a label, such as learning difficulties, can become self-fulfilling prophecy. Special needs labels make the labelled students vulnerable. Teachers may take a deterministic view that these students' ability and potential are fixed and cannot be changed by additional effort (Hart and Drummond, 2014). Labels can also shape expectations for a group. For instance, before children with Down's syndrome began benefiting from inclusive education, their learning environments were constrained and their developmental outcomes often limited. These limits were misinterpreted as inherent to what such children could achieve (Buckley, 2000).

When selective admission procedures prevail, assessments can limit the admission of learners with special education needs in inclusive settings. In Latvia, the multidisciplinary commission may recommend that learners with intellectual disabilities should follow special programmes and not sit state tests. In Ukraine, not all learners with special education needs are admitted to inclusive education (Alisauskiene and Onufryk, 2019).

Socio-economic characteristics can drive special needs categorization. In Romania, learners from minority or disadvantaged groups are more likely to be assessed as having special education needs and barred from enrolling in mainstream schools (Horga et al., 2016). In Slovakia, the share of Roma children placed in schools for children with mild disabilities continues to be disproportionately high (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016).

Most countries recognize and make specific arrangements to address the needs of learners with special needs. In some countries, such assessment is conducted by professional multidisciplinary teams at the local, regional or national level. These are known as categorization commissions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Inclusive Resource Centres in Ukraine and municipal assessment teams in other countries. Ensuring multidisciplinary assessment for all learners at any age in every education setting poses a financial and capacity challenge in many countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the focus may fall on detecting difficulties rather than potential.

Countries employ a variety of methods and many, such as Bulgaria, are undertaking reforms (**Box 3.3**). In some, schools and teachers conduct assessment for individualized education plans. Hungary, through its Diagnostic Developmental Testing System, known as Difer, carries out an initial and mandatory baseline survey to assess basic skills of school-age children. But many countries lack well-developed, reliable tools to assess general and special learning needs and the progress of the students concerned. In Belarus, a lack of comprehensive diagnostic tools means that medical diagnoses define education pathways, often resulting in placement in segregated special settings that do not take children's potential and needs into account. Latvia and Kazakhstan face difficulties in assessing learners with intellectual disabilities. In Slovakia, psychological assessment in school does not fully consider Roma students' socio-economic background. The Russian Federation and Serbia lack special procedures and assessment materials for dyslexia.

Whether labels are formally or informally assigned and whether they are made public or kept private are important considerations in assessing labelling's implications (Riddick, 2000). Screening and providing evidence-based general advice to schools on inclusive teaching may work better than identifying affected students (Tymms and Merrell, 2006).

The potentially detrimental effects of diagnoses, labels and categories can be minimized so that they inform rather than determine practice. In a break from categories defined in terms of medical conditions, Portugal recently legislated

BOX 3.3:

Bulgaria is improving identification of special education needs

As countries adopt an inclusive approach to education, they need to reform the way they identify special education needs. In Bulgaria, the Ministry of Education and Science and its 28 regional inclusive education centres, in collaboration with UNICEF, have been introducing the ICF into education since 2018. This classification is based on the biopsychosocial model, combining aspects of the social and medical models in disability assessment. It is designed to document not only children's characteristics but also the influence of their environment.

The ministry plans to introduce a functional assessment toolkit in at least 400 schools and kindergartens under the Support for Inclusive Education project. About 15 teachers in each school and kindergarten, or about 6,000 teachers in all, will be involved in cascade training on the toolkit's implementation. About 12,000 students, or 30 per education institution, on average, will be covered when functional assessment of special education needs is rolled out by 2021. A methodology for conducting functional assessment in the Bulgarian context is also planned. This new model will improve local teams' expertise to support personal development, improving the quality of additional education support geared to children's individual profiles.

a non-categorical approach to determining special needs, focusing instead on level of support given.

The medical approach promotes a 'wait to fail' attitude: Diagnosis outside the learning setting is accompanied by an expectation that the student will fail without intervention. A non-categorical approach has implications for data. Instead of aggregate statistics on the number of students with specific conditions, data refer to the number of students who receive support, where they receive it, for how long and how effective it is. The use of special education needs categories for instructional purposes can be separated from the use of a reduced set of categories for resource allocation (Norwich, 2014).

DATA FOR INCLUSION: THE POLICIES AND RESULTS COUNTRIES MONITOR VARY

Data on the education attainment and achievement of various groups help describe their situation and prompt policy responses from education and other ministries. Implementation of these responses needs to be monitored, within a clear results framework, to achieve progress on making systems more inclusive.
This section analyses three key monitoring areas: progress towards inclusion and desegregation in schools, collection of qualitative data on inclusive teaching practices, and inclusive approaches to data collection.

Student segregation occurs at several levels

A key tenet of inclusion is ensuring that the diversity of the school-aged population is represented in every classroom. In practice, this goal is undermined by the existence of special schools and of special classes within mainstream schools and by residential and other geographical disparities.

Information on the share of students in special schools is incomplete

A key system-level question is the extent to which children are in the same classrooms regardless of background. While enrolment in separate schools is the most easily identified form of segregation, statistics on intermediate arrangements, such as mainstream classes with special support or special and mainstream schools on shared premises, are rarely available. This scarcity reflects the variety of possible and potentially concurrent arrangements and the lack of standardized nomenclature and clear-cut boundaries (Hornby, 2015).

In Europe, large variation is observed in the percentages of students identified with special needs, as mentioned above, but also in the percentages of those enrolled in special schools and in segregated classes. Poland and Lithuania have similar shares of students in special schools (about 1.5%). However, in Lithuania such students make up just 1 in 10 of the 13% identified with special education needs. By contrast, while far fewer Polish students are identified with special needs, almost one in two of them is in a special school. Overall, one in three students identified with special needs in Central and Eastern European countries is placed in a special school, compared with one in two in northern European countries (and all, or almost all, in Flanders [Belgium], the Netherlands and Sweden) and less than one in five in southern European countries (and almost none in Italy and Portugal). Latvia and Slovakia rank among the countries with the highest shares of students in special schools in Europe (Figure 3.10).

Nevertheless, the percentage of students with disabilities attending special schools has been falling in both Latvia and Slovakia at a rate similar to the regional average, which fell from 78% in 2005/06 to 53% in 2015/16. Other countries have made faster progress. In Serbia, where all children with disabilities were in special schools in 2008/09, the share had fallen to 36% seven years later. Other countries that made rapid progress from a starting point where all children with disabilities were enrolled in special schools were Armenia (to 27% in seven years), Montenegro (to 21% in seven years) and Tajikistan (to 26% in just two years). The Republic of Moldova also made spectacular progress, reducing the share from 77% to 9% in 10 years (**Figure 3.11**).

However, it should be noted that reducing numbers in special schools does not automatically mean more inclusion; non-inclusive alternative arrangements, such as special classes, may emerge.

Countries have also addressed the need to move children without parental care out of residential institutions. Faced with harsh conditions during the post-Soviet transition, many parents opted for residential care, especially in the case of children with disabilities. The phenomenon peaked in around 2000 but there was a slow decline from 973 to 683 per 100,000 children in residential care between 2005 and 2015. Georgia and the Republic of Moldova have made rapid progress (**Figure 3.12**).

> One in three students identified with special needs in Central and Eastern European countries are placed in special schools

The concentration of vulnerable students varies by country

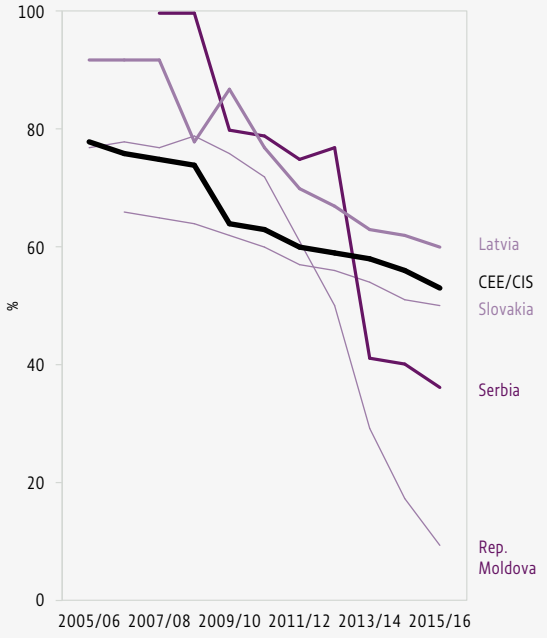
Even where each school follows inclusive practices, the education system as a whole may not be inclusive. In addition to selective admission policies and streaming into different tracks, poor or ethnic minority families are often clustered in certain localities and schools. As such schools are not identified explicitly in education statistics as schools for poor or minority students, there is no direct equivalent to special school enrolment statistics. Learning assessments, such as PISA, are an alternative source on segregation, as they collect information on schools' and students' socio-economic characteristics. Three indices provide complementary perspectives.

The first measure of inclusivity is based on student population diversity in terms of economic, social and cultural status, a measure of socio-economic background drawing on students' home resources, parental education and occupation. PISA defines as an index of social inclusion the percentage of variation in status resulting from differences within rather than between schools. The more diversity within schools, the more inclusive the education system.

FIGURE 3.11:

The Republic of Moldova and Serbia have made rapid progress in moving children with disabilities out of special schools

Percentage of children with disabilities in education who attended special schools, selected countries, 2005/06–2015/16

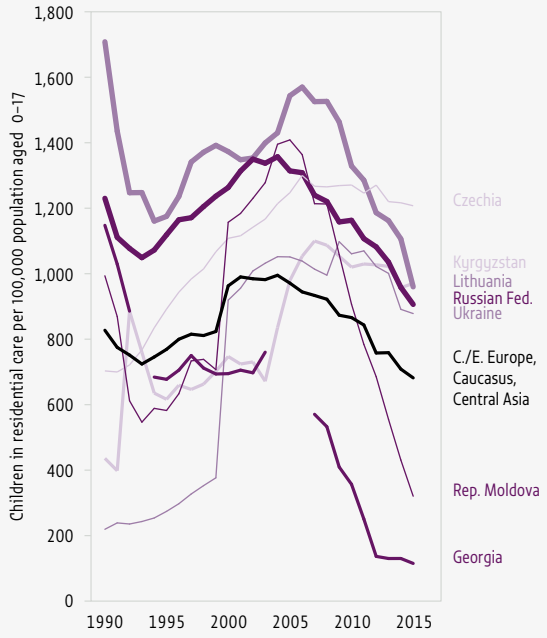


Note: CEE/CIS: Central and Eastern Europe Commonwealth of Independent States.
Source: Based on the TransMONEE 2019 database.

FIGURE 3.12:

A move towards deinstitutionalization began in 2005 but progress is slow

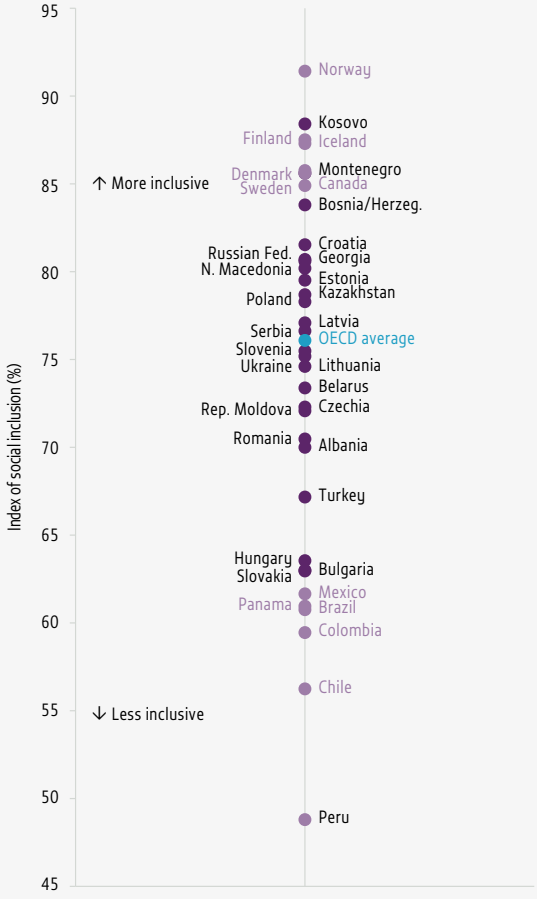
Rate of children in residential care at the end of the year, per 100,000 population aged 0–17, 1990–2015



Source: Based on the TransMONEE 2019 database.

In 2018, 76% of the variation among 15-year-old students in countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was observed within schools and 24% between schools. The same median value was observed for countries and territories in the region. While they did not match the five Latin American countries that had the lowest index values, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia were the least inclusive education systems in the region; their values matched those of Indonesia and Thailand. By contrast, three education systems in south-eastern Europe, those of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo[4] and Montenegro, were the most inclusive on this definition, matching the index value of Scandinavian countries (**Figure 3.13**). However, it is important to note that, for instance, in Montenegro in 2018, the out-of-school rate among the poorest youth of upper secondary school age was 36%, which means the index value is overestimated, as it does not take these marginalized populations into account. The index also does not take into account segregation along ethnic lines.

FIGURE 3.13:
In Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, there are large differences between schools in student socio-economic background
Index of social inclusion, selected education systems, 2018



Notes: The index of social inclusion is the percentage of variation in the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status of 15-year-old students that results from differences within rather than between schools.
Source: OECD (2019a).

The second measure of inclusivity reported by PISA tries to capture peer effects. The isolation index measures the probability that an average student from one group will be in contact at school with members of another group. It ranges from zero (no segregation) to one (full segregation). A variant of the index measures the probability of disadvantaged students (say, from the bottom 25% in terms of economic, social and cultural status) being exposed to high-achieving students. In 2018, the average value of the index of disadvantaged students' isolation from high-achieving students in reading in OECD countries was 0.67, which means a typical disadvantaged student in terms of socio-economic status had a 16% chance of being enrolled in the same school as a high-achieving student, while the likelihood would have been 25% if both populations were randomly mixed in schools (OECD, 2019b). The same median value was observed for countries and territories in the region. However, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia had among the world's highest values of the index, which means disadvantaged students were concentrated in schools with few high-achieving peers. By contrast, Estonia and Kosovo[4] had low values of the index (**Figure 3.14**).

One explanation for the significant differences in index values across countries and territories in the region may be that students in some countries are more likely to make up for their disadvantage to reach a high level of achievement. On average in OECD countries, 11% of students from the bottom quartile of socio-economic status scored in the top quartile in reading. In Croatia, Estonia, Kazakhstan and Kosovo,[4] the share was higher than 15%, while in Bulgaria it was 6.5% and in Hungary it was 7.7% (OECD, 2019b).

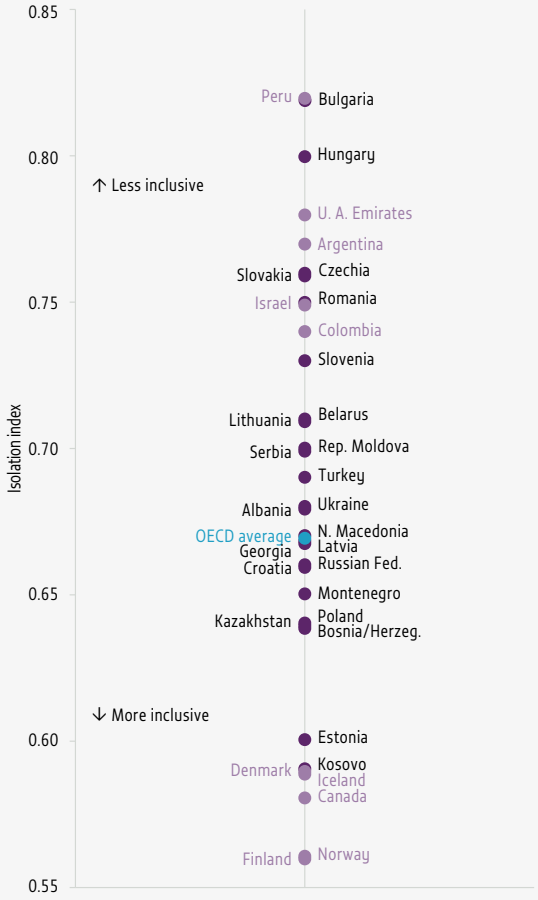
A third measure concerns the extent to which social diversity at the school and country levels mirror each other. The countries with the lowest degree of social diversity within schools – in other words, displaying the highest levels of social segregation – were Albania and Slovakia; the latter had the second-highest value of all countries that took part in the 2018 PISA. The values of Albania and Slovakia were twice as high as those of Croatia and North Macedonia.

4 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

While Roma children are much less likely than non-Roma to attend school, those who do attend have often been educated separately. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, most Roma children were educated in majority Roma schools. Special needs identification has been used to segregate Roma children in special schools or in segregated classes within mixed schools, with separate entrances and cafeterias. In one of the few comparative studies, at least 5% of Roma in Croatia, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova and Romania, and at least 10% in Bulgaria and Slovakia, attended segregated classes in mainstream schools (Brüggemann, 2012).

Such practices continue, as country-specific data suggest. In Slovakia, Roma constituted 63% of all children in special classes and 42% of those in special schools in 2018. Classes to support children who were not ready for the first grade of primary school were almost exclusively Roma. In 2018, a Metropolitan Court ruling in Hungary obliged the education ministry to stop admitting new students to 44 segregated schools and imposed a fine to be used on monitoring desegregation (European Commission, 2019).

FIGURE 3.14:
The probability of a disadvantaged student being in the same school as high-achieving students differs significantly by country
Index of disadvantaged students' isolation from high-achieving students in reading, selected education systems, 2018



Notes: The isolation index measures the probability that a student who belongs to the bottom 25% in terms of socio-economic status will be in the same school as students from the top 25% in terms of learning proficiency in reading. It ranges from zero (no segregation) to one (full segregation). References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).
Source: OECD (2019).

Monitoring of inclusion in schools should be ambitious

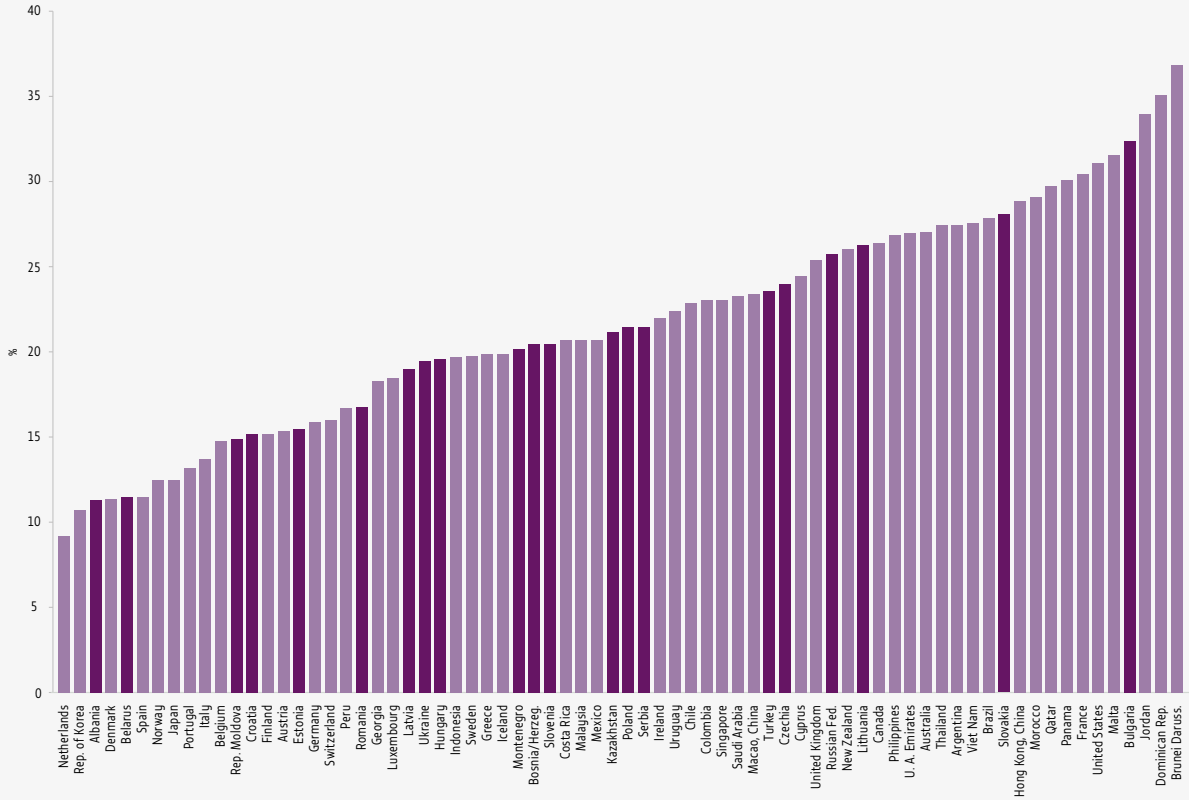
Monitoring inclusive education means monitoring the quality of education of all children. In the region, 25 education systems reported having frameworks for quality assurance across all levels of the system, while 17 had frameworks to monitor and evaluate implementation of policies on inclusion in education. In the Estonian Education Information System, every school can see the recommendations of an external advisory team on implementation of support services and school management measures. The Ministry of Education and Research external evaluation department regularly monitors the data schools enter, comparing them with the advisory team recommendations. When measures taken by a school are not consistent with the recommendations, clarification is requested and advice provided. Administrative supervision may be initiated.

Countries often lack a unified data collection authority. Various authorities and procedures are involved, without cooperation. In Belarus, data on children with disabilities and special education needs are collected by the education, health, and labour and social protection ministries for their own purposes, but the data often do not match. In Bulgaria, state and municipal institutions' databases are not synchronized. Moldovan districts lack a single system collecting and processing data on students. In Ukraine, the education, health and social sectors have no national database on children from birth.
Some countries, such as Serbia, are working on linking children's individual education records to personal

> "In Slovakia, Roma constituted 63% of all children in special classes and 42% of those in special schools in 2018"

4 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

FIGURE 3.15:
About 2 in 10 students feel like outsiders at school
Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that they feel like outsiders or left out at school, selected countries, 2018



Source: OECD (2019b).

identification numbers to follow them through the education system and coordinate education with health and social support measures.

Governments tend to collect data mainly to support resource allocation. In particular, data on specific groups of learners identified as needing additional resources are used to prepare budgets. In the Republic of Moldova, data record students with special education needs to quantify the volume of services needed. In Slovakia, such data are part of the school funding formula, which assigns a weight to these learners. In Ukraine, data are used to calculate transfers from the state budget to local budgets to provide support for children/students with special education needs.

The focus of data collection on learners with special education needs and disabilities is a historical legacy. Inclusion-related data collection must focus on the entire school-age population. Countries need to broaden the purposes and uses of data collection and ensure that data cover inclusive pedagogical practice, not just resource redistribution.

Comprehensive reviews confirm there is a lack of evidence on special pedagogy for teaching children with special needs (Davis et al., 2004; Nind and Wearmouth, 2004; Rix and Sheehy, 2014). Teachers who can teach students with special needs effectively are also the most effective overall (Jordan and McGhie-Richmond, 2014).

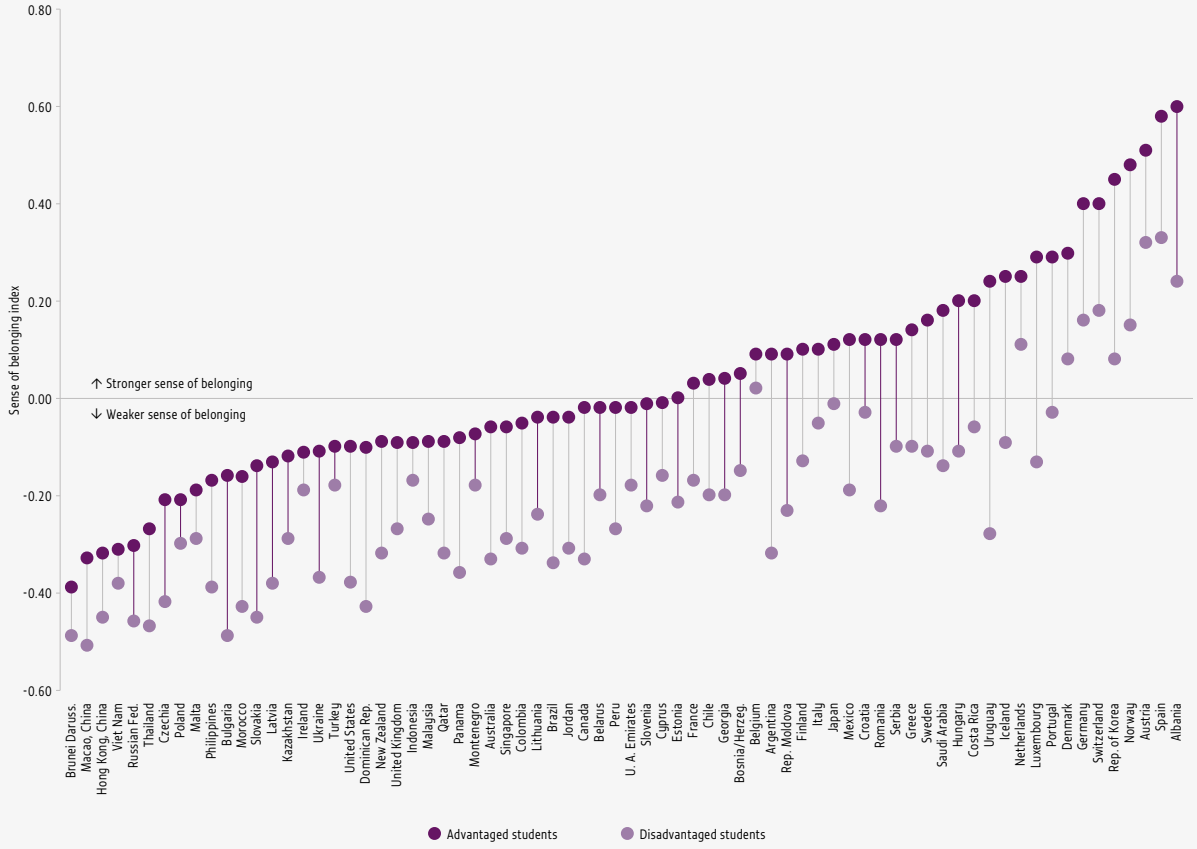
Information on the education outcomes of children belonging to various groups gives, at best, a limited view of their experience of exclusion and inclusion. Students can be physically in a class but not belong to it socially (Ferguson, 2008). Learners can be subject to humiliating treatment whether they belong to a specific group or not.

Few data on student experiences exist, and outsiders have only limited and irregular opportunities to observe classrooms (Kuper et al., 2018; Price, 2018). Feelings of relating and belonging affect learning (Alton-Lee, 2003; Porter et al., 2013). An environment that allows students to be persistently mocked cannot be genuinely inclusive, whether ridicule is directed at a disability or group

FIGURE 3.16:

Disadvantaged students feel they do not belong at school

Sense of belonging index, by socio-economic status, selected countries, 2018



Note: The sense of belonging index is based on responses to the following questions: 'I feel like an outsider (or left out of things) at school', 'I make friends easily at school', 'I feel like I belong at school', 'I feel awkward and out of place in my school', 'Other students seem to like me' and 'I feel lonely at school'. The value of zero is the average for OECD countries.

Source: OECD (2019b).

membership or at physical appearance, motor skills, an uncommon name or new-student status (Dare et al., 2017; Oravec, 2012).

Cross-national learning achievement surveys tend to ask questions on sense of belonging. In the 2018 PISA, students in the region were, on average, three percentage points less likely than students in other regions to report feeling like outsiders at school. Around 1 in 10 students in Albania and Belarus reported feeling like an outsider at school. In Bulgaria and Slovakia, 3 in 10 students did so, consistent with the measures of inclusion reported earlier (**Figure 3.15**). From this and other questions, such as whether they feel lonely at school, an index of sense of belonging has been calculated.

Schools in every participating country fall far short of making students from all socio-economic backgrounds feel equally as though they belong. Students in the Czech Republic, Poland and the Russian Federation had the lowest values in this index (**Figure 3.16**).

While this information is available at the system level, detailed data should be captured at the school level through the education management information system (EMIS) so that the data can inform policy and monitor implementation and outcomes. Globally, however, this is rarely done. A country that leverages its EMIS for inclusion is New Zealand, which systematically monitors soft indicators, including on whether students feel cared for, safe and secure, and on their ability to establish and maintain positive relationships, respect others' needs and show empathy (New Zealand Education Review Office, 2016).

> The Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia has been integrated within the school quality assurance policy

Data collection should promote inclusion

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning should not only serve the function of collecting data on inclusion but also be inclusive in methodology and actively foster inclusion (Save the Children, 2016). Collecting data on inclusion can itself be part of making schools and systems more inclusive. The choice of indicators directs attention to issues that may have been ignored. School self-assessments are part of the search for ways to overcome barriers to inclusion.

The Index for Inclusion is the most prominent holistic framework of school-level indicators across the domains of inclusive cultures, policies and practices (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). The index can be adapted to local contexts through school self-evaluations and value frameworks (Carrington and Duke, 2014). It has been translated into 40 languages and adapted and used in many countries (Index for Inclusion Network, 2019).

The Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia, initiated by UNICEF and the government's Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, is a well-elaborated framework suitable for national adoption. It includes indicators for inter-sectoral monitoring and identifies minimal and optimal indicator sets, including for identifying disparity among school authorities, municipalities and schools in terms of inclusion success. It has clear reporting cycles and assigned roles for information collection. It also envisages consolidation of information from school and municipal reports, the national statistical office, the national EMIS, other organizations' research, and special surveys (Serbia Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and UNICEF, 2014). The framework has been integrated within the overall school quality assurance policy and quality standards for schools (Nedeljkovic, 2019).

Inclusive data collection asks questions of, and on, all concerned, from head teachers and teachers to government officials, local partners, parents and students. Community-based surveys can respond to this challenge. A community-based EMIS in Tajikistan that collected information on out-of-school children and attendance of enrolled children both motivated community solutions and informed district policies (Save the Children, 2016).

For non-academic outcomes, it is important to consult with children and young people directly and elicit their views, not only to monitor outcomes but also to foster inclusive practices (Messiou, 2008). Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly requires student consultation. This is possible even if the child has communication difficulties or limited formal language skills (Fayette and Bond, 2017). Ensuring that children can express dissent, including non-verbally, and that all children's voices are heard is a crucial consideration (Porter, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Data on inclusion deliver a clear message: Many millions continue to be excluded from education access and success. Among them, disproportionately, are those living in poverty; ethnic and linguistic minorities; people with disabilities; and, especially, those experiencing intersecting sources of discrimination and disadvantage. To reach the excluded requires understanding who they are and the barriers they face.

Many countries still struggle to collect meaningful data for inclusion of educationally vulnerable populations. Comprehensive data collection that helps monitor equity and inclusion without creating stigma at the individual level is possible. Inclusion of data on qualitative experiences at the school level in the national EMIS is needed. Comprehensive data on inclusion must cover inputs, processes and outcomes at all levels of the system and on all learners.

Monitoring education inequality at the system level requires identifying specific groups. Whether involving ethnicity or poverty, such categorization will always be imperfect. With respect to disability, the Washington Group's set of survey questions and the Module on Child Functioning, which adapts them to children, form a contribution in line with the social model that can improve comparability between countries.

By contrast, inclusion at the individual learner level is best served by avoiding categorization and labels as much as possible. Assumptions about what learners can or cannot do, based on assigned categories, should be replaced with understanding of every individual's abilities and their experience of exclusion and inclusion.

Maria, 17 years old, living with cerebral palsy, is an advocate for other adolescents with disabilities in Bulgaria. Maria has perfect English, great communication skills and artistic aspirations, but because she moves her arms and body much slower than her peers, it was difficult for her to complete school tests in the time required. Due to Maria's advocacy, Cambridge University changed its language certification rules. The university kept the content but changed the amount of time adolescents with disabilities are given to complete the test.

Credit: UNICEF/UN0338737/Nabrdalik VII

CHAPTER

4

Governance and finance

KEY MESSAGES

Horizontal collaboration across ministries is widespread in the region.

- Most countries have inter-ministerial bodies to integrate services that promote inclusive education. In Lithuania, the education, health and social ministries have agreed to jointly develop measures to help children identified with autism or other developmental disabilities.
- Government structures need to reinforce collaboration on producing and sharing data on vulnerable learners. The Russian Federation reformed its needs identification system to engage multiple government services.

Vertical collaboration between central and local authorities is needed for delivering inclusion.

- Decentralization needs to be supported with funds and human resources. In Estonia, while county education departments usually have only a supervisory role, some counties have proactively established development plans and encouraged school network building.
- Some countries integrate services both horizontally and vertically. In the context of the process for relocating and resettling third-country asylum seekers and refugees, Croatia's 2017–20 Action Plan for Integration engages representatives from ministries and agencies, NGOs and humanitarian organizations but also local and regional government.
- Coordinated actions on quality assurance are crucial. Romania's education ministry, county school inspectorates and quality assurance agency follow different procedures and do not collaborate in assessing schools.

Governments engage non-government and international actors to varying degrees.

- Cooperation between governments and non-government actors varies by country. In Albania, NGOs were involved in the design and implementation of the National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians.
- International actors can influence inclusive education. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the concept of inclusive education was introduced in an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe strategy that later became the basis for policies, laws and regulations.

Local management responsibilities must be clearly outlined to support efficient resource use.

- Decentralized governance needs clear mandates. In Slovakia, a high degree of school financial autonomy enables schools to promote improvement. Slovenia's school councils have autonomy to decide annual work plans while taking national regulations into account.

Disability-inclusive education funding must be sustainable and promote efficient resource use.

- Special, separate education funding linked to formal decisions of social and medical services leads to strategic behaviour by parents, schools and local authorities seeking eligibility for resources. In the Russian Federation, mainstream and special schools operate in parallel, as mainstream schools do not receive additional funds to enrol students with special needs.
- Countries should allocate funds based on recognized needs of schools or local authorities for support services. In the Czech Republic, a per pupil allocation is being replaced by an amount per staff member that aims to take into account the cost of support measures and salary levels.

External financing has been supportive of inclusive education reforms.

- Turkey's successful conditional cash transfer programme was scaled up in 2017 to reach Syrian and other refugee children, with European Commission and UNICEF support.
- The European Social Fund has supported various social cohesion reforms, including an educational counselling system in Estonia and a new Roma education model in Slovakia.

Effective implementation of legislation and policy can be facilitated or hindered by the way governance and finance structures are organized and collaboration between the two occurs. Governance relates to interactions among actors (OECD, 2015), to roles and responsibilities across government levels and to capacity in local government and communities (European Agency, 2017). It involves top-down policy dynamics but also collaboration between government and non-government stakeholders. An effective balance between centralization and decentralization strategies (Caldwell, 2009; European Agency, 2017) is a key consideration within governance debates. Each type of strategy has advantages and disadvantages for specific categories of actors responsible and accountable for inclusive education. That is also the case with funding systems aimed at ensuring that resources are allocated equitably to schools and that all learners have access to education opportunities of good quality (European Agency, 2018).

This chapter addresses collaboration, cooperation and coordination in governance and financing. It first considers the need to break down silos in policy formulation and implementation and looks at how education ministries establish partnerships between education levels, between government levels, with other sectors and with non-government stakeholders. It then examines the financing of services for equity and inclusion, including mechanisms to allocate education resources to regions, schools and students. It also discusses social protection programmes that target vulnerable groups and can affect education, and reviews the role of external financing.

COLLABORATION IS A PRECONDITION FOR EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Avoiding overlaps or gaps in responsibility is important for delivering inclusive education efficiently and sustainably.

Collaboration can happen between ministries (horizontal), between tiers of government (vertical) or, in a few cases, both (**Box 4.1**).

Integrated services with interventions from education, social assistance and health departments help address learners' needs in several areas of individual care and fulfil their rights. Integrated models improve service provision and can lead to cost-effectiveness in the education and care of vulnerable children and learners. Depending on a country's level of centralization, clear processes for sharing responsibility for the education of disadvantaged learners among central, regional and local authorities may be needed to ensure no student falls between the cracks.

Whether horizontal or vertical, collaboration can cover several areas. Analysis of responses from 30 education systems in the region showed that collaboration in policy development, implementation and coordination was the most common form both between ministries and between tiers of government. The second most common form involved identification of needs and referral to services. Collaboration on data was more common between the central and local levels, following the usual flow of information, and less common between ministries. Two-thirds of education systems reviewed identified monitoring and evaluation processes, along with quality assurance and accountability mechanisms, as another area of shared responsibility (**Figure 4.1**).

Horizontal collaboration between government departments takes many forms

Cooperation between ministries whose work affects vulnerable learners – usually the ministries dealing with education, health, labour and social affairs – is crucial, especially in national strategy implementation. In Kyrgyzstan, collaboration to transfer children without parental care from boarding schools to families takes place within the framework of European Union (EU) budget support to the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

In Lithuania, three ministries (Health; Education, Science, and Sport; and Social Security and Labour) have agreed to jointly develop measures to help children identified with autism or other developmental disabilities and their parents. Montenegro's inclusive education strategy aims to improve collaboration between the healthcare, child and social protection and education sectors to deliver coordinated services for children with special needs, as well as coordinated psychosocial and financial support to families.

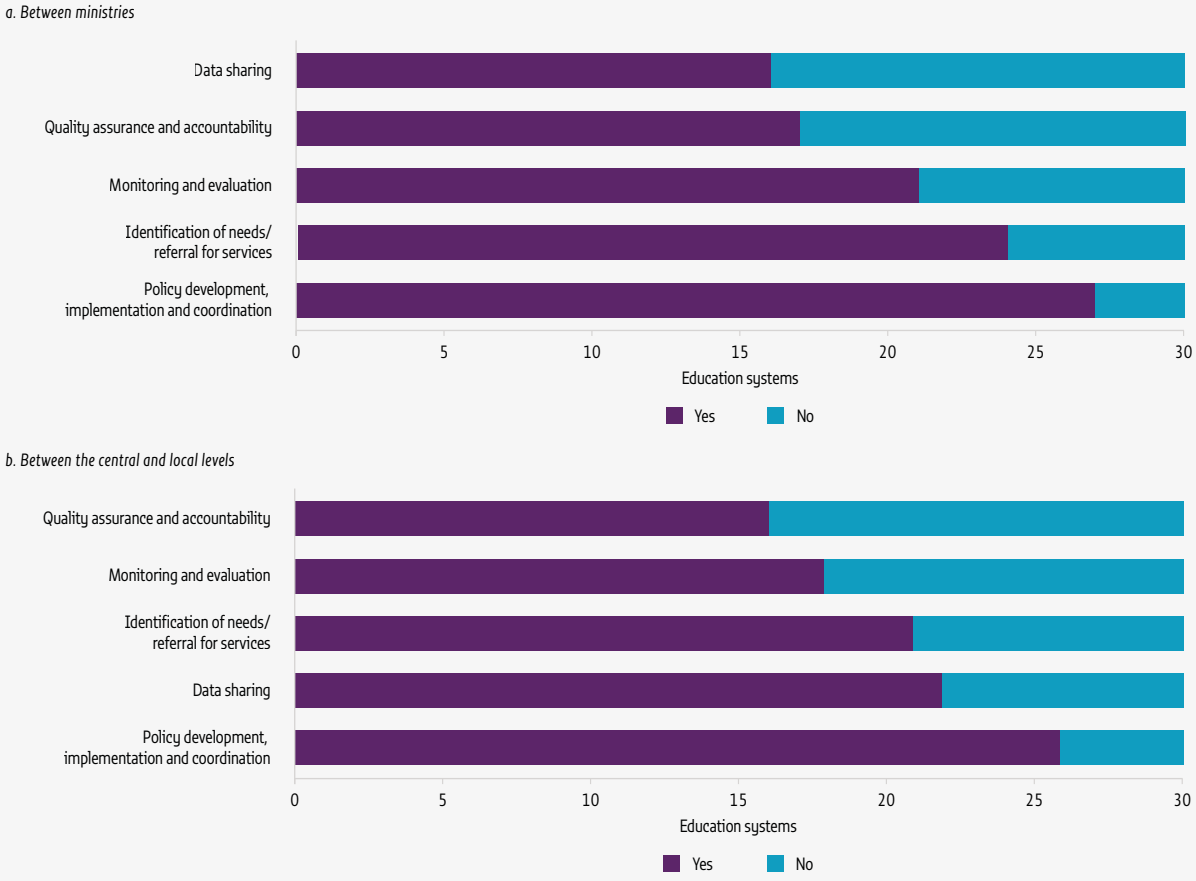
Poland is working on a new model of education for all that ensures that all relevant ministries are involved

in consultation on inclusive education (notably the ministries of Family, Labour and Social Policy; Health; Science and Higher Education; Development Funds and Regional Policy; and Justice). In Turkey, a cooperation protocol between the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of National Education aims to make schools and the surrounding environment safe.

Government structures need to reinforce collaboration on producing and sharing data concerning vulnerable learners. Bulgaria has a cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Agency for People with Disabilities for exchange of statistics on children and learners with disabilities. In Georgia, a 2017 memorandum between the education and health ministries calls for sharing of information about learners with special education needs, but it still needs to be formalized as an official document. The Russian Federation reformed its needs identification system engaging multiple government services (**Box 4.2**).

In some countries, education ministries are the main coordinators of inclusive education, with various levels of involvement from other ministries and departments. In Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Education leads the development, implementation and coordination of inclusion in education but partners with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Health and the State Examination Center State Program on Inclusion. In Serbia, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has set up a joint body for coordination and supervision of intersectoral committees. It functions as an advisory group and has representatives from all relevant ministries (health, social affairs, public and local affairs).

FIGURE 4.1:
Horizontal and vertical collaboration is most common in policy development, implementation and coordination
Number of education systems with some form of collaboration in inclusive education delivery



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

In a few countries, policy appears to be implemented solely by the education ministry, with little if any horizontal integration. The Belarus Activity Plan of Implementation of the Concept of Inclusive Education for 2016–20 indicates the Ministry of Education acts alone.

Social inclusion policies sometimes support inclusive education provision

Some social affairs ministries, strongly engaged with specific groups of vulnerable learners, coordinate policies and initiatives that have an impact on inclusive education. In Albania, implementation of the 2015–20 National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians is monitored by an inter-ministerial committee chaired by the deputy minister of social welfare and youth and composed of deputy ministers from other relevant ministries. Responsibility for monitoring implementation lies with line ministries, which use data collection focal points to identify information gaps. A programme of activities related to enrolling out-of-school children refers to collaboration in the form of local multisector working groups and referrals of families of children 'at risk for abandoning compulsory education to social protection services and other sources of support'.

In Hungary, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Disability Affairs was established in 2015 as an advisory and consultative committee operated by the State Secretariat of Social Affairs and Social Inclusion. Every ministry and state secretariat (including that of education)

designates a member. In 2016, the government launched a cross-sectoral programme to harmonize early childhood services and support, which involved the education, social protection and health sectors.

Generally, however, in countries where other ministries lead policies for vulnerable populations, inclusive education receives limited attention. In Kazakhstan, models of inclusive education that would unite the efforts of all interested ministries and departments, especially in monitoring, are still to be developed. Romania has many institutions and processes to monitor and evaluate the education system, but the country still needs to develop strategies on how to use collected data to develop policies for quality and equity in education (Kitchen et al., 2017).

> “Generally, in countries where other ministries lead policies for vulnerable populations, inclusive education receives limited attention”

BOX 4.1:

In Armenia and Croatia, horizontal and vertical collaboration improve inclusive education governance

Horizontal and vertical collaboration and responsibility sharing related to disadvantaged learners are sometimes practiced jointly. Armenia established an informal cross-ministerial work group in 2019 to coordinate the introduction of universal inclusive education. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport coordinated the activities, but the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs participated, as did regional and municipal government representatives. Representatives of non-government organizations (NGOs) and experts in the field were also invited to take part.

In Croatia, the 2017–20 Action Plan for Integration engages representatives from the relevant ministries, central state administration offices, the Croatian Employment Service, the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs and civil society organizations, and national and international humanitarian organizations working with refugees. Local and regional self-government representatives intensified their engagement and involvement only recently, since the launch of a process for relocating and resettling third-country asylum seekers and refugees to Croatia in line with the quotas the country assumed as an EU member state. Their participation also grew as a result of the need to develop a national operational plan for a systematic, even and sustainable model for distributing this population across local communities all over the country.

BOX 4.2:

The Russian Federation has reorganized its needs identification system to make it more inclusive

The Russian Federation has been trying to leave behind a legacy of needs identification based on the medical model. First piloted in Moscow, with the purpose of assisting children with autistic spectrum disorders and their families, the Psychological-Medical and Pedagogical Commissions have been established throughout the country since 2013 with a broader scope based on a new form of interdepartmental cooperation. They are responsible for psychological, medical and pedagogical assessment and the identification of physical and intellectual development disabilities (Russian Federation Ministry of Education and Science, 2013).

The commissions build on the principle of social partnership. Educational psychologists work together with social educators, professionals in social rehabilitation and law enforcement agencies. They provide joint recommendations on medical and pedagogical assistance and the most appropriate education placement. This interdisciplinary and interagency cooperation has been an important step towards a more inclusive system (Alekhina and Falkovskaya, 2017). The multisectoral approach has necessitated the addition of functional collaborative and mediation skills under the professional standards of university programmes for education psychologists. The commissions are central to the comprehensive early intervention concept and services for children with developmental difficulties (Russian Federation Government, 2016a). Building on its success, the model is intended to be applied to psychology services in education (Russian Federation Government, 2016b).

Vertical collaboration is needed to ensure the sustainability of inclusive education

As in other parts of the world, a move towards greater decentralization as a basis for more effective provision of services such as inclusive education has characterized the region. In Lithuania, central institutions, municipalities and schools are jointly responsible for education quality. Identification of learner needs takes place at three levels. At the school level, a child welfare commission assesses learners with input from parents. At the municipal level, a pedagogical-psychological service identifies special needs and determines their causes, while an education unit of the municipal administration provides assistance to children and families residing in the municipality. At the central level, the National Agency for Education designs learning aids and implements national projects and programmes.

In the Republic of Moldova, various structures have recently been created and developed to support inclusion, among them psycho-pedagogical assistance services for children and young people, resource centres, day centres for children and young people with severe disabilities, and community centres. The new support services are based on the social model of disability, which builds on strengths and focuses on the needs of children, young people and their families.

The challenge is to combine such measures with the necessary funding and with human resource capacity development in municipal and other local authorities. In Estonia, county education departments usually have only a supervisory role. However, some counties have proactively established development plans and encouraged school network building. Other counties do not see themselves as prepared for this role, as the ministry often takes the lead in communicating directly with them on matters of school networks.

In Slovakia, an action plan in support of socio-economically challenged districts includes education as one of its focus areas. The plan aims to create conditions for access to high-quality education for all learners near where they live so as to increase social inclusion and improve learning outcomes.

In Slovenia, the government has prioritized governance and monitoring mechanisms to reinforce cooperation and increase stakeholder accountability at the local and school levels. One suggested improvement is to give school administrations more autonomy in managing their budget.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the national legal framework for inclusive education takes different forms at the regional and local levels. This division can lead to lack of clarity on procedures for inclusion of learners with various needs in mainstream education and result in education system fragmentation. In addition, terminology differences lead to inconsistent use and understanding of the term 'learners with special needs', thus hindering vertical collaboration.

Partly because of such challenges, not all countries have decentralized education delivery. In Hungary, responsibility for schools was shifted in 2013 from municipalities to the Klebelsberg Centre, a central government institution. In 2016, in an effort to improve efficiency, 60 regional school district centres were created, with the Klebelsberg Centre retaining an intermediary function between ministry and districts. In this instance, centralization and over-regulation have prevented local municipalities from acting as responsible service providers for their communities.

Quality assurance mechanisms are relatively recent

Coordinated actions between the central and local governments with regard to quality assurance are crucial to achieving successful inclusive education practice. Sustaining education improvement in the longer term requires integration and mediation across each system level. Governments in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia have had to tackle the legacy of a medical approach to education of learners with disabilities and special education needs that focuses on deficiencies. Most have only relatively recently adopted more inclusive, rights-based approaches to the education of disadvantaged learners.

> "The challenge is to combine decentralization with the necessary funding and with human resource capacity development in municipal and other local authorities"

> In three-quarters of education systems, national strategies support monitoring and evaluation of education outcomes and inclusive education practices

In three-quarters of education systems, national strategies support monitoring and evaluation of education outcomes and inclusive education practices. Mongolia intends to ensure that education standards, focused on a child-centred approach and addressing individual learning needs, are used flexibly to support learning appropriate to local contexts. Montenegro identified a need for quality assurance and monitoring with development of standards. North Macedonia has prioritized development of a national standard for each primary education cycle, with a special focus on inclusiveness and respect for differences. The Republic of Moldova plans to review and draft minimum quality standards for support services in education institutions. Tajikistan cites a lack of standards as a constraint on further development.

In Bulgaria, a 2018 decree on a joint mechanism to address early school leaving ensures that institutions involved in education carry out coordinated follow-up of children. Municipalities and regional governments take part in the process. Municipalities determine coverage areas, coordinate municipal outreach teams, designate municipal staff to participate in these teams, and support parents in fulfilling their legal obligation to enrol children in school.

In Serbia, every municipality has an inter-sectoral committee that evaluates children's needs for support to overcome physical and social barriers in everyday activities important for education, community life and development. Each committee member monitors the proposed support measures' effects on a child from their field's perspective. The committee submits mandatory reports on its work at least twice a year.

Ukraine is developing quality assurance mechanisms at the central level. The 2017 education law introduced the concept of institutional audits to assess schools' activities and internal quality provision system according to standards related to school environment, assessment system, teacher work, management processes and organization of education processes based on learner-centred principles.

Coherence in quality assurance mechanisms for inclusive education remains a challenge in some countries. Romania's Ministry of National Education, County School Inspectorates and Agency for Quality Assurance in School Education have different procedures for externally assessing schools. These bodies sometimes duplicate each other's efforts, and schools must deal with multiple expectations (World Bank, 2017).

Several governments engage non-government actors to varying degrees

Cooperation between governments and non-government actors can greatly support implementation of inclusive education programmes. However, the degree to which NGOs participate in governance varies by country.

Education ministries have shown varying levels of support for NGO activities. In Albania, Roma and Egyptian NGOs were involved in the design and implementation of the National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians, while associations representing children with disabilities contributed to the Action Plan for People with Disabilities. The Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection in Kosovo, established in June 2011, consists of 27 local and international NGOs working in child protection.[1] The Kosova Education Center, an NGO, played a leading role in producing key strategic documents in education, which the government approved.

In the Russian Federation, a non-profit social organization, the Center for Curative Pedagogy, has been a pioneer in the promotion of inclusion in education. A group of teachers and parents of children with special education needs established it in 1989, at a time when government agencies proclaimed its target group of children 'unteachable'. In Serbia, NGOs were involved in developing a policy on teaching assistants (**Box 4.3**). In Ukraine, NGOs initiate and implement projects at the national level after submitting a request for administrative support to the Ministry of Education and Science.

In some countries, the scope of collaboration is limited. In Bulgaria, for instance, NGOs are not directly involved in governance, although they are involved in policymaking

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

BOX 4.3:

In Serbia, NGOs have taken part in policy proposals on teaching assistants

Inclusive education was introduced in Serbia as a strategic priority in 2009, but only recently has policy addressed the issue of teaching assistants. Based on the experience of pedagogical assistants supporting Roma families, a cross-sector working group was formed to work on a policy for assistants to support learners with special education needs. The group included representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit at the Office of the Prime Minister, the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation of the University of Belgrade, the Education Programme of UNICEF Serbia, the Association of Schools for Pupils with Developmental Disorders and Disabilities, the Institute for Education Evaluation, the Institute for Education Development, the National Council for the Roma National Minority and the Association for Pedagogical Assistance. The outcome was a rule book describing two types of teaching assistants.

The first type consists of pedagogical assistants for Roma students needing additional education support. These assistants are also expected to support teachers, educators and other professionals in teaching and extracurricular activities to improve their work with Roma students. Another important element of their work is to actively and continuously cooperate with students' families to improve the social, health and emotional status of the students.

The second type of assistant, in accordance with the 10-year practice of inclusive education in Serbia, aims to meet the need for pedagogical assistants for students with disabilities. The support they are to provide depends on the students' development, education and social needs.

Putting the rule book into practice faces major challenges. Amendments must be made to policies linked directly or indirectly to employment of assistants. A separate rule book on education institution financing must also be amended and additional budget sources found. However, publication of the rule book on teaching assistants makes other necessary policy changes possible.

and in piloting models for inclusive education in education institutions. Depending on the outcomes of such models, the legislation and documents that define inclusion policies are amended. In Montenegro, cooperation with NGOs is mostly on a project basis rather than through long-term commitment to include them in decision making and governance.

> "International organizations can influence the setting of the inclusive agenda"

In yet other countries, there is almost no collaboration with NGOs in governance. The Belarus alternative report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that legislation revision often happens behind closed doors and is not open to civil society organizations. In Hungary, NGO involvement in strategy making is limited. NGO representatives sometimes participate, as invited guests, in advisory bodies established by the government.

International organizations play a key role in inclusive education provision

International organizations can influence the setting of the inclusive agenda at a more advanced level than local associations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the concept of inclusive education was introduced in Education Reform Strategy: Five Pledges on Education, a document of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe that later became the basis for policies, laws and regulations in education.

In conjunction with the EU Structural Reform Support Programme, Lithuania has formed a working group with representatives from disabled people's organizations, education support specialist associations, school associations, municipal associations and the Ombudsman for Children, along with researchers. The group will make suggestions for improving the action plan for children's inclusion in learning and multidisciplinary education.

In North Macedonia, representatives of UNICEF, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Macedonian Civic Education Center were involved in drafting the new Law on Primary Education and the Law on Teachers and Associates in Primary and Secondary Education, as well as bylaws derived from them. The legislation provides for major changes in inclusive education.

In Turkey, international organizations' involvement in funding refugee education has led to improvement in the quality of data collected. Such examples suggest that, increasingly, these stakeholders have a strong positive impact on the decision-making process and the transparency of inclusive education governance.

COUNTRIES ARE RE-EXAMINING THEIR MECHANISMS FOR FINANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Achieving equity and inclusion requires adequate funds reaching schools and students according to need. Countries pursue policies of varying form and intensity to mitigate the education impact of vulnerabilities such as poverty, ethnicity, disability and remoteness. In general, three funding levers are important in analysing financing for equity and inclusion in education.

First, governments pursue an overall policy of financing local authorities or schools. Such policies range from those aimed at ensuring that every authority or school receives the same level of resources per student (equality) to those meant to take into account characteristics of areas, schools or their student populations (equity). Policies may vary by type of school or by type of financial, human resource or material input, with approaches for distribution of maintenance grants, for instance, differing from those for teacher appointments or equipment purchases. More rarely, allocation may be determined by outcomes or another performance element. General policies focusing on equality may be complemented by specific programmes compensating for disadvantage.

Second, education financing policies and programmes may target students and their families rather than authorities and schools. Such financing may be in the form of cash (e.g. scholarships), exemptions from fees or in-kind support (e.g. school meals).

Third, social protection programmes targeting students and families may affect equity and inclusion in education. Examples include conditional cash transfers or child grants with an education component that aim to address poverty. Targeting mechanisms tend to be well articulated and regularly evaluated.

For each funding lever, the key aspects to consider when examining the potential impact on equity are whether specific policies or programmes exist to reallocate resources to disadvantaged areas or populations (and, if so, using what targeting criteria); the absolute volume or relative depth of spending (e.g. average transfer size); and coverage in terms of percentage of schools, students or families reached.

How funds are transferred to schools, and how schools can use them, affects equity and inclusion

Governments tend to fund schools in proportion to the number of students. The general allocation is often complemented by criteria that assign different weights at the central or regional level before transferring funds to schools. The criteria typically cover diverse learning support needs, diverse languages and cultures, and diverse locations in remote rural or mountainous areas. Equity is not synonymous with equality. Unequal treatment of people with diverse backgrounds may be needed, providing differential funding for different student groups depending on their needs and the needs of the schools that ensure they are effectively supported.

Poland's government uses a formula based on the actual number of students, adapted by a system of weights reflecting conditions in a given school or area (e.g. rural areas, small towns, small schools); the variety and specificity of school tasks (e.g. special and integrated education, vocational education for particular economic sectors, sport schools, education for national and ethnic minorities, art education); and the variety and specificity of out-of-school tasks (e.g. boarding facilities, special nursery schools).

How central, regional and local authorities are involved in budget design and allocation before funds reach schools is important in understanding their potential effect on redistribution. Moreover, equity and inclusion can be affected not only by the level, criteria and mechanisms of allocation but also by the degree of autonomy granted to local governments and schools in allocating the funds according to learners' needs.

In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education sets the budget and allocates it directly to schools on the basis of student numbers and the previous year's expenditure. School administrations have limited authority in budget setting. Giving more power to school administrations for budget setting is a strategic objective to be achieved by 2023.

In theory, when local governments can make decisions on the basis of information from school support services or advisory centres, and schools have some leeway in their spending decisions, budgets tend to be more effective and efficient in achieving the objectives of inclusive education

“Achieving equity and inclusion requires adequate funds reaching schools and students according to need”

> Devolution of responsibility to a broad range of actors can also lead to ineffective or inequitable use of resources

(Meijer and Watkins, 2019; European Agency, 2016a, 2016b). In Lithuania, information shared between levels improves budget preparation to fit schools' needs. At the beginning of the school year, each school informs its funder (municipality or other) about the number of learners with recognized special education needs. The funder informs the Centre of Information Technologies in Education, under the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, which is responsible for compiling a learner database. The rules specify that allocations for students with special education needs should be double the basic per student allocation and those for ethnic minority students 5% higher. Funding for non-teaching staff, operational resources and capital assets remains within municipal education budgets.

In Bulgaria, state and municipal kindergartens and schools receive state budget funds to cover basic and additional staff remuneration for working with children and students from vulnerable groups, as well as other out-of-work pay and benefits. In 2015, Estonia's Ministry of Education and Research adopted a new concept of early childhood education and care that gives local governments more flexibility in organizing provision, based on the needs of children and families. In Slovakia, there is a high degree of school financial autonomy to make spending decisions that promote school improvement.

In practice, devolution of responsibility to a broad range of actors can also lead to ineffective or inequitable use of resources, especially when capacity for developing effective funding plans is insufficient at the local or school level. These concerns may be amplified by weak articulation between decision-making levels and limited collaboration among the actors involved. Excessively complex governance arrangements can lead to inefficient school funding structures (OECD, 2017). Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of three units: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (consisting of 10 cantons), Republika Srpska and Brčko district. Each of these 12 administrative units has its own education ministry, legislation and budget. In this case, decentralization does not guarantee equity. Mechanisms of financial assistance for children from disadvantaged groups differ, in some cases even within municipalities. For instance, learners with special needs are entitled to transport to school and financial assistance in some parts of the country but not in others.

By contrast, Slovenia is characterized by a centralized decision-making process in terms of education governance but grants some autonomy to schools. The financing system is prescribed in detail at the national level. Mechanisms for monitoring spending have to meet criteria and standards issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Funding allocations to support inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups are set by national laws and regulations, but school councils have autonomy to decide the annual work plan, while taking national regulations into account.

An alternative approach is to use the budget strategically to provide incentives for schools to achieve specific outcomes. Conditional grants may stimulate schools to shift towards long-term inclusive education policy objectives, but such experimental approaches inevitably remain small in scale. In 2017, the Ministry of Education in Azerbaijan introduced a programme providing small competitive grants to applicants with a record of improving school environments, student achievement and teaching and learning practices. The grants aim to identify, document and share good practices and provide support to take them to scale, working in partnership with communities. The target beneficiaries are schools or teachers working with communities or groups of schools. Priorities include raising public awareness of inclusive education, improving social pedagogy and psychological counselling, and supporting positive school environments. In three years, 25 projects have been awarded a total of almost US$75,000.

The World Bank-funded 2015–22 Romanian Secondary Education project, which supports efforts to identify and monitor out-of-school children, provides grants to disadvantaged upper secondary schools to reduce early school leaving rates and improve school performance. Depending on the number of students enrolled and results obtained on the baccalaureate examination, the grant value ranges between EUR 70,000 and EUR 152,500. The project encourages interventions in Roma communities, learner-centred activities, mentoring and counselling, and extracurricular activities.

Any model of decentralization needs to be relevant to national context, as 'even the best policies travel badly' (Harris, 2012, p. 395). Instead of attempts to replicate policy from other countries, international experience should serve to 'enrich policy analysis, not to short-cut it' (Raffe, 2011, p. 3). Ideally, decentralization of education decision making should be part of broader public sector reforms, whereas enhanced school autonomy might be prompted by more education-specific concerns about school management and performance (OECD, 2013).

> Spending throughout the education system, which can help mainstream students from disadvantaged groups, may fail learners with disabilities, as fulfilling their needs for support is costlier

In the case of financing disability-inclusive education, a challenge for policymakers is that spending throughout the education system, which can help mainstream students from disadvantaged groups, may fail learners with disabilities, as fulfilling their needs for support is costlier. Funding for special and integrated education is linked to a formal assessment involving external experts, requiring a diagnosis that could lead to strategic behaviour by parents, teachers or other actors. Such strategic behaviour may result in less inclusion, more labelling and rising costs for the education system in general (European Agency, 2016a).

The 2012 education law of the Russian Federation supports inclusion of all students. In practice, however, mainstream and special schools continue to operate in parallel, since mainstream schools that are willing to enrol students with special education needs do not receive additional funding.

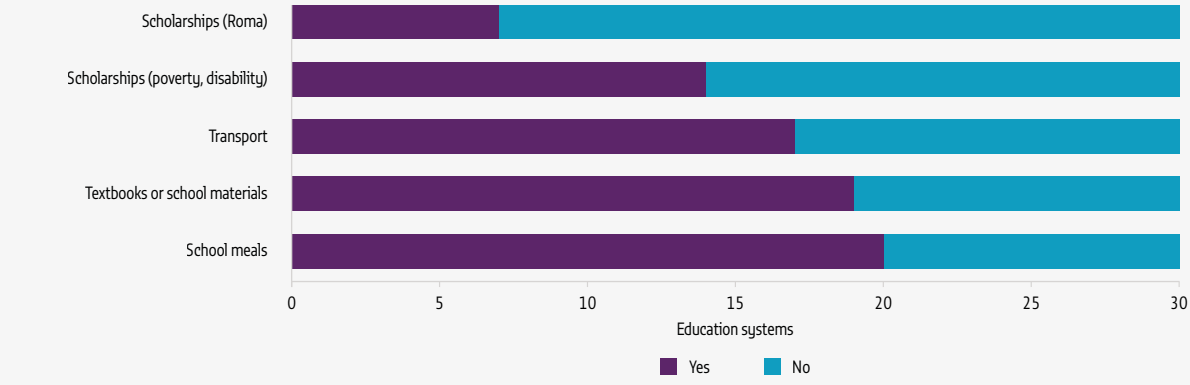
Countries may use resource-based models in which fund allocation is based on use of support services. These systems eliminate the dependency of funding on learners' official diagnosis and the consequent social labelling. They finance resources used by schools to educate students regardless of what their specific needs are. In the Czech Republic, the use of a per capita amount per pupil was replaced in January 2020 by a per capita amount per pedagogical worker/member of education staff. The new system aims to guarantee financing of the number of hours taught. When allocating resources, it takes into account the size and structure of study fields in schools and regions, the financial cost of support measures and the salary levels of teachers in individual schools.

Direct funding to disadvantaged students and their families can support equity and inclusion

Funding can be directed preferentially not just to disadvantaged schools but also to disadvantaged learners and their families. Such supplementary funding to students may take different forms, such as scholarships or allocations in kind. These funding modalities aim to cover costs that could represent entry barriers to disadvantaged students, such as school fees and the price of transport, textbooks and meals. For instance, seven education systems in the region target scholarships to Roma students (**Figure 4.2**).

In North Macedonia, the Ministry of Education and Science project Regular Class Attendance: Action for Inclusion of Roma in Primary Education is funded by the EU and implemented by three NGOs: Open Society

FIGURE 4.2:
Relatively few education systems reported direct support for education of disadvantaged groups
Number of education systems offering some type of cash or in-kind education-related support



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Foundations, the Dendo Vas education support centre and the Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives 'Step by Step'. It focuses on irregular attendance and low transition rates to upper primary grades. Scholarships worth EUR 400 per year have been awarded to almost 300 Roma first-graders from families that already receive social assistance, paid on condition of regular attendance for three years.

Funding does not need to be directly related to education to compensate for socio-economic disadvantage. Countries report their use of social protection programmes unevenly, which suggests education ministries may not be fully aware of such programmes' indirect impact on education objectives. Family or child allowances are a common measure, reported by 14 of the 30 education systems reviewed. In Mongolia, every school-age child from the Dukha ethnic group is entitled to a monthly allowance equal to 50% of the minimum living standard. In Slovakia, disadvantaged families receive a child allowance of EUR 25 a month conditional on attending compulsory education (Council of Europe, 2019). Latvia awards disability pensions or tax relief for families, thanks to strong cooperation between the education and health ministries. Romania, Slovenia and Ukraine offer medical-technical aid, such as speech therapy and psychological support.

External financing has been critical in prompting inclusive education reforms

Donors have supported central and local governments in the region in implementing inclusive education programmes. The Asian Development Bank, European Commission (mainly through its European Neighbourhood Instrument), German Corporation for International Cooperation (better known as GIZ), UNICEF, USAID and World Bank are examples. For instance, the Monitoring and Evaluation of Inclusive Education project in Serbia was developed in the framework of World Bank technical assistance and funded by the Western Balkans Investment Framework trust fund (Friedman et al., 2015).

Turkey has run a conditional cash transfer programme since 2003. An initial evaluation found significant positive effects on the secondary school enrolment rate among 14- to 17-year-olds, especially in rural areas, where the probability of being enrolled increased by 17% and, for boys, as much as 23% (Ahmed et al., 2007). The government scaled up the programme and extended it in May 2017 to reach Syrian and other refugee children. It is implemented through a partnership of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, Ministry of National Education, Turkish Red Crescent, European Commission and UNICEF. By June 2019, more than 500,000 students regularly attending school were receiving transfers of between US$6 and US$10 per month; 83% of the families also received monthly Emergency Social Safety Net grants of US$20 per family member (Turkey Government and European Commission, 2019).

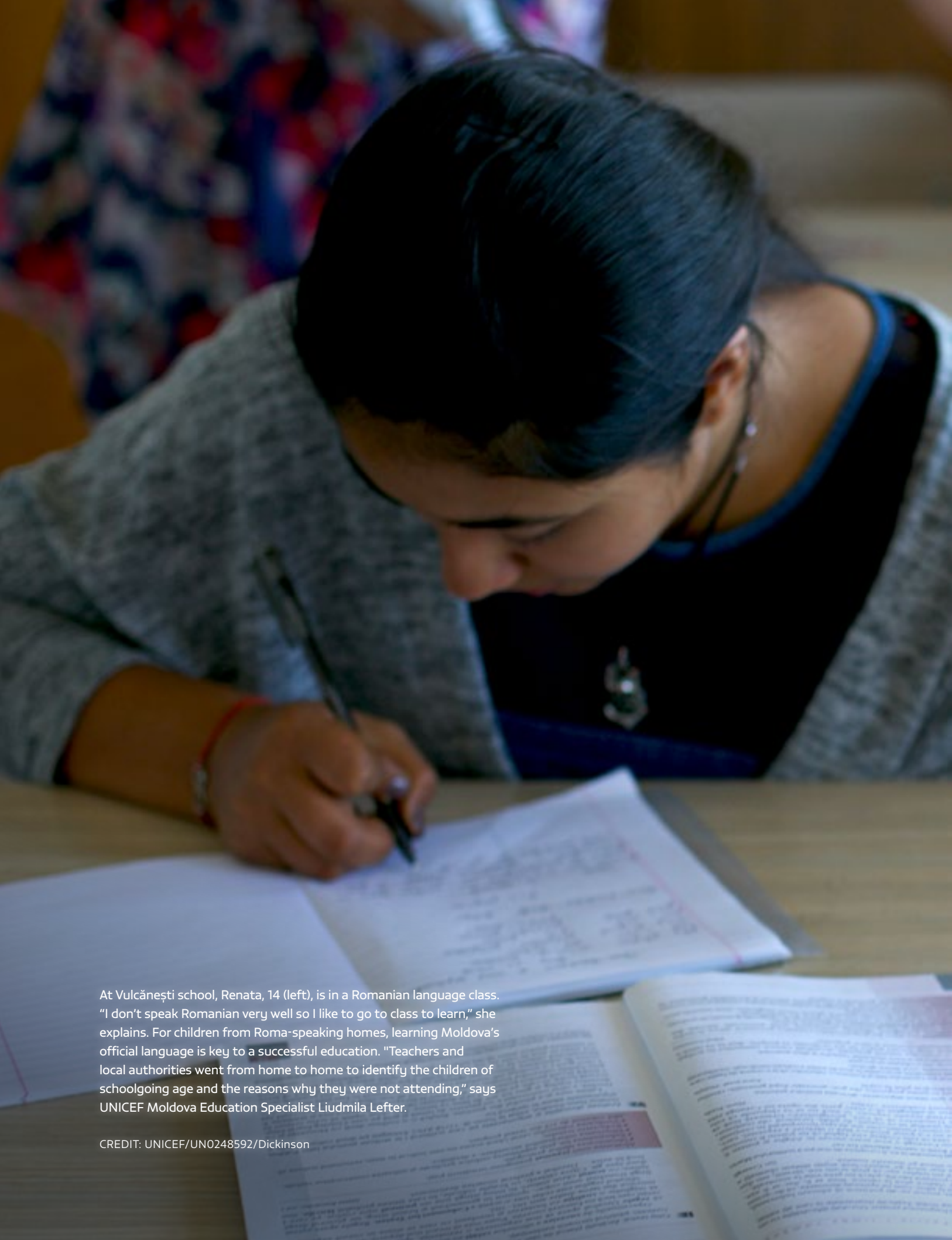
The EU countries from Central and Eastern Europe receive European Social Fund (ESF) support aimed at improving social inclusion. In Estonia, the ESF-supported Developing an Educational Counselling System project aims to ensure early childhood intervention throughout the country, improve the counselling system and train service providers. The Rajaleidja (Pathfinder) counselling centres established through the project will aim to improve collaboration between the education, social affairs and healthcare sectors to identify the particular needs of children with special needs and their families and provide them with support.

In Slovakia, School Open to Everyone, another ESF-supported project, has designed a new education model that promotes inclusion of children from marginalized Roma communities. The model has been tested in seven of the country's less developed regions. The project aims to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality education by training teachers, assistants and other education professionals.

While the short-term benefits of such actions are positive, questions arise regarding their long-term sustainability and how dependent countries are on external funding. Both national authorities and international organizations should aim to ensure ownership of the results by local stakeholders.

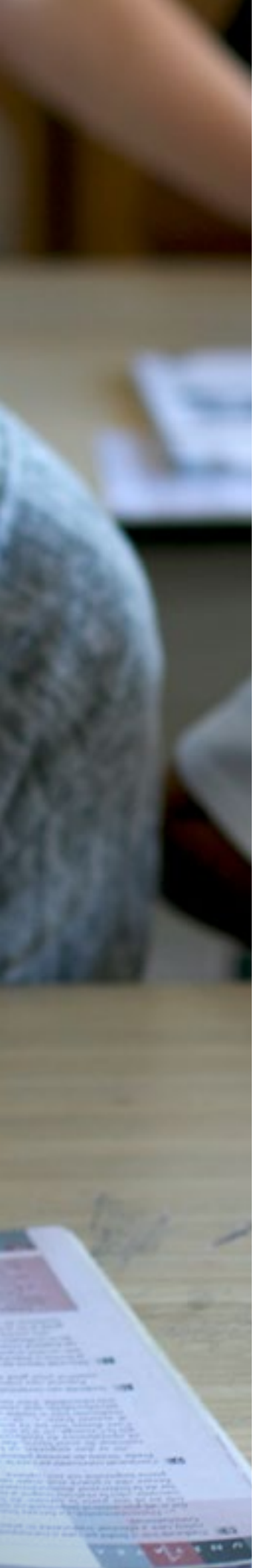
CONCLUSION

Governance and finance are interdependent in education. This chapter has identified factors that affect governance and finance systems and that must be considered when implementing inclusive education legislation and policy. These factors include collaboration between government structures and between state and non-state actors, identifiable forms of horizontal and vertical collaboration and the impact of decentralization on provision of inclusive education. Mechanisms of quality assurance between governance levels are also key elements, as they support coherence and continuity in activities related to inclusive education. Finally, applying a funding system for inclusive education that is not based on labelling should be considered.



At Vulcănești school, Renata, 14 (left), is in a Romanian language class. “I don’t speak Romanian very well so I like to go to class to learn,” she explains. For children from Roma-speaking homes, learning Moldova’s official language is key to a successful education. "Teachers and local authorities went from home to home to identify the children of schoolgoing age and the reasons why they were not attending,” says UNICEF Moldova Education Specialist Liudmila Lefter.

CREDIT: UNICEF/UN0248592/Dickinson



CHAPTER

5

Curricula, textbooks and assessments

KEY MESSAGES

The curriculum should represent all learners and be flexible.

- Groups that lack political or social recognition are represented only marginally if at all. A Council of Europe review of history, civics and geography curricula in 14 education systems found:
  - no mention of national minorities in Albania and one in the Czech Republic
  - no mention of Roma in 9 countries, including Bulgaria, Serbia and Slovakia, where they are a sizeable minority; but a comprehensive framing of Roma history offered since 2017 in Romania's history curriculum.
- Curricula should not reproduce stereotypes. Bosnia and Herzegovina has distinct curricula for its three constituent groups; each curriculum emphasizes the respective group and mentions the others in passing.
- The gender dimension is often compromised. Turkish curricula in 2016 barely mentioned women's rights and had removed grade 9 content referring to gender equality.
- Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are mostly ignored. Russian Federation law prohibits talking in school about the existence of the LGBTI community.
- Some ministries issue guidelines on inclusion. Slovakia's National Institute for Education annual citizenship education manual offers detailed proposals to schools for actions to help prevent racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance.
- Meaningful stakeholder participation is needed. Estonian parents and Moldovan students are among the few examples of external stakeholder involvement in curriculum development.
- Curriculum flexibility can manifest in what, how, where and when learning occurs. Such flexibility should support learner-centred approaches.
- Some 70% of the region's countries provide schools or classes using the home languages of the largest national minority groups, leading to parallel provision that often works against inclusion. By contrast, in Slovenia's Slovene-Hungarian bilingual schools, the ethnic majority and minority learn together using an intercultural curriculum.
- Education of nomadic populations presents challenges. In the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan, a project seeks to increase preschool education coverage in remote rural areas through mobile groups and a cycle of television programmes.

Learning materials and textbooks may promote inclusion but also reinforce stereotypes.

- Inclusive textbooks employ inclusive language, represent diverse identities and integrate human rights. The trilingual education policy in Kazakhstan led to new Tajik, Uighur and Uzbek primary school textbooks. In Bulgaria, specially developed teaching aids are available for electives on Roma history and traditions.
- Reversing representation of traditional gender norms in textbooks requires strong government commitment. Azerbaijan introduced a gender equality criterion in the textbook assessment process, although it assigned it a low weight.
- Technology can support learners with disabilities. Montenegro uses textbooks in the Digital Accessible Information System format, which allows easy recording of written material containing audio and visual information.

Assessment frameworks that do not consider learner diversity harm inclusion.

- Various adapted assessment models can demonstrate progress and increase opportunities for learners with special education needs. In Lithuania, formative assessment is encouraged to enable individual learner progress. In Georgia, sign language standards have been elaborated to assist inclusion of learners with hearing impairment, and standards for learners with visual impairment are being prepared.
- Nevertheless, national assessment systems have a long way to go to become inclusive, respond to individual needs and not result in segregation.

Inclusion is not just about ensuring everyone is in school or eliminating physical segregation. An inclusive learning experience requires inclusive curricula, textbooks and assessment practices. The curriculum has been described as 'the central means through which the principle of inclusion is put into action within an education system' (IBE, 2008, p. 22). It reflects what is meant to be taught (content) and learned (goals). It needs to be coherent with how it will be taught (pedagogical methods) and learned (tasks) as well as with the materials to support learning (e.g. textbooks, computers) and the methods to assess learning (e.g. examinations, projects).

Curricula exclude learners when they do not cater to diverse needs and do not respect human and citizenship rights; they must embrace learners' identities, backgrounds and abilities and respond to learners' needs. Textbooks can perpetuate stereotypes by associating certain characteristics with particular population groups. Inappropriate images and descriptions can make students with non-dominant backgrounds feel misrepresented, misunderstood, frustrated and alienated. While good-quality assessment is a fundamental part of an inclusive education system, testing regimes that do not accommodate various needs can exclude learners. Finally, the links between curricula, textbooks and assessments are often ignored. Sometimes changes are made to one but not the others.

> "The curriculum has been described as 'the central means through which the principle of inclusion is put into action within an education system'"

This chapter addresses these three interlinked aspects of learning, showing how a number of factors need to be aligned for inclusive curricular, textbook and assessment reforms to be successful. Capacities need to be developed so that stakeholders work collaboratively and think strategically. Partnerships must be in place so that all parties own the process and work towards the same goals. Successful attempts to make curricula, textbooks and assessments inclusive entail participatory processes during design, development and implementation to ensure that all students' needs are reflected.

INCLUSIVE CURRICULA TAKE ALL LEARNERS' NEEDS INTO ACCOUNT

An inclusive curriculum 'takes into consideration and caters for the diverse needs, previous experiences, interests and personal characteristics of all learners. It attempts to ensure that all students are part of the shared learning experiences of the classroom and that equal opportunities are provided regardless of learner differences' (IBE, 2020).

This definition draws attention to three concepts pursued in this section. First, there are political tensions regarding the kind of society people aspire to achieve through education, for inclusion is an exercise in democracy. Second, there are practical challenges in ensuring flexibility in order to serve diverse contexts and needs without segregating learners. Third, there are technical challenges in ensuring that the curriculum serves equity by being relevant and in creating bridges so that no learners are cut off.

The curriculum is not just 'a set of plans made for guiding learning' but also the 'actualization of those plans' (Glatthorn et al., 2018, p. 3). It entails distinct phases, from design to development, implementation and evaluation, each of which affects how inclusive curricula are. The conscious effort to ensure that students master particular content is referred to as the intended curriculum. In practice, what students receive and learn is also affected by social and cultural norms, which contribute to what is sometimes called the hidden curriculum.

During the curriculum's design phase, education systems need to decide on the breadth and depth of the inclusion paradigm they will follow. In the development phase, the commitment to inclusion is tested in how diversity is tackled and how other viewpoints to broaden student understanding are taken into account. At this stage, certain content is eliminated and new content is added. Original ideas encounter resistance if there is too little or too much attention to certain minorities. Parents may find it hard to reconcile some topics with their personal, cultural or religious beliefs. Teachers may realize the new curriculum requires them to teach new skills or take more inclusive pedagogical approaches. Even if these hurdles are overcome, an inclusive curriculum's effectiveness is really put to the test during the implementation phase, when the intended curriculum is interpreted and enacted in schools. Without proper understanding and mastery of the expected pedagogies, the reform can easily lose steam (Berkvens, 2020).

> "A Council of Europe review of history, civics and geography curricula in 14 countries found that Roma were not mentioned in 9 countries"

In Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, progress has been made in curriculum development, representation and adaptiveness to integrate inclusive values. Kazakhstan's National Scientific and Practical Centre for Correctional Pedagogy developed guidelines in 2019 providing methodological recommendations for supporting students with special education needs in comprehensive schools through individual curricula development. In Poland, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education supports curriculum changes through a European Commission programme. Efforts to introduce curriculum improvement have been supported as part of national education strategies, as in Serbia, or through legislative amendments, as in Slovakia.

Tensions often arise over what a truly inclusive curriculum is

All countries in the region have provisions for equity in their curricula, according to which all learners have the right to fulfil their potential in education regardless of identity, background and ability. But some groups that lack political or social recognition are represented in curricula only marginally or not at all. Curricula in many countries are not representative or are characterized by stereotypes in representation of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and religion.

Where ethnic minorities' culture, history and languages are covered, such content is often addressed only to the minorities themselves in minority schools or classes. Their contribution to the country's heritage is often not visible in mainstream curricula. More than half of minority school teachers in Latvia and Slovakia perceive elements of ethnic prejudice in mainstream curricula and found representation of ethnic groups in history unfair and unbalanced. The political discourse in both countries tends to support the notion that the history of the ethnic majority or 'state-creating nation' is what should be taught in schools, contributing to marginalization of minority groups' history even when it is included in the curriculum (Golubeva, 2009, 2014).

A Council of Europe review of history, civics and geography curricula in 14 countries found no mention of national minorities in Albania, one in the Czech Republic and two in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova and Slovakia. In 9 countries, Roma were not mentioned in history, civics or geography. This is notable for Bulgaria, Serbia and Slovakia, where Roma make up a sizeable minority of the population. Where history curricula mention Roma once (Croatia, Kosovo[1], Hungary) or twice (Bosnia and Herzegovina), it is in the context

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

> Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are mostly ignored and non-binary distinctions are presented as anomalies

of the Second World War and the Holocaust, as victims without agency (Council of Europe et al, 2020).

Romania is an exception. The 2011 education law requires curriculum documents, from the framework curriculum down to syllabi, textbooks and other teaching materials, to include elements on cultural diversity (ethnicity, language, religion). The history of all national minorities is to be part of secondary education history classes. The official history curriculum has offered a more comprehensive framing of Roma history ('from slavery to emancipation') since the 2017 curriculum reform (Council of Europe at al., 2020). In countries lacking systemic approaches, civil society and international organizations tend to support initiatives. Lessons for Today, a project running since 2015 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia and Serbia, aims to raise awareness and encourage discussions on nationalism, exclusion, prejudice and discrimination; promote critical thinking on recent historical events; and inspire interdisciplinary history education (Anne Frank House, 2020).

The recent conflicts, political divisions and transitions in the region accentuated the need for curricula that do not reproduce stereotypes about other nations and that actively promote interethnic understanding and peace. Yet, in many countries, history curricula in particular are rife with ethnic political claims and stereotyping. Bosnia and Herzegovina even has distinct curricula for each of the three constituent groups (Bosniak, Croatian and Serbian), and content analyses show that each curriculum emphases the respective group, mentioning others only in passing or not at all (Open Society Fund BH and proMENTE Social Research, 2017).

Some countries promote gender equality in their curricula, primarily by avoiding gender stereotyping in their content. Changes in 2014 to Estonia's basic and upper secondary education curricula promote gender equality in teaching of social studies, career planning, technology and handicraft (Human Right Council, 2015). In Romania, the new framework curriculum refers to efforts to prevent gender-based violence, and both the core curriculum and national provision of base curriculum reflect gender perspectives (Eurydice, 2018). Older syllabi made only occasional reference to gender equality but the new ones have entire lessons on the issue (Barbu et al., 2020).

In other countries, the gender dimension remains severely compromised in curricula. In Armenia, gender equality principles were not consistently translated into education standards, curricula and textbooks, with the result that gender representation in textbooks remained unbalanced and displayed gender roles in traditional and stereotypical ways (Silova, 2016). Turkey's latest curricula, introduced in 2016, barely mention women's rights, and in fact grade 9 content referring to gender equality was removed (ERG, 2017).

Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are mostly ignored and non-binary distinctions are presented as anomalies, contributing to the invisibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) learners and those from LGBTI families. The issue is not a priority in any inclusion strategies and action plans of the region's 30 education systems. Indeed, some countries have taken steps to ban such content in education. Albania's curricula contain no information about LGBTI people's rights (UNDP, 2017). Nor does Croatia mention their rights in citizenship education, which focuses on human rights (Croatia Ministry of Science and Education, 2017). In Romania, a bill was submitted in November 2019 to ban 'sex and gender proselytism' in education. Russian Federation law prohibits even talking in school about the existence of the LGBTI community.

However, there are examples of action being taken to address the issue. The 2013–18 Strategy for Improving the Quality of Life of LGBT Persons in Montenegro included projects focusing on non-violence and curriculum reviews, with support from the Council of Europe. In Mongolia, advocacy activities led by the United Nations Population Fund on reintroducing a health education curriculum resulted in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports including topics on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and reproductive health.

Another highly controversial area in curricula across the region is religion. After 1989, most countries opted for some form of confessional religious education, with elements of traditional religious instruction, in public schools (Marinovic Bobinac, 2007). Only the religion of the majority was taught unless there were large numbers of students belonging to a minority religion,

as in Croatia and the Russian Federation. This approach excluded content on non-traditional, non-denominational religions or atheism. In Armenia, a review of secondary school textbooks on the history of the Armenian church indicated that they portrayed the Armenian Apostolic Church as having an exceptional position and significance and other religious denominations in negative light (Hovhannisyan and Daytyan, 2017). The content of confessional religious education can be non-inclusive and prejudiced. Some countries, including Estonia and Slovenia, have opted for non-confessional religious education in public schools.

Ministries often issue implementation guidelines or procedures for schools regarding inclusion and adaptation to student needs, especially when new policies are being implemented or a specific situation occurs. In Kazakhstan, a guide makes recommendations for schools on building a learning strategy for children from national minorities and migrants, taking into account their characteristics and special education needs. One recommendation refers to organization of classroom environments to support these students' adaptation. Slovakia's National Institute for Education issues an annual policy manual for schools on the design, content, organization and implementation of the citizenship education curriculum to raise awareness and ensure prevention of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, extremism and other forms of intolerance. The guidelines changed substantially in 2015/16 to address human rights, children's rights, discrimination, national minorities and foreigners, offering detailed proposals for actions in schools.

While such documents may be based on the inclusive paradigm, often they do not take the realities of schools into consideration, thus compromising implementation. In Belarus, the Ministry of Education issued a letter on organization of special education in general education institutions for 2019/20, prescribing in detail how integrated classes should be created (Belarus Ministry of Education, 2019). However, in practice, the so-called integrated classes used two curricula: a standard one for general education and another for special education. Joint instruction, depending on children's level of disability, was carried out only for a narrow list of subjects and in some cases students were separated during break times (Levania Centre, 2018).

An inclusive curriculum requires stakeholder participation from development to implementation

Participative curriculum development can help address the needs of all learners. It should ensure adequate representation not only of responsible institutions, such as agencies, institutes and education ministries, but also of schools, teachers, parents and students. However, few countries involve multiple stakeholders, and most do not invite schools and teachers to contribute to the process. Only the Republic of Moldova reported involving students, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia and the Republic of Moldova reported involving parents. International and national civil society organizations, when they are part of the process, may be the only participants to voice the concerns of disadvantaged groups (**Figure 5.1**).

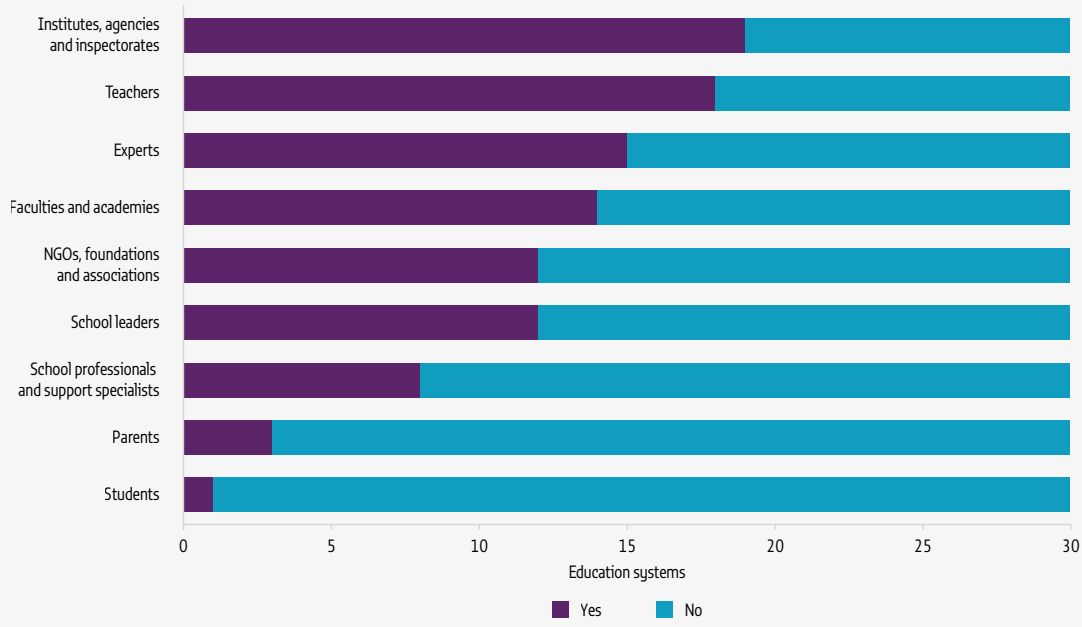
In the Republic of Moldova, curriculum development is highly participative and evidence-based. During the latest revision (2018), teachers, parents and students were involved through round tables and surveys. Evaluation of the national curriculum in general education also confirmed that target groups, such as primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school students, teachers and school leaders, parents and experts, had been identified, and their samples were representative.

The Ministry of Education and Science in Kyrgyzstan sets up working groups for each of the seven areas of the curriculum. Participants include ministry employees, head teachers, subject teachers, representatives of non-government organizations (NGOs) and donors, as well as independent experts. Draft standards are also submitted for consultation to the wider education community. More than 20,000 teachers participate through an online platform, and amendments and recommendations made by educators are included in the document.

The fact that non-government stakeholders are reported as participants is in itself not sufficient, as the degree of engagement ranges from simple consultation to participation in actual dialogue and negotiation of curriculum content. Armenia's Ministry of Education,

> "The most common forms of curriculum adaptation in the region are individualized education plans and adaptation for learners belonging to ethnic minorities"

FIGURE 5.1:
Hardly any country in the region involves parents and students in curriculum design
Number of education systems reporting stakeholder involvement in curriculum development



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Science, Culture and Sport began a comprehensive revision of the general education curriculum and subject standards in 2018 and issued a public call for working groups, encouraging subject teachers and experts to apply. In July 2019, the ministry initiated a review of the draft curriculum. To receive and review the text, however, a new round of expression of interest was called, limiting the number who could participate (Armenia Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, 2019).

In Georgia, a national curriculum regulates teaching hours, learning environment conditions, minimum student workload, expected learning outcomes upon completion of each level, and ways to acquire the required skills and knowledge while allowing for school curricula and individual curricula for students with special education needs. The National Curriculum Department leads curriculum planning and implementation. Other stakeholders' contribution to the national curriculum for 2017–23 was channelled through the national curriculum portal (Georgia Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, 2020).

In Turkey, the centralized curriculum authority does not prioritize stakeholder participation, making it difficult to introduce democratic citizenship education (Sen, 2019; Sen and Starkey, 2019) and contributing to the preference of ethno-cultural over political definitions of citizenship that can exclude some communities (Ince, 2012). A recent review called on the Ministry of National Education to expand the range of non-government and expert stakeholders it engages with in curriculum development (ERG, 2016).

An inclusive curriculum should be flexible

Student diversity requires flexible curriculum in terms of adaptability and accessibility to various needs and abilities so as to increase student participation and engagement. At the same time, adaptations must meet curricular standards and expected outcomes without lowering expectations or compromising students' future opportunities (Flecha, 2015). There are degrees of flexibility, along a continuum from fully flexible to traditional fixed curricula (Jonker et al., 2020). Flexibility can manifest in what, how, where and when learning occurs.

> Some 70% of the region's education systems provide schools or classes using the home language of the largest national minority groups

The most common forms of curriculum adaptation in the region are individualized education plans and adaptation for learners belonging to ethnic minorities, such as Central Asian pastoral communities (**Box 5.1**).

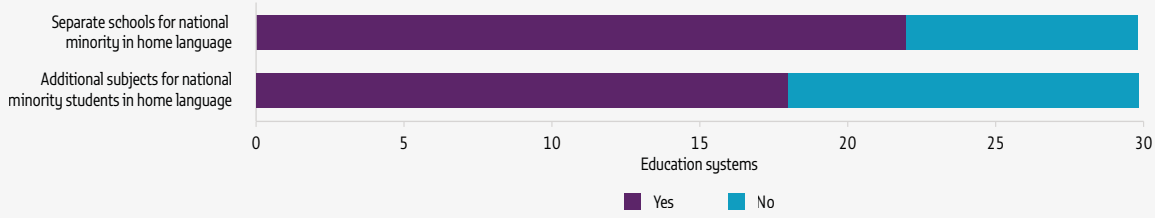
Almost all countries use individualized education plans. Some, including Albania and Romania, specify in their laws that curriculum and working methods should be adapted to enable learners with special education needs or disabilities to reach their full potential. Individualized education plans are also used for gifted students (e.g. in the Russian Federation) or those with specific health conditions (e.g. in Slovakia). Other countries, among them Bosnia and Herzegovina, do not specify for whom such individualized education plans are intended.

In most countries, a special commission, working group or support group is in charge of developing individualized education plans. In Kazakhstan, a psychological-medical-pedagogical commission leads curricular adaptation in partnership with teachers and experts in schools. In Mongolia, students, parents and/or teachers apply for individualized education plans. Students and parents can offer suggestions on the plan and its content. In the Russian Federation, parents are involved in preparation of individualized education plans. The school chooses an appropriate curricular framework and adapts it to student needs and school conditions. Adjustments tend to be made by representatives of psychological-pedagogical services, the deputy director and teachers commissioned by the school director. The adapted version is submitted for discussion with teachers and parents of children with special needs before the pedagogical council and school governing body adopt the final version.

Individualized education plans are mostly implemented by a regular teacher assisted by an expert. In Albania, for example, an assistant teacher implements the plan in cooperation with the classroom teacher, subject teacher, psychologist, social worker and parents. In general, individualized education plans for students with disabilities are used in regular schools, although in some cases the plan may be implemented in special schools or at home. Plans for students with health conditions preventing school attendance are used at home. In Kyrgyzstan, although there are individualized education plans implemented in regular schools, students with a disability or health condition often study at home. The school develops a plan for a child for one school year; if the psychological-medical-pedagogical commission decides that the child should study at home, the parents must transmit the decision to the school. But caution should be exercised so that individualized plans are a vehicle to ensure flexible adaptation to meet learner needs in mainstream classes, not a basis for segregating learners or fitting them to the system.

Curriculum flexibility also applies in adaptations for children belonging to ethnic minorities. Some 70% of the region's education systems provide schools or classes using the

FIGURE 5.2:
Most countries have separate schools and classes for national minorities
Number of education systems reporting different models of education for ethnic minorities



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

home language of the largest national minority groups. Most involve a common curriculum with the possibility of additional classes on the minority culture and heritage. In some countries, minorities have a specific curriculum meeting national education standards. About 60% of the education systems reviewed offer a model with additional subjects taught in the minority language so minority members can attend mainstream schools while national, ethnic and linguistic identities are preserved (**Figure 5.2**).

Roma populations' curricular needs are beginning to be recognized, albeit slowly. In Bulgaria, there are elective classes in Romani and Roma folklore. Teaching aids and exercise books are available, and Romani language training may be provided to learners in preparation for the elective classes (Krumova and Kolev, 2013). Following a process that began in 2015, Croatia announced a Language and Culture of the Roma National Minority curriculum in 2020 to meet its constitutional obligation to offer minorities education in their home language. Textbooks in Romani are in short supply, however, and most Roma in the country do not speak Romani, so it is up to parents whether to ask the school to provide Roma curriculum. The curriculum was developed by a group appointed by the Ministry of Science and Education (Roma Education Fund, 2020).

In Romania, all subject areas, except Romanian Literature and Language, are taught in multiple minority languages. If students from national minorities attend Romanian schools or schools of other ethnic minorities, they can demand to be taught language and literature, history and traditions, and music education in their home language.

BOX 5.1:

Flexibility is the answer to early childhood education for nomadic people in Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan

The education of nomadic populations presents challenges. A number of initiatives respond flexibly to these children's needs. In Kyrgyzstan, pastoral communities move from the end of May to the beginning of September to high-mountain pastures (jailoo), where children previously could not attend a 100-hour government-run school preparation programme in August. Under the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme, initiated by the Aga Khan Foundation, the Jailoo Kindergartens project in Alai district (rayon) began providing early childhood care and preschool preparation for children in pastoral communities in 2006. In 2018, during the jailoo season, more than 600 children were educated in 21 jailoo kindergartens, while 107 jailoo educators received child development care and early childhood development science training modules. In turn, teachers trained more than 500 parents and caregivers.

In Mongolia, more than 80% of districts (soum) are located more than 100 km from provincial capitals, and nomadic herders, who account for about 40% of the population, live between 10 and 55 km from soum capitals. The preschool education law states that children who cannot attend basic kindergarten are entitled to alternative education in shift classes with state-financed mobile teachers and tent (ger) kindergartens. Ger kindergartens are an innovative adaptation designed to suit nomadic peoples' socio-economic and cultural setting. Affiliated with and managed by regular kindergartens, they are driven by pickup truck to remote locations where they stay up to six weeks in the summer, serving communities of 10 to 15 herding families with up to 25 children, sometimes moving with the herders. They run for a full eight-hour day, and children may stay with teachers overnight. In recent assessments, ger kindergartens performed better than fixed kindergartens in terms of quality of interactions but worse in other quality domains (World Bank, 2017).

In the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, a federal subject of the Russian Federation, children of nomadic families had no preschool education opportunities in the early 2010s. The local government and some public agencies amended the regional education law in 2013 to recognize parents' right to select a nomadic form of education. The Nomadic School project, developed as part of a support programme for indigenous populations, aims at providing preschool and primary education along traditional nomadic routes, taking into account the way of life and traditions of northern ethnic minority communities. For instance, a school preparedness activity every summer offers intensive preschool training in nomadic camps (University of the Arctic, 2015; Mercator, 2016; Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug Education Department, 2017). Overall, the share of children from indigenous northern ethnic minorities ready for school was 64% in 2018 (Russian Academy of Education, 2018).

In Uzbekistan, the pilot project Aklvoy, in 12 of the 15 districts of the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, has two components. First, it is designed to increase preschool education coverage in remote rural areas through mobile groups. It has reached about 2,000 preschool-age children not previously covered by preschool education. Classes are held outdoors and on a bus equipped with teaching aids (cards, posters, workbooks, didactic games, education toys, children's literature, sports equipment, magnetic boards, construction sets, educational photos and videos). Second, the Ministry of Preschool Education has developed a cycle of television programmes and online classes, master classes and experiences for 3- to 7-year-olds with the technical support of the National Television and Radio Company. Over 200,000 preschool-age children follow the cycle. All programmes are accompanied by sign language interpretation.

According to Azerbaijan's education law, the state guarantees equal conditions in general education, with the language of instruction being Azeri, including for foreigners and people without citizenship. Citizens or those in charge of education institutions can ask to use a language of instruction other than Azeri. The curriculum can also differ but must meet national general education standards or those of internationally accredited education programmes. Where the language of instruction is not Azeri, Azerbaijan history, literature, language and geography must be taught according to the general education curriculum.

It should be noted that inclusion is best served through intercultural learning in mainstream schools, ideally bilingual schools where the ethnic majority and minority learn together in both languages and the common curriculum includes and is representative of both groups. Several countries (e.g. Croatia, Estonia) have bilingual schools in which some teaching is in the minority language, but they are attended only by minority students (Czech and Russian, respectively). In Prekmurje, a multi-ethnic region in Slovenia, Slovene-Hungarian bilingual schools operate with common curricula designed with respect to the equal position of the Hungarian and Slovene communities, languages and cultures in the society, and with both groups attending.

TEXTBOOKS SUPPORT INCLUSION THROUGH CONTENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Textbooks, an essential part of curricula, are crucial for promoting inclusion (Fuchs and Bock, 2018). An inclusive textbook development approach employs inclusive language, represents diverse identities and integrates human rights (UNESCO, 2017). Civic education, social studies, history, geography, religion and ethics textbooks, in particular, should include human and citizen rights. Inclusion and exclusion in a range of social and historical contexts should be represented to foster awareness of challenges. Even textbooks that deal with diversity may avoid critical discussion of complex and controversial topics. Diversity may appear as a special topic rather than a normal feature of social coexistence. Ethnic or religious groups may be marginalized and certain minority stereotypes perpetuated (Niehaus, 2018).

> “Inclusion is best served through bilingual schools where the ethnic majority and minority learn together in both languages and the common curriculum includes and is representative of both groups”

Inclusiveness also requires making textbooks available to all learner groups. Technology can support learning materials in various formats, such as Braille, large print, sign language and audiobooks. Teachers and schools should be able to select the learning materials best suited to their community (**Box 5.2**).

BOX 5.2:

The ability to select from a range of textbooks is another dimension of inclusion

Textbook and learning material policies in the region vary in terms of degree of autonomy in selection and availability of different titles for a given subject. Ministries or other education authorities assess textbooks based on numerous criteria and quality standards and determine which can be used. But even when teachers are granted autonomy in selection, the choice is often limited.

In Armenia, schools can choose between two textbooks, but a study showed that often schools do not receive the textbooks they chose (Transparency International, 2017). In Azerbaijan, new textbook development procedures enable education resources to be purchased from a list of recommended supplementary learning materials approved by the School Pedagogical Council. In Hungary, the Education Authority is the dominant publisher, and there is very little variety in textbooks available per grade and subject for schools to choose from. The Education Authority also controls accreditation for textbooks and learning materials.

In North Macedonia, schools have no autonomy in textbook selection and only one book is approved per subject, except those using imported textbooks, for which up to three can be selected from an approved list. However, curricula and guidelines enable teachers to use other learning materials to prepare themselves and provide guidance, links and texts to students that can contribute to achievement of learning goals. In Poland, all textbooks must be approved by the Ministry of National Education, but there is no such procedure for other learning materials. The teacher can decide to teach with or without a textbook and other learning materials.

Textbooks can exclude through omission and misrepresentation

Textbooks and the legitimate knowledge they convey emerge from complex power dynamics (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991). They can perpetuate gender biases and stereotypes through visual or written content but also by omission. Representation of ethnicity in textbooks depends largely on historical and national context. Factors influencing countries' treatment of minorities

> The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues is working towards a recommendation on the inclusion of their history in curricula and teaching materials

include the demographic, political or economic dominance of one or more ethnic groups; the history of segregation or conflict; the conceptualization of nationhood; the role of immigration; and various combinations of these factors. Textbooks may acknowledge minority groups in ways that mitigate or exacerbate the degree to which they are received, or perceive themselves, as 'other' (Fuchs et al., 2020).

Many countries in the region have laws, rules or regulations that ensure the availability of textbooks or learning materials promoting inclusion of ethnic minorities. In Belarus, learning materials in minority languages are available only as supplements. In Montenegro, all primary and secondary school textbooks are translated into Albanian, but the Albanian community has protested that this means they are not sufficiently adapted to its needs (Tomovic, 2014). There is a textbook on Albanian language and literature, but not for history. The government has indicated that the reformed curriculum integrates content promoting minorities' history and culture, and enables teachers to create and adapt up to a fifth of a subject's content to student needs (Montenegro Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, 2016).

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Central Asian countries developed state language schools and tried to strengthen state language teaching. Textbook supply chains had collapsed, however, which damaged education quality. For instance, in Kazakhstan, less than 40% of sanctioned textbooks were available in Kyrgyz and Russian and even less in Uzbek and Tajik. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, primary and secondary schools choose target languages for subjects based on teacher capacity, context and resources. The most successful pilot schools became resource centres for new schools, providing multilingual content and teaching materials. The High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe supported the establishment of an Uzbek language textbook development and publishing centre in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. The recent adoption of a trilingual education policy in Kazakhstan made it possible to increase provision of new Tajik, Uighur and Uzbek primary school textbooks and learning materials (Stoianova and Angermann, 2018).

In much of Europe, Roma and traveller children are at high risk of exclusion in education through curriculum and textbook deficiencies. They are disproportionately likely to be taught a reduced curriculum, as they are often sent to remedial classes and special schools (Council of Europe, 2017). Moreover, the core curriculum does not reflect their history. The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues is working towards a recommendation on the inclusion of their history in curricula and teaching materials (Council of Europe, 2019). In Bulgaria, where students can choose elective subjects on Roma history and traditions, specially developed teaching aids and exercise books are available.

BOX 5.3:

Azerbaijan and Belarus fight gender stereotypes, but gender inclusivity in textbooks remains a challenge

Reversing representation of traditional gender norms in school textbooks requires a major mobilization and strong commitment from government. In 2015, the Ministry of Education in Azerbaijan introduced gender equality criteria in the Textbook Approval Board submission assessment process. Experts from the Gender Studies Department of Baku State University evaluated the submissions. Application of the new criteria on both verbal and visual content revealed unbalanced representation of women and men: 90% of images of men were related to participation in agriculture, business, management and technology, while women were shown as housewives washing clothes, cleaning, cooking, serving their husband or taking care of children. A recent study showed that such gaps remain (Dadashova, 2019). That is partly because of the low weight of the gender equality criterion in textbook evaluation scoring: only 3, at most, of the total 60 points assigned.

In Belarus, laws and policies are equivocal on gender equality. The second amendment of the Constitution in 2004 recognized women's equal rights in education and vocational training, but the 2010 Education Code referred to 'ideas of role and vital purpose of men and women in modern society', which could imply a traditional gender lens. Training guidelines for policymakers, school leaders and social protection and health workers mention a gender dimension, but there is concern that they reinforce gender stereotypes. Current education plans and programmes are not yet gender-responsive, and guidelines for review and adjustment of learning materials to fight gender stereotypes are insufficient. For instance, the crafts subject is divided, with boys learning crafts traditionally perceived as male (e.g. carpentry, plumbing) and girls learning crafts traditionally perceived as female (e.g. cooking, knitting, sewing). Military training is only for boys, and reproductive health and sexuality education is only for girls, as part of first aid training.

Some countries, including Azerbaijan and Belarus, have tried to promote gender equality and inclusion through improved textbooks (**Box 5.3**). Montenegro's Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids is developing a new generation of textbooks incorporating gender-sensitive language for the nine years of basic education. A lack of general standards and guidance, however, can lead to unbalanced design of different textbooks for the same curriculum. In Romania, a gender perspective is available in some textbooks but missing from others. In Turkey, gender roles promoted through textbooks conform to patriarchal, traditional and religious norms (Aratemur-Çimen, and Bayhan, 2018).

Textbooks need to be accessible to all learners

Providing free textbooks to poor and marginalized families is a common policy in the region. In Hungary, starting in 2020/21, textbooks will be free for all primary and secondary school students. In Lithuania, every school has a Child Welfare Commission that discusses and addresses cases of learners from disadvantaged groups who may lack access to textbooks and learning materials. In the Republic of Moldova, students from families at risk of exclusion can rent textbooks.

Some countries use web platforms or software to make electronic textbooks and learning materials available to all learners. In Estonia, e-learning materials are available on the digital study material portal e-koolikott (e-schoolbag), and students with special education needs have access to tailor-made e-learning materials. In Georgia, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport has a portal with a digital library providing access to learning materials and cloud storage space to all teachers and students; in addition, some special materials are available for blind students. In Kazakhstan, OPIQ, an interactive library, provides access to electronic textbooks on subjects in grades 1–11 and a collection of tasks and tests, while BilimLand, an education portal, has additional digital education resources. Kyrgyzstan's National Open Education Resources Repository provides more than 800 school textbooks and teaching materials for computers, tablets and smartphones.

Information and communication technology (ICT) can support distance learning as well as learners with disabilities. In Montenegro, the Education Information System project has provided all education institutions with computers and broadband internet and has trained school staff in their use, with the support of regional coordinators. ICT is also used to improve access for children with disabilities (**Box 5.4**).

BOX 5.4:

Textbooks in Montenegro support inclusion of students with learning disabilities

Montenegro has begun using textbooks in the Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) format, the first country in the world to do so (Perovic, 2020). DAISY textbooks allow easy recording of written material containing audio and visual information. Their text can be easily enlarged, and their words highlighted, while spoken by the narrator of the audio. The texts are accessible through any technological device with a display screen, in a class or at home.

DAISY textbooks are intended for all learners but are especially beneficial for those who have difficulty reading printed texts. Producing them has involved adapting printed textbooks in Montenegrin (reading books for grades 4–9 and history for grades 6–9) to the relevant audiovisual format to support learners with visual impairments, those with no residual vision, and all students with a learning disability such as dyslexia or dysgraphia.

The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids, the Resource Centre for Children and Youth 'Podgorica', the Bureau for Education Services and the School of Dramatic Arts, with UNICEF support, initiated DAISY textbook production in 2014. The project was piloted in 25 schools and had expanded to 70 by 2019. About 35,000 students can benefit from the use of DAISY textbooks in schools, including an estimated 500 with disabilities (Zero Project, 2020).

The 2019–2025 National Inclusive Education Strategy envisages their roll-out (Montenegro Ministry of Education, 2018). Next steps include increasing awareness of DAISY textbook use and its impact on learning (Zero Project, 2020). The Bureau for Education Services organized accredited teacher training on the use of DAISY textbooks in schools in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Assistive technology is used to improve access to learning materials for students with special education needs, although special schools tend to be better equipped than mainstream schools, as examples from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Russian Federation and Serbia show. Special schools in North Macedonia have tailored materials, such as Braille textbooks, software and audiobooks. Often such resources are provided through schools' participation in projects with NGOs. In Slovakia, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport introduced a policy in 2011 to ensure that all special school orders for textbooks would be met free of charge. Transcriptions in Braille and electronic versions on CD for partially sighted learners were published for literature textbooks in grades 5–7.

INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS SHOULD INCLUDE ALL LEARNERS

Information from learning assessments is critical to guide teaching for all students. Yet summative assessments, which generate feedback only after a course of study is complete, tend to prevail in national frameworks and serve as a basis for important decisions on student certification and placement, whether in segregated or inclusive settings. Summative assessments provide little information on how teaching should be adapted or modified to help learners with special education needs to progress and achieve. When used for accountability purposes, these high-stakes assessments can lead to negative practices such as selective admission, strict discipline policies, student reassignment, and greater focus and time given to those most likely to succeed. According to head teacher reports from countries taking part in the 2015 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Programme for International Student Assessment, 38% of tested students were in schools where academic performance was an important determinant of admission. In Bulgaria and Croatia, more than 8 in 10 schools used performance as a criterion (OECD, 2016).

Yet, while exclusionary practices are a common result of assessments, assessment and inclusion need not be seen in opposition. To support inclusive education, assessment systems need to abide by principles that 'promote the learning of all pupils as far as possible' (European Agency, 2007, p. 47). First, all students' learning progress and achievement should be identified and valued, and all students should have the opportunity to demonstrate their progress and achievement. Second, assessment procedures should be complementary, coherent with the goal of supporting learning and teaching, and coordinated, avoiding segregation through labelling. Third, students should be entitled to reliable and valid assessment procedures that accommodate and, where possible, are modified to meet their needs (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2007, 2008).

The importance of a balanced assessment system is increasingly recognized in the region. In Kyrgyzstan, a formative assessment system is scheduled for introduction. Teachers in Lithuania are encouraged to provide feedback and use other formative assessment methods that support each student's development. Research in North Macedonia showed that formative assessment, with a focus on ongoing monitoring, had the biggest influence on improving outcomes of students with learning difficulties (Aleksovska et al., 2015). An OECD review of Serbia recommended a move away from reproducing facts in school graduation examinations and towards a wider range of transversal competences and levels of achievement (Maghnouj et al., 2020). In Tajikistan, the Ministry of Education and Science, with international support, is developing guidance on the use of formative assessment in classrooms.

Out of the 30 education systems reviewed, 27 reported having a national assessment framework for all learners to specify procedures guiding data collection and use. In most countries, such frameworks operate at the national level and are described in laws, regulations or even the national curriculum, as in Estonia and Georgia. A few countries regulate the assessment framework at local level. In Lithuania, for example, schools develop their own student assessment procedures, approved by the head teacher, and publish them on the school website. In Poland, each school adopts its own assessment system, guided by national legislation. However, this process is not always straightforward. Latvia and Slovenia, for instance, reported that enhancing evaluation and assessment tools aligned with education goals so as to improve student outcomes was challenging and that assessment data were used mainly to make decisions about student retention or promotion.

Countries whose assessment frameworks differentiate learners with special needs essentially refer only to learners with disabilities. Few countries' curriculum-based assessment guidelines cover a wider range of learners. In Belarus, assessment guidelines state that ethnic minority or immigrant learners not proficient in Belarusian or Russian may be exempt from grading in the corresponding language classes for up to two years. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, guidelines refer to gender, ethnicity, language, culture and special needs; in Hungary, to socio-cultural background; and in the Russian Federation, to immigrant and bilingual children.

> "High-stakes assessments can lead to negative practices such as selective admission, strict discipline policies, student reassignment, and greater focus and time given to those most likely to succeed"

While assessment frameworks should support ethnic minority learners' needs, some countries' frameworks do not always meet those needs, especially with respect to high-stakes examinations. They may in fact act as a barrier to demonstrating learning achievement at the end of school and for gaining access to tertiary education. This is a challenge for students of Uighur- and Uzbek-language schools in Kazakhstan and for most students educated in languages other than Russian in the Russian Federation.

In the case of learners with disabilities, two approaches can be distinguished. In some countries, such as Armenia, teams of professionals, including special teachers and therapists, assess learners with disabilities in accordance with their individualized education plan, while all other learners' assessments are based on general procedures. Other countries have general assessment procedures that apply to all learners, but are adjusted and modified for learners with disabilities. In Kazakhstan, learners with disabilities are assessed using the same criteria and indicators as other children but adaptations take into account needs and limitations imposed by a range of impairments. Teachers set learning targets for assessment of learners with disabilities as part of a differentiated and individualized teaching approach that combines a common and special education curriculum.

Most countries have guidance documents on assessment. Azerbaijan approved new guidelines for school-based assessment in 2018, although they do not refer to special education needs. Croatia has an Ordinance on the Methods, Procedures and Elements of the Evaluation of Primary and Secondary Schools and special provision for evaluating achievement of students with disabilities. Serbia has a rulebook with guidelines on exercising the right to an individualized education plan. In Uzbekistan, guidebooks developed in compliance with the State Educational Standard provide guidelines to teachers on conducting learner assessment. Countries without formal guidance for teachers use other approaches. Mongolia has trained teachers in a few provinces on general assessment and the new assessment regulations. Turkey, as part of its Education Vision 2023, will implement a School Development Model and a Learning Analytics Platform.

Countries offer various accommodations to learners with disabilities in examinations

Assessment methods should meet all learners' needs. In the case of learners with disabilities, reasonable accommodations may be needed to ensure these learners can be assessed without lowering expectations (Yaoying, 2013). Accommodations take various forms. They may be made to testing equipment and technology (**Box 5.5**). Specific examination materials and tests for learners with disabilities are prepared in the Czech Republic, Mongolia, North Macedonia, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine. In Montenegro, individual adjustments are made for each examination. Depending on type and degree of disability, students are exempted from parts of the examination they cannot take.

> "Specific examination materials and tests for learners with disabilities are prepared in the Czech Republic, Mongolia, North Macedonia, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine"

Additional time may be given to students with disabilities, ranging from 30 minutes in Hungary to one hour in Azerbaijan. In Kazakhstan, students with disabilities have longer break times. Setting accommodations are also made. Bulgaria provides an independent room with a personal development support team. Ukraine offers a room with a nurse, ramps, an accessible toilet and an accessible table. Examination facilities with accessibility features are also available in Montenegro.

Test procedure accommodations are common. Students with severe oral communication difficulties can take written instead of oral examinations in Croatia, Georgia, Mongolia, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation. In Hungary, students with severe writing difficulties can take an oral examination or choose another subject to be assessed on in the secondary school leaving examination.

Teacher consultants and additional teaching staff are often made available. Assistants write down student answers in Bulgaria, specialists interpret in sign language in Kazakhstan, administrators and assessment centre staff provide support in Lithuania, and an external person is permitted to enter and leave the examination auditorium to provide support in Ukraine.

Some countries lack national guidelines on assisting assessment of learners with special education needs. In Belarus, children with learning difficulties who study in mainstream schools are assessed according to the regular norms. In Latvia, all learners with disabilities except those with intellectual disabilities follow the general education curriculum based on the National Standard of Basic Education, which means they must take tests and examinations like their peers without disabilities. In Uzbekistan, school graduation examinations are waived for learners with disabilities upon a medical commission recommendation. Learners who do not pass graduation

examinations in some subjects may repeat them in the following two months or sit a different examination. A 2% quota in university admissions for people with disabilities was introduced in 2018 (Yusupov, 2019).

BOX 5.5:

Technology is used to improve assessment quality

Increasingly, education systems expect teachers to use ICT to improve assessment quality. Almost half the education systems in the region use ICT for this purpose, although they differ in the assessment types and extent involved. In some countries, ICT is used in state school graduation examinations only, while in others it is also used in school-based and even home-based assessment. In Estonia, ICT is used in standard-determining tests, harmonized basic education final examinations, state examinations and internationally recognized foreign language examinations.

Examples of ICT used to support assessment include speech synthesizer software and text formatting (increased font size or different font) for the visually impaired, speech-to-speech platforms for the hearing impaired, and alternative and augmentative communication software, such as view control software, applications for testing on computers and via smartphones, and software for converting speech to writing. Bulgaria offers enlarged fonts on computers, along with computers with a customized speech synthesizer. Adaptation of technology, materials and proceedings also takes place in graduation and national examinations in Croatia. In Slovakia, enlarged letters, clearly divided text, and text in Braille are used in ICT-based assessments. In Slovenia, assessment through computer programmes is used via the Special Needs Assessment Profile programme. It is a non-obligatory psychometric test that collects information about a child's learning, social, emotional and behavioural issues.

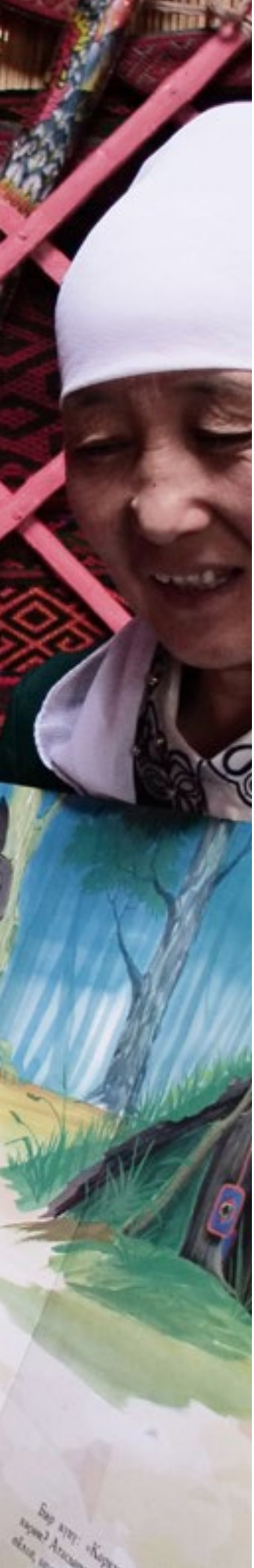
CONCLUSION

Countries are making progress towards inclusion through their curricula, textbooks and assessment processes. While all countries have legal provisons for inclusive curricula, representation of some groups is still weak or absent. As public institutions charged with curriculum development increasingly recognize the need to avoid biases and discriminatory content, they are involving other stakeholders. However, this involvement is usually limited to simple consultation. Active cooperation and dialogue with experts, schools and, especially, parents and learners remain relatively rare. Curricula are commonly adapted to learner needs through individualized education plans, which exist in almost all countries but mainly for children with special education needs. Procedures for developing and implementing them remain a challenge.

Learning materials adapted to different learners' needs are increasingly available, but schools and teachers need more autonomy when it comes to selecting learning materials. Policies, regulations and guidelines on assessment of all learners, including those with special needs, are being created and updated to meet the goal of inclusion. Key questions on why and how learners are assessed, however, sometimes still lack an inclusion dimension. Education systems should continue supporting and guiding schools and teachers in the use of assessment as a tool for planning and implementing meaningful participation, teaching and learning of all students.

The jailoo kindergarten in Kyrgyzstan teaches the children of pastoralist families who move to the mountains in the summer to fatten their livestock for the winter. The kindergarten ensures the children do not fall behind in their studies while on the move. The lessons are catered to the lifestyle of the children, and are equipped with culturally responsive teaching materials.

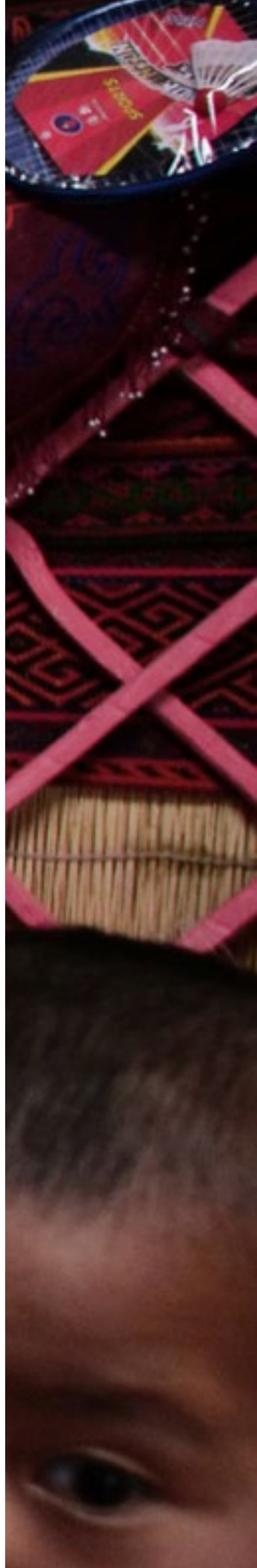
CREDIT: GEM Report/Askar Nuraken



CHAPTER

6

Teachers



KEY MESSAGES

Pre-service teacher education should be based on the inclusive paradigm.

- Teachers should be prepared and supported to recognize student needs, ensure rich learning environments, and cooperate with colleagues to provide high-quality education for all.
- Among 14 countries in the region, only about one in two lower secondary school teachers in 2018 felt prepared to work in mixed-ability classrooms and one in three in culturally diverse classrooms. In the Czech Republic, the respective ratios were 1 in 5 and 1 in 10.
- Some countries have made progress in preparing teachers for inclusion. A master programme on inclusive education in Montenegro aims to introduce the inclusion paradigm at university level and within the entire education system and to sensitize university staff.
- Some countries continue to follow a medical approach emphasizing differences between learners. In Uzbekistan, Tashkent State Pedagogical University offers a course on inclusive education in the defectology faculty, a field based on the deficiency model.
- Initial teacher education rarely enables future teachers to gain working experience in inclusive environments. The teacher training institute of the University of Miskolc, Hungary, partners with schools and practitioners.
- Competences in inclusion are not always required for teacher licensing and certification. In the Russian Federation, as licensing does not require demonstration of practical classroom skills, pedagogical universities are under less pressure to have inclusive education courses.

In-service teacher education fills gaps, but not systematically.

- Among 14 countries, the average percentage of lower secondary school teachers expressing high demand for training in inclusion-related areas was similar to the EU average. But teachers in Romania expressed consistently higher-than-average demand for training.
- An ageing teaching force is a challenge. In Lithuania, 27% of teachers with up to five years of experience, but only 17% of those with more than five years, had been trained to teach in a multicultural or multilingual setting.
- Some countries have a structured approach to professional development. Armenia's model focuses on competences for various teaching strategies instead of specific skills for some categories of students.

Teacher diversity is not representative of student diversity.

- Teaching staff diversity reflects an education system's commitment to values and principles of inclusion. Montenegro has no qualified teaching staff capable of teaching in Romani.
- Some countries take steps to ensure diversity. Kazakhstan supports admission to education faculties for applicants who are poor, come from rural areas or have a disability.

Support personnel are often lacking, and their roles are not always clearly defined.

- Among 12 education systems with data, there is 1 professional for every 30 or so teachers, on average. Latvia and Lithuania have the most (1 per about 12 teachers).
- Specialist support often is not used effectively. In North Macedonia, such personnel do administrative tasks, and little of their work time is dedicated to teacher and student support.
- Among 10 education systems with data, there is 1 teaching assistant for every 30 or so teachers, on average. The Czech Republic has the highest number (1 for every 9 teachers). In Albania and Serbia the assistant role is recognized in legislation and at the policy level.
- Teacher assistant roles are often diluted. In Armenia, assistants have been introduced to help teachers develop and follow up on individualized education plans, but only 3 of the 14 responsibilities in their job description refer to such support.

Teachers are key to students' learning and socialization (Hattie, 2003; Rice, 2003; OECD, 2005; UNESCO, 2015). Their teaching quality is a result of their initial and continuing education, their attitudes and motivation, and the support they receive from the school and the system. As their role shifts from merely transferring knowledge to fostering every child's potential, they need assistants and resources. Various types of support personnel have been recruited into mainstream education, although their contribution to improving inclusiveness has often been insufficient.

Inclusive education requires all teachers to be prepared and willing to teach all learners. For teachers to provide truly inclusive education, they need to be agents of change with values that support high-quality teaching for all students (Ackers, 2018; Ainscow, 2005). Teachers generally do not feel their initial education has prepared them well to teach all learners (OECD, 2014; 2019). Approaches to initial teacher education and continuing professional development vary greatly, and links between both types of training and classroom realities are generally lacking. Moreover, the teaching force is relatively homogeneous and seldom reflects increased classroom diversity. This chapter reviews initial teacher education and continuing professional development, diversity in recruitment, and the role of support personnel in inclusive education.

TEACHERS ARE NOT WELL PREPARED TO WORK IN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Teacher education and training for inclusion should prepare teachers to value learner diversity, considering it as a resource, and to support all learners and have high expectations for them all. Such education and training should also encourage teachers to work with others and in teams, and should support their continuing personal and professional development (European Agency, 2012).

> "In some countries, modules or entire initial teacher education programmes focus on inclusive education; in others, subjects focus on specific groups"

Countries differ in the ways their initial teacher education and in-service professional development programmes integrate inclusion-related topics and develop skills for inclusive education. In some countries, modules or entire programmes focus on inclusive education; in others, subjects focus on specific groups, such as students with hearing or visual impairments. With the exception of a teacher college in Slovenia, where teachers are educated before becoming subject experts, teachers are initially trained as subject experts before developing pedagogical skills. Such differences affect teachers' preparedness to work in a diversified classroom. Moreover, teacher certification or licensing is not based on skills demonstrated in the classroom.

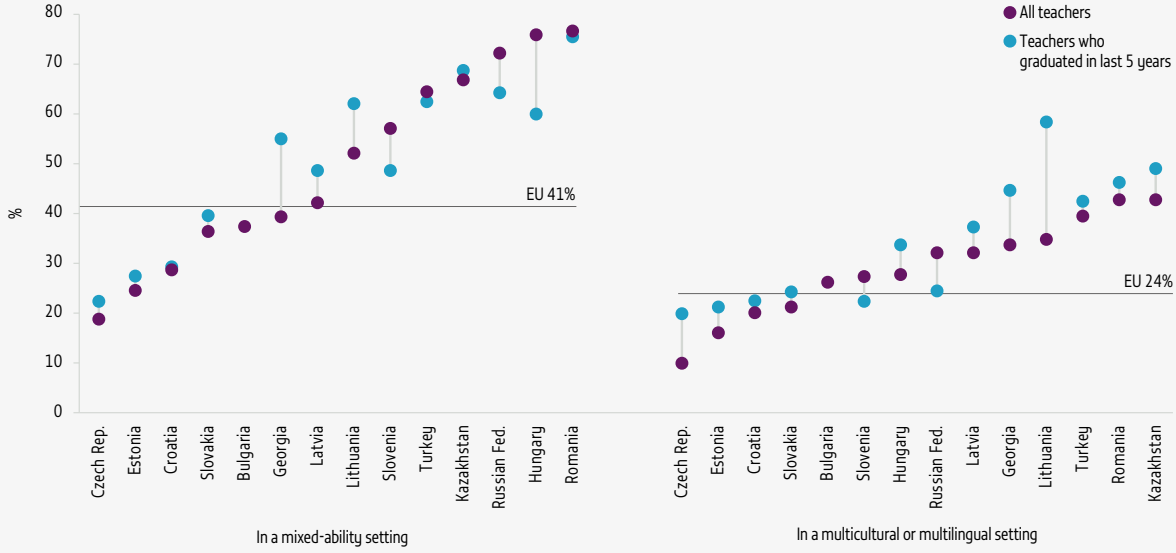
Many teachers feel insufficiently prepared to teach in challenging environments. Among 14 countries in the region only about one in two teachers responding to the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) said they felt prepared to work in mixed-ability classrooms and one in three felt ready for culturally diverse classrooms. In the Czech Republic, the respective

ratios were 1 in 5 and 1 in 10. A possible reason for the low numbers is limited teaching force diversity (**Box 6.1**). Yet countries in the region reported higher levels of preparedness, on average, than European Union (EU) countries (**Figure 6.1**), although this should be seen in the context of classrooms in the region being less diverse than in EU countries (see **Chapter 3**).

Inclusion is integrated in initial teacher education in various ways

There are two basic models of teacher education for inclusion. The first relies on a cross-curricular approach and emphasizes practical experience, following the principle that inclusion should be at the core of general teacher education and not a specialist topic (Rouse and

FIGURE 6.1:
One in two teachers in the region feels prepared to teach in mixed-ability settings and one in three in multicultural settings
Percentage of lower secondary school teachers who felt well or very well prepared for teaching in particular classroom settings, by year of graduation from teacher education programme, 2018



Note: The EU average refers to the 23 countries that took part in the 2018 TALIS.
Source: OECD (2019).

BOX 6.1:

Teacher diversity is not representative of student diversity

A major aspect of being a teacher is serving as a role model. Students identify with teachers and think about their own future based on how they perceive the world around them. If there are no teachers with disabilities or from ethnic minorities, or if teachers in a given subject are mostly male or female, students may conclude that certain career paths are simply not possible for some groups. Teaching staff diversity reflects an education system's commitment to values and principles of inclusion. Increased representation of teachers with different cultural backgrounds or with disabilities is linked to increased enrolment and well-being (Borker, 2017) and improved performance of students from these groups (Cherng and Halpin, 2016; Egalite et al., 2015).

Teachers in the region are often not representative of diversity in the overall population. Gender imbalance is significant. The average share of female lower secondary school teachers was 69% in EU countries overall, but among EU countries in the region it ranged from 73% in Romania to 89% in Latvia. In Montenegro and Slovakia, it is reported that there are no qualified teaching staff capable of teaching in the Roma language.

Some countries are making efforts to increase teacher diversity. Kazakhstan's government offers preferential admission to teacher training universities for applicants from rural areas, with disabilities or from low socio-economic backgrounds (Kazakhstan Information-Analytic Centre, 2017). In the Russian Federation, more than 90 ethnic minority languages are taught in schools, and there is considerable ethnic diversity among qualified teaching staff, even in large cities such as Moscow.

Florian, 2012). The Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia and Serbia take this approach to initial teacher education. The second model focuses on special education courses aimed at producing specialists to support students. The courses may be mandatory but usually are optional, which means development of inclusive education skills depends on future teachers' initiative. The courses are offered by subject faculties, teacher training faculties, pedagogical universities and other universities, most of which design their own curricula.

Some countries have made progress in preparing teachers for inclusion (**Box 6.2**). This may be one reason the 2018 TALIS data show that teachers who had completed their teacher education programme in the previous five years reported slightly higher than average levels of preparedness to teach in mixed-ability or multicultural settings. Croatia has begun a national training programme for outcome-oriented learning to bring students to the centre of the education process. Poland has launched a reform of initial teacher education and professional development, guided by the Education for All principle. Romania's curriculum framework revision to support inclusion in mainstream education also involves revision of teacher training and skills. These are all good starting points for improvement of teacher preparedness for inclusive education.

The Armenian State Pedagogical University offers four inclusion-related courses, two at bachelor and two at master level. One subject is mandatory and the other optional at each level. The mandatory subject at bachelor level is theory and practice of inclusive education; the optional subject is psycho-pedagogical assistance. At master level, organization of inclusive education is mandatory and assessment is optional. In Bulgaria, all pedagogical specialities in higher education include compulsory courses training teachers to work with students with special needs in intercultural education and in inclusive education.

The Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Montenegro has a master programme on inclusive education whose broader objective is to introduce the inclusion paradigm at university level and within the entire education system and to sensitize university staff. In Poland, as part of mandatory initial teacher education, students gain knowledge and skills to perform complex teaching, education and care-related tasks, including development and adaptation of curricula to meet all students' needs and abilities.

However, some countries continue to follow a medical approach to education that emphasizes differences between learners and reinforces barriers to inclusion (Florian, 2019). In Ukraine, Ternopil National Pedagogical University introduced a master programme on inclusive education in 2019. It aims at developing professional competences for inclusive learning environments but puts considerable focus on correctional pedagogy and practices. In Uzbekistan, Tashkent State Pedagogical University offers a course on inclusive education but it is in the defectology faculty, a field based on the deficiency approach to education. Uzbekistan, like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tajikistan and Turkey, does not incorporate any inclusion-related topics in initial teacher education.

Initial teacher education across the region mostly takes a somewhat theoretical approach to inclusion and rarely enables future teachers to gain experience in inclusive environments through internship or practical training. Among the 30 education systems reviewed in the region, only 10 include inclusion-related practice and internships in initial teacher education: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

Two universities in Hungary have tried to address this issue. The teacher training institute of the University of Miskolc builds professional partnerships with schools in the region, and university staff collaborate with school staff to offer practical experience to teacher candidates who, in turn, are expected to work voluntarily with disadvantaged learners from Roma and other communities. The Institute of Education at the University of Pécs also engages in partnership with schools where future teachers can practice.

Lengthy accreditation processes for new courses and programmes mean it takes time to align them with inclusion policies. Resistance to adaptation by academic staff and lack of consensus on adding new content to programmes are related problems. Albanian universities vary hugely in the programmes offered (Wort et al., 2019). In North Macedonia,

“Some countries continue to follow a medical approach to education that emphasizes differences between learners and reinforces barriers to inclusion”

initial primary school teacher education includes optional classes on inclusion, but the initial education curriculum of subject teachers has no inclusion-related topics.

Even where systems integrate inclusion-related topics into teacher education, competences in inclusion are not always required for teacher licensing and certification. In Serbia, prospective teachers must demonstrate competences in a classroom to be licensed, but it need not be a mixed-ability or multicultural classroom. Attendance of inclusion-related courses during in-service professional development is obligatory for attestation, a process in which teachers' skills and accomplishments are regularly assessed. In the Russian Federation, by contrast, licensing is automatic upon receipt of a university diploma and does not require demonstration of practical classroom skills, let alone inclusion-related skills. With federal standards lacking such requirements, pedagogical universities are under no pressure to introduce inclusive education courses. Uzbekistan lacks both a qualification framework and teacher professional standards, whose absence results in ineffective teacher selection and appointment.

In-service teacher education fills gaps, but not systematically

Initial teacher education programmes are slow to respond to demands brought about by new policies or emerging situations. Continuing professional development, offered through national services such as training institutes, universities and professional bodies or through non-government organizations (NGOs), can help teachers update and broaden their skills. Another approach to in-service training is through networks (**Box 6.3**).

Evidence from the 2018 TALIS showed that teachers in the region were more likely to have received professional development than their EU peers in at least three of four inclusion-related areas. The area with the largest disparity in exposure of lower secondary school teachers to such training was approaches to individualized learning. More than 7 in 10 teachers had received training in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia and the Russian Federation, compared with fewer than 3 in 10 in Hungary and Slovakia (**Figure 6.2**). It is also important to consider that the alignment of such training with principles of inclusiveness may vary considerably between countries.

BOX 6.2:

Kazakhstan and Slovenia differ in their approaches to introducing inclusive education in initial teacher education

In recent years, countries in the region have made progress in preparing teachers for inclusion. In Kazakhstan, between 2013 and 2018 the Community Educational Foundation ran the School for All project, which supported introduction of a mandatory inclusive education course for all pedagogical specialties, equivalent to 3 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits, or 90 hours. All materials were developed in Russian and Kazakh and made available for bilingual use by teachers and students. A glossary of psychological and pedagogical terms in inclusive education was also prepared. About 360 pedagogical university and college teaching staff and 100 inclusive education trainers were trained, in partnership with the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. Among other objectives, the training aimed to develop skills in a variety of teaching strategies to promote student-centred learning, such as effective group work, participatory and inclusive methods, responsiveness to differing abilities and learning styles, and support to students in applying their learning.

Slovenia modernized its school system, emphasizing human rights, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, starting with a 1995 white paper on education and resulting legislation. The reforms enabled a shift from the previous emphasis on specialists to teachers with a broad education and competences to address various types of special needs in an inclusive system. About 10 years ago, the country set up and accredited a master's degree programme in inclusive pedagogy at the University of Primorska Faculty of Education, equivalent to 120 ECTS credits, or four semesters. A similar programme on inclusion in education was accredited by the University of Maribor Faculty of Education. Participants are expected to develop competences including leadership skills; cooperation with peers, the community and parents; teamwork and strategic thinking; sensitivity to people's needs in a range of social situations; and professional ethics and responsibility.

“Even where systems integrate inclusion-related topics into teacher education, competences in inclusion are not always required for teacher licensing and certification”

BOX 6.3:

Learning communities widen teachers' professional development opportunities

A collaborative learning community with shared goals can increase teaching staff skills, knowledge and confidence, thus improving support to learners and ultimately raising achievement (European Agency, 2018b). In total, 17 education systems in the region indicated that legislation or policy supported development of learning communities.

School networks are one such mechanism. In Kosovo,[1] each network comprises a mentor school and a few cooperating schools that share experiences and effective practices. In all, 21 of these learning communities, involving over 100 schools, benefit from intensive exchanges. Cluster schools in Kyrgyzstan each act as a centre for several schools in the vicinity, provide training for teachers and create and distribute teaching materials. The Russian Federation also takes a network approach, in which schools may share teaching tools and highly qualified teachers in the Modern School project.

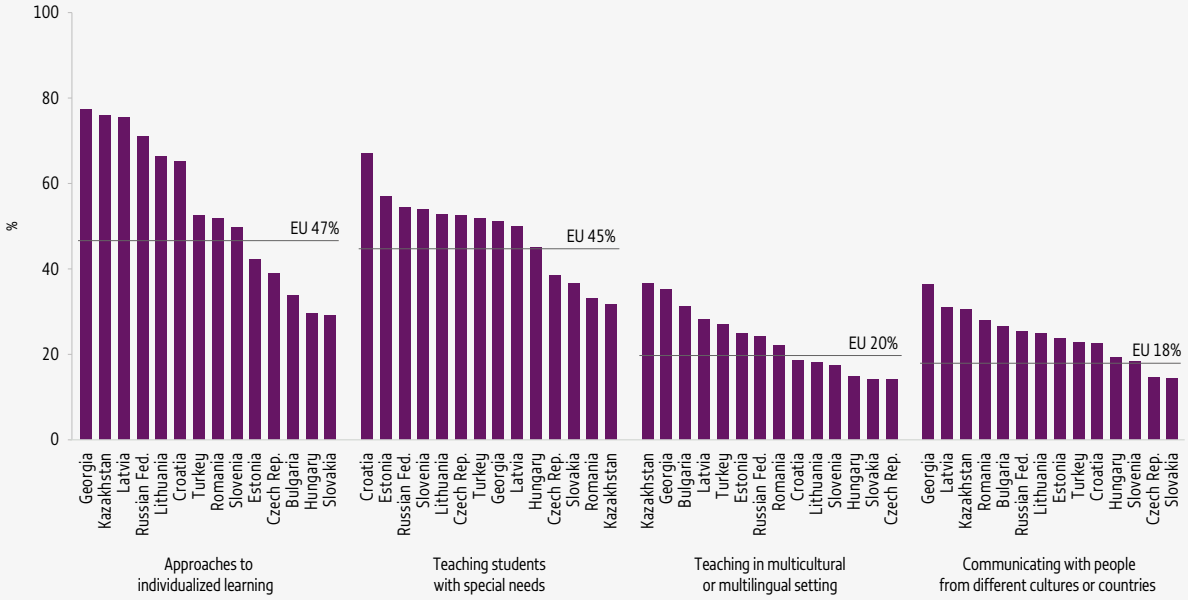
However, relatively few learning communities focus on equity and inclusion. In the Russian Federation, the Association of Inclusive Schools helps disseminate information about inclusive education in regions, provides professional support, shares good practice and supports innovation. Some countries establish collaboration between special schools and resource centres. In North Macedonia, mainstream schools collaborate with a resource centre, which uses its material and human resources to provide expert support to students with special needs as well as to teachers, support staff, parents and the inclusion teams of other students in the municipality.

Finally, 12 countries indicated they had cooperation programmes between schools and universities or other higher education institutions, partly to foster inclusive education and focus on student teachers' professional learning in the form of internships, professional development (e.g. inclusive education teacher training, assessment and evaluation, language instruction) and research into innovative practices for inclusive education development.

FIGURE 6.2:

Teachers in the region are more likely than their EU peers to have received professional development in inclusion-related areas

Percentage of lower secondary school teachers reporting that particular topics were included in their professional development, 2018



Note: Students 'with special needs' are defined as those for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because they are mentally, physically or emotionally disadvantaged.
Source: OECD (2019).

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Many countries report an ageing teacher population, which may hinder efforts towards preparing the teaching force for inclusion. The 2018 TALIS found that more than 50% of teachers were over 50 in Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia and Lithuania, compared with an average of 34% in EU countries. Older teachers are less likely to have had inclusion-oriented professional development. In Lithuania, 27% of teachers with up to five years of experience, but only 17% of those with more than five years, had received professional development in teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting. In Bulgaria, 35% of teachers with up to five years of experience, but only 25% of those with more than five years, had received professional development in communicating with people from different cultures or countries.

Some countries make such training an essential part of appraisal, quality assurance or career advancement. In Lithuania, mainstream school teachers need to attend special pedagogy courses at regional teacher education centres, teacher professional development centres or higher education institutions to acquire a specialization in special education needs. A 40-hour course is required to teach students with health issues, movement or posture disorders, and behavioural or emotional disorders. A 60-hour course is needed to teach students with speech, hearing, visual, intellectual or developmental impairments, as well as those with complex disabilities.

In other countries, professional development is not connected to career advancement or other incentives. In Estonia, teacher professional development has no impact on salaries, roles in school or career advancement. Montenegro links teacher career advancement to salary increase, but acquisition of skills for inclusion is not particularly emphasized or encouraged.

Evidence from the 2018 TALIS is mixed on demand for professional development in inclusion. Overall, among the 14 countries in the region that took part, the average percentage of lower secondary school teachers expressing high demand for training in inclusion-related areas was similar to the EU average. Demand was highest for training to teach students with special needs. Across the four areas covered, Romanian teachers expressed consistently high demand compared with the EU average. For instance, 27% expressed high demand for skills to communicate with people from different cultures or countries, compared with 10% in the EU (**Figure 6.3a**).

It is worth noting that, perhaps counterintuitively, the relationship between the prevalence of professional development opportunities and the expression of need for more professional development in these 14 countries was positive: The more such opportunities existed, the more teachers expressed a high need to participate in such training. This association was strongest in the case of training to communicate with people from different cultures or countries. The increase in availability of such opportunities may have emerged in response to recognized needs.

Evidence is also mixed on changes in teacher demand for training in countries that have taken part in more than one TALIS round. Four countries that took part in the survey in 2008 and 2018, especially Hungary and Slovenia, reported considerable decline in demand, but all countries that took part in 2013 reported an average increase of about seven percentage points (**Figure 6.3b**).

“Many countries report an ageing teacher population, which may hinder efforts towards preparing the teaching force for inclusion”

BOX 6.4:

Armenia has developed a comprehensive in-service training programme

Armenia recently introduced a new model of in-service capacity development building on an initiative of Teach for Armenia. An expert group carried out a study of teacher competences, identified shortcomings and developed an inclusive education teacher training and mentorship methodology and toolkit. Instead of targeting specific skills for working with some categories of vulnerable students, the programme identified key competences for working in inclusive education, such as better recognition and identification of learning styles, strategies, needs and progress of diverse children; individualization of teaching activities and use of various teaching strategies; and problem-solving methods for challenging classroom situations through collaboration with other teachers, education support specialists, families and other stakeholders.

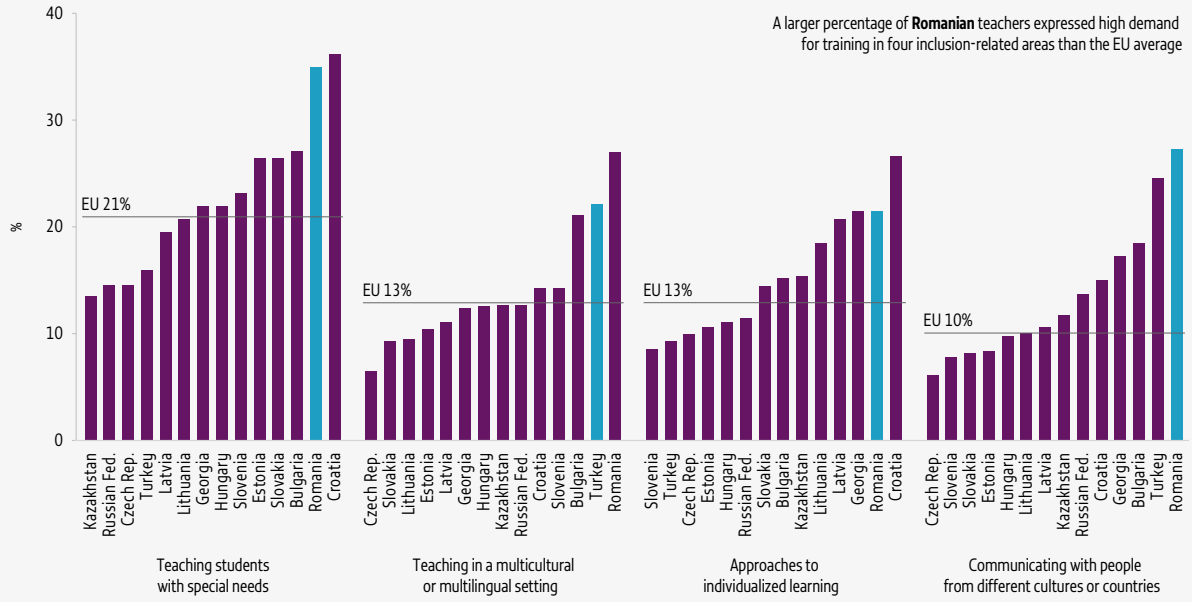
Following a call for applications, since 2019 a mentorship programme has offered two weeks of intensive training in mentoring and facilitation skills to more than 800 public school teachers and teaching assistants. To ensure high-quality implementation and continuous improvement of the programme, the Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Centre hired six external specialists to monitor and evaluate more than 50 trainer-mentors' performance and the programme's overall impact on teachers' professional development.

FIGURE 6.3:

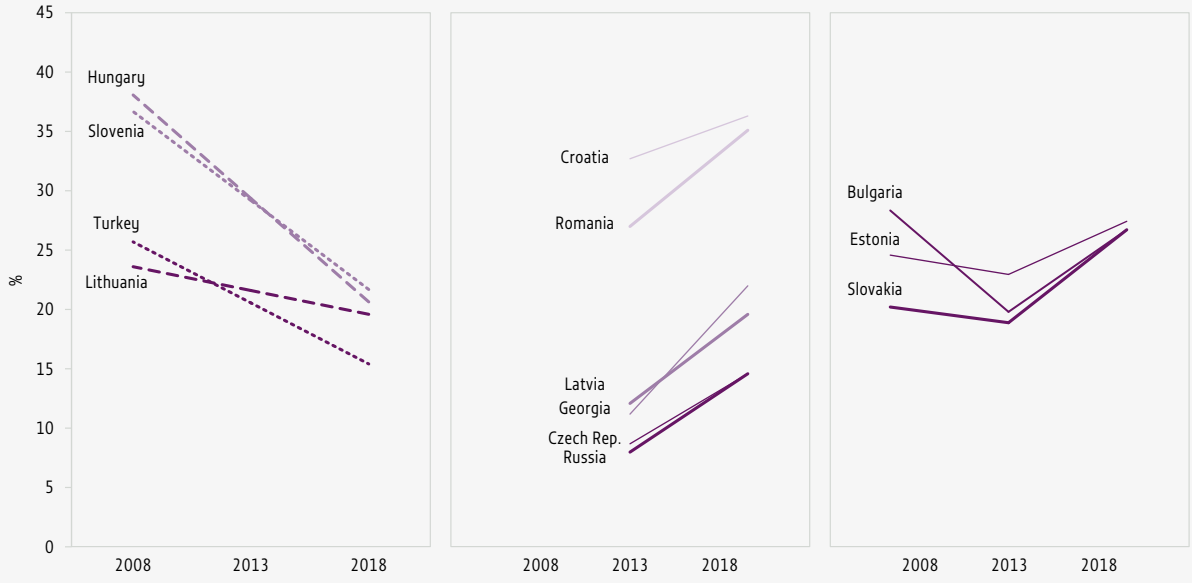
Teachers are more likely to express need for professional development in teaching students with special needs

Percentage of lower secondary school teachers reporting that particular topics were included in their professional development, 2018

a. In four inclusion-related areas, 2018



b. In teaching students with special needs, 2008, 2013 and 2018



Note: Students 'with special needs' are defined as those for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because they are mentally, physically or emotionally disadvantaged.
Source: OECD (2019).

While many countries lack a well-structured approach to teacher professional development for inclusive education, some are making significant efforts to formulate one, including Armenia (**Box 6.4**). The Czech Republic included a major component on teacher and other school personnel capacity development in the Learning Culture, Leadership, Inclusion, Mentoring, and Activating Forms of Learning, or K-L-I-M-A, project (2016–22), under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, to support all students in developing their full potential.

One area in which professional skills need to be developed is inclusive assessment: making sure teachers can identify learning needs and understand the challenges students may face in the learning process. Teachers need support in collecting data regularly and using them to develop individualized education plans and set targets (European Agency, 2007). Guidance on the use of curriculum-based assessment is particularly important to ensure alignment between learning goals and objectives, on the one hand, and formative and summative assessments on the other. Such alignment can help clear up ambiguities, difficulties and complications observed in teaching and learning practices. However, only Azerbaijan and Hungary reported such training.

Very few in-service teacher education programmes focus on teaching ethnic minority or immigrant students whose home language is not the language of instruction. In Estonia, 14% of all students in basic education are instructed in Russian, but only one institution offers training for Russian-language teachers. In Serbia, a programme of teaching Serbian as a second language was developed only after significant immigrant inflows, although the need existed long before. In Poland, regional in-service teacher training institutions guide teachers in schools where the language of instruction is an ethnic minority or regional language.

Some in-service education and training systems do not prioritize inclusion at all. In the Russian Federation, 144 hours of in-service training is mandatory once every three years for every school staff member, and the training certificate is required for attestation. The 2018 TALIS and 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study confirmed that, among participating countries, Russian teachers spent the most time in professional development (OECD, 2019; IEA and UNESCO, 2020). However, the type, area and content of in-service training is determined by whether the course is obligatory or elective. If inclusion-related courses are available at an in-service training centre, they are usually provided by trainers from specialized research institutes or defectology departments of teacher training institutions. The very concept of inclusion is seldom discussed or defined during such training.

TEACHERS NEED SUPPORT TO ENSURE INCLUSIVE TEACHING

To adapt teaching to students' needs and backgrounds, it is not sufficient for teachers to have knowledge and skills. They also need appropriate working conditions and support personnel (Hehir et al., 2016). Education

“Very few in-service teacher education programmes focus on teaching ethnic minority or immigrant students whose home language is not the language of instruction”

support personnel cover a wide range of professional, administrative and technical functions (Education International, 2017). In the context of inclusive education, specialists (e.g. psychologists, pedagogues, special educators, therapists) and teaching assistants are the most relevant professionals to help teachers fulfil their duties.

Teachers often lack support from professional staff

Psychologists and pedagogues play an important role in improving teaching, cooperating with parents and, in some countries, supporting teachers' professional development. In Serbia, they are the most important source of support for teachers in developing individualized education plans and differentiating their teaching (Kovacs Cerović et al., 2016).

Support personnel may be employed by mainstream schools, special schools or resource centres serving the community or region. Among the 12 education systems that provided detailed data on availability of professionals in education, there was 1 professional for every 30 or so teachers, on average. Latvia and Lithuania had more professionals (1 per about 12 teachers) while the Czech Republic (1 in 57), Slovakia (1 in 75) and Kosovo[2] (1 in 155) had fewer (**Figure 6.4**).

Availability of professionals is not equitable. In Armenia, psychologists can be employed only as members of multi-professional teams, and only in schools attended by students with disabilities. Moreover, they are generally seen as solely responsible for formulating the support that children with disabilities need. Teachers see inclusive education as just a modality for providing education services to students with disabilities, in which specialists support and guide student learning.

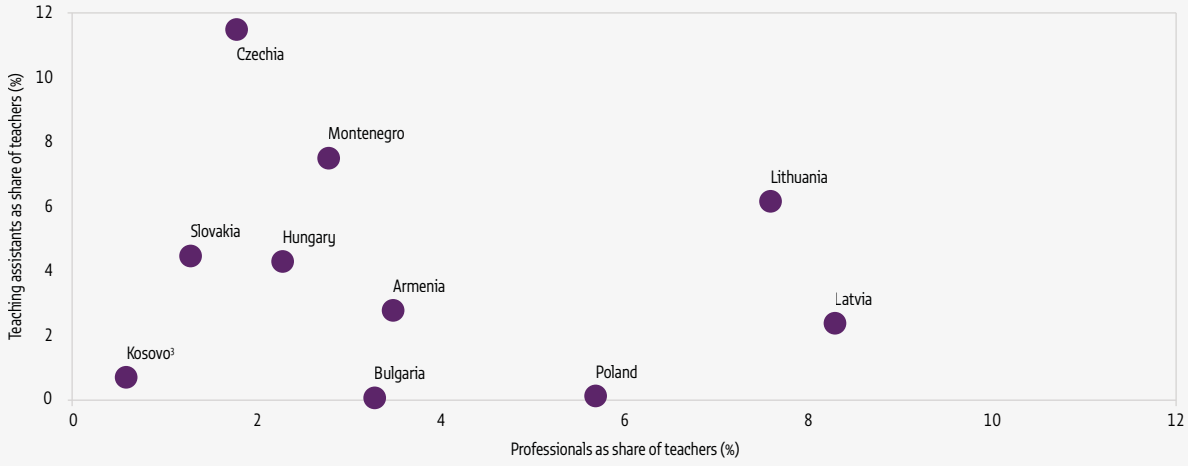
In Azerbaijan, qualified professionals whose role is to support children with disabilities work only in special schools. As the country tries to include children with special education needs into mainstream schools, teacher workload and responsibility increase without adequate qualified support. In Croatia, 43% of schools employ psychologists and 51% employ speech therapists and other

2 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

FIGURE 6.4:

Few professionals and teaching assistants are available to support teachers in inclusive education

Professionals and teaching assistants as percentage of teachers in primary and secondary education, selected education systems, 2019 or most recent available year



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

specialists focused on rehabilitation. Romania reported a particular lack of qualified and competent support personnel in rural areas. In Ukraine, special educators can be invited to a mainstream school if students' individualized education plans identify a need for such support.

The transformation of special schools into support or resource centres is seen as an opportunity to make more equitable the availability of professionals to support mainstream schools. In Belarus, newly created resource centres within the regional Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation offer training and mentoring to schools and teachers upon request and could become inclusive education knowledge hubs with the support of international organizations. In Slovakia, centres for special pedagogical counselling are being established within special schools (Slovakia Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports, 2017). It is envisaged that special education teachers will share their expertise with other teachers in inclusive schools. Over two phases of the More Successful in Primary School project, Slovakia has also attempted to set up inclusive teams in mainstream schools, composed of a school psychologist, a school special pedagogue, a social pedagogue and a teacher assistant.

Overall, while specialists should support mainstream schools' teachers, in practice their support is often not as planned. In some cases, they are assigned other tasks. In North Macedonia, support personnel are overburdened with administrative tasks, and little of their work time is dedicated to teacher and student support. In other cases, their work with students does not take place as intended. In particular, students with disabilities are often pulled out of their mainstream classroom to receive individual or small group support provided by a specialist, as in Armenia (UNICEF, 2016). In other words, the education, training and employment policies targeting support personnel are not aligned with the inclusive approach to education.

The role of teaching assistants remains to be defined

Teaching assistants are available at similar rates to professionals. Among the 10 education systems providing detailed data, there was 1 teaching assistant per 30 teachers. In some countries, teaching assistants have long been part of the education system. The Czech Republic has the highest number: one for every nine teachers. In Slovakia, where pedagogical assistants were introduced in the early 2000s, their number in mainstream primary and secondary education increased from 664 in 2005 to 3,195 in 2018. By contrast, teaching assistants are virtually absent in Bulgaria, while in Kosovo[3] and Poland, the post of teacher assistant is just being piloted (Figure 6.4).

The introduction of teaching assistants in the region is being presented as an opportunity to increase education systems' inclusiveness. In Albania and North Macedonia, the employment and countrywide roll-out of personal and teaching assistants for children with special education needs are expected to take some of the burden off mainstream teachers, who have felt anxious about

3 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

having such students in their classroom, and to promote individualization of teaching (**Box 6.5**).

Teaching assistants' roles and assignments vary significantly, from supporting one student only, or a group of students, to supporting teachers and participating in support teams. In the Russian Federation, an assistant is assigned to a student with disability upon approval by the medico-social commission to provide support in and outside the classroom. In Ukraine, although teaching assistants are assigned to individual students with disabilities, they also participate in psychological-pedagogical support teams along with teachers, other specialists and the child's parents.

In some cases, their role is still somewhat vague or debated. For instance, in Armenia the post of teaching assistant was recently introduced. The government originally described its aim as supporting teachers in developing and following up on individualized education plans. In the job description, however, only 3 of the 14 responsibilities listed implied assisting teachers. In Azerbaijan, some teachers consider teaching assistants to be fully responsible for the education of a student with disabilities. However, the core principle should be that every learner has the right to be taught by a qualified teacher.

Countries report barriers to establishing teaching assistant positions. In Azerbaijan, labour legislation describes such a post, but mainstream schools' administrations have limited financial autonomy and are not empowered to employ additional staff. In Mongolia, although the education law specifies the role of assistant teachers, legal provisions for hiring them are not yet in place.

In some countries, mainstream schools employ teaching assistants as mediators. In Bulgaria, an education mediator acts as an intermediary between families, communities, students and schools, facilitating education provision and quality. In Croatia, as part of efforts to fulfil the right of learners with disabilities to have access to appropriate programmes and forms of support, as well as pedagogic and didactic adaptation to their needs, the Ministry of Science and Education established a committee at the beginning of the 2019/20 school year to evaluate the real need for teaching assistants. It recognized that such initiatives needed to be expanded to provide, for instance, an effective monitoring mechanism in primary and secondary education for learners at risk of early school leaving, such as Roma children.

In Serbia, the Roma Teaching Assistant Programme assigned a Roma assistant to each eligible primary school (Box 6.5). They could allocate their time as needed during classes and after school, e.g. collecting information about children not enrolling or leaving school early, gathering documents, visiting families and cooperating with the community. An evaluation found the programme helped increase grade 1 Roma student attendance (Battaglia and Lebediniski, 2015, 2017).

BOX 6.5:

Albania and Serbia are introducing teaching assistants in their education systems

Teaching assistants can serve the purpose of inclusive education through a variety of functions. In Albania, the initiative to introduce such posts is based on the 2012 education law and 2013 normative dispositions, which recognize the right of children with disabilities to be educated in their local school and receive additional support based on their needs. Regional Support for Inclusive Education in Albania, a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and European Union implemented by the Network of Education Policy Centers, introduced assistant teachers in selected schools through volunteer support. Following positive responses from teachers and parents, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth assigned the assistant teachers to support not only students but also teachers, parents and school administrators. Awareness-raising campaigns and training have focused on improving school community members' attitudes and developing assistant teachers' capacity. In November 2019, a minister issued instructions on assistant teachers for students with disabilities in schools, defining selection criteria and procedures and describing their duties.

In Serbia, teaching assistants were formerly not recognized at policy level. However, a positive experience with pedagogical assistants supporting Roma students in a Roma Education Fund project led to the establishment of a working group to help institutionalize this function. Members included representatives of the education ministry, the government's Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, the Institute for Evaluation of Quality of Education, the University of Belgrade Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, the Association of Schools for Pupils with Developmental Disorders and Disabilities, the Institute for Education Development, the National Council for the Roma National Minority, the Association for Pedagogical Assistance and UNICEF. A rule book, published in 2019, describes two types of teaching assistants: those supporting Roma students and their families directly as well as indirectly through support to teachers and other professionals, and those providing pedagogical assistance to students with disabilities, in accordance with their developmental, education and social needs, in line with the 10-year experience of inclusive education provision.

There is room for improvement in support personnel education and training

The volume and quality of initial education and continuing professional development opportunities for support personnel are important determinants of inclusive practices' implementation. Support personnel in the region are generally not yet suitably prepared to work in inclusive environments in collaboration with teachers, as countries continue to favour a mainly medical approach to inclusion in the education and training of professional staff. In Azerbaijan, courses in the initial education curriculum alternate focus between inclusion and special education. An obligatory inclusive education course for corrective pedagogues at bachelor and master levels at the State Pedagogical University discusses principles, the legislative basis for inclusion and typology of children with disabilities. Future professionals are left with ambiguities, and in-service training does not always compensate for deficits in initial education.

Education and training of professional staff either follow a separate track or partially overlap with initial mainstream teacher education. The degree of overlap varies. Some curriculum units for undergraduate, graduate or specialist studies can be the same. Sometimes teachers and professional staff who provide inclusive education must attend in-service training courses. For instance, in Georgia, special teachers are expected to meet at least one of the following requirements: an academic degree in teacher education at bachelor or master level, or a master's degree and a completed special teacher training module; an academic degree in a subject and a master's degree in special education; or a special teacher professional development programme or teacher training programme after two years of service as a special education teacher.

Reforms have been introduced in relation to qualifications and competences required of support personnel. In Georgia, plans to introduce a certification process and a higher education programme for special education teachers have been announced. In North Macedonia, new professional standards for teachers and support personnel are expected to have a positive influence on the system of professional development. Romania's higher education curricula for teachers and special educators were reviewed and new versions supporting the inclusive dimension in mainstream education were produced and approved. The new curricula aim to reduce segregation, discrimination and gender-based violence. Professional staff, including psychologists, pedagogues, special educators and therapists, need at least a master's or equivalent degree. The minimum level for teaching assistants is secondary education, albeit some kind of vocational pedagogical education. In Slovakia, new mechanisms for the licensing and attestation of teachers and support personnel, consistent with recent legislation, are being introduced.

Few countries have a strategic approach to planning and implementing continuing professional development of support personnel to develop their capacity for work in diverse classrooms or inclusive environments. In general, the approach to in-service training remains ad hoc. Inclusion-related topics are available for short periods, e.g. during the implementation of a national project or an accreditation process. In Bulgaria, the in-service training system sets certain requirements for licensing and attestation of support staff and offers annual seminars for teachers and special educators who work with students with special education needs in mainstream schools.

Inclusive education and training curricula for support personnel in the region contain a range of inclusion-related topics, but are mainly related to working with students with particular disabilities. In Mongolia, there was no pre-service training for special educators until the recent launch of a special education programme at the School of Education Studies of the Mongolian State University of Education. It aims to prepare special educators to teach children with disabilities in mainstream and special schools.

Topics such as individualized education plans, differentiated teaching, communication skills, challenges of working in diverse classrooms and the whole-school approach to inclusive education are insufficiently covered in the curricula for education and training of professional staff, especially for special educators and therapists. An example of an obligatory in-service training programme for professional staff exists in the Republic of Moldova and covers inclusive education services at the institutional

> “Few countries have a strategic approach to the professional development of support personnel to develop their capacity for work in diverse classrooms or inclusive environments”

level, the planning and organization of the educational process from an inclusive perspective, teaching strategies for children with special education needs, and specific individual and group interventions, among other topics.

CONCLUSION

Teachers in the region are generally not well prepared to work in diversified classrooms and lack professional support in schools. During their initial training, they are exposed to subject knowledge, subject teaching methodology and general pedagogy, but receive limited practical training in mixed-ability and culturally diverse settings. As future teachers are mostly trained to address special needs through correctional practice, cross-curricular and comprehensive approaches to inclusion are rare. Consequently, teacher licensing and attestation is usually not linked to competences for inclusive education or to a performance evaluation.

The lack of initial training in inclusion makes in-service professional development the principal way to empower teachers to work in diverse classrooms, although it tends to focus on students with disabilities more than other vulnerable groups and is rarely actively encouraged. School-based professional development is rare and teacher appraisal is not used enough to boost motivation and professional satisfaction. Teachers have no opportunities for coaching and mentoring in the classroom setting, which would help equip them with practical skills.

The teaching force in most countries does not match student population diversity, and there are few national policies to encourage members of disadvantaged groups to become teachers. In the absence of role models and opportunities to identify with teachers, the attendance, well-being and achievement of students from such groups are at risk.

Although inclusion is interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral, teachers are not sufficiently supported by other professionals. Support personnel of various competences are equally unprepared, since a comprehensive approach to inclusion is rare in their initial education as well. There is a lack of support personnel in many countries and their roles are insufficiently defined across the region, leading to unclear division of assignments and responsibilities.

Education in Tajikistan, Shahrinav District.

CREDIT: GPE/ Carine Durand

CHAPTER

7

Schools

KEY MESSAGES

Schools have a key role to play in helping build an inclusive education system.

- School leaders need to adopt an inclusive ethos and pedagogy, respond to diversity and deliver education of good quality for all through a whole-school approach.

Legal barriers hamper fair school admissions but head teachers can help overcome them in the process of developing an inclusive school culture.

- Exclusionary mechanisms and administrative barriers remain. In 15 countries, admissions depend on medical-psychological assessments and other selection procedures.
- Of the 30 education systems, 17 do not include children with disabilities in primary and 21 in secondary education. Admission barriers exist for Roma children in 10 countries in primary and 13 in secondary education.
- School tactics lead to exclusion even when preventive legislation is in place. In 15 education systems, mainstream schools have special classrooms. In Serbia, children with a developmental disability are nominally enrolled in mainstream schools but placed in developmental groups where they do not benefit from daily interaction and inclusion in mainstream classroom activities.
- Home schooling is another exclusionary practice. Local schools register a child year after year in the same grade. This administrative grade retention allows the school to be flexible with the support offered to children, but usually only a reduced curriculum is accessible.

Organization of learner support is a key school responsibility.

- As they shift towards inclusive and in-school support, countries offer multiple support functions: counselling and mentoring roles in 25 countries, learning support assistance in 22 countries, and specialist and therapist support in 21 countries. The challenge is to overcome the targeted, exclusionary and often medical approach that has dominated such support.
- Head teachers in North Macedonia, Slovakia and Slovenia, on their own initiative or as part of school networks, can use a continuum of support offered by counsellors for preventive, supportive and developmental activities.
- Head teachers can rely on support teams for specific interventions. Latvia has established a pedagogical-psychological support service. Support teachers in the Republic of Moldova provide special psycho-pedagogical assistance, physiotherapy and speech therapy.

Special schools have a new role to play in an inclusive education system.

- Some countries are moving to establish resource centres to support mainstream schools with specialist expertise and resources, especially for learners with complex needs. Poland, where 34% of learners with special education needs are taught in special settings, is developing specialized centres to support mainstream schools.

Inclusive education requires appropriate and accessible school buildings and facilities.

- Much infrastructure is neither adapted nor accessible. In Kyrgyzstan, only about 8% of schools have the necessary infrastructure for children with disabilities.
- New school design approaches respond to learner diversity. In Georgia, schools must be adapted to learner needs and equipped using universal design standards.
- Few countries monitor infrastructure standards well. Lithuania collects online information by municipality on various aspects of accessibility and adaptability in general schools.

In the move towards inclusive education, schools and school leaders are crucial. Especially now, amid a rapid shift towards new and diverse forms of instruction, interaction and participation, accelerated during the COVID-19 crisis, schools need to ensure that teachers and learners learn collaboratively and socially. Mechanisms of exclusion from the school community, the pedagogical approaches schools develop to reach all learners, and how leadership promotes inclusive school development must be monitored.

As a school becomes inclusive, aiming to organize equal learning opportunities and ensure equal learning outcomes, two issues are central. The first concerns access and accessibility. As human and financial resources to address diversity are scarce and distributed unequally, the transition to inclusion is often a management challenge for schools and school networks. The second issue regards human and technological support for learning. Specialist support and targeted actions for vulnerable groups in mainstream schools are essential.

Despite these elements' importance, inclusive school development cannot be reduced simply to improving schools' physical accessibility or access to the curriculum. Access to learning requires a broader perspective involving the organizational, pedagogical and social conditions offered by schools and their ambitions and effect on learners' performance, transition and future life opportunities (Ebersold, 2015; European Agency, 2017; UNESCO, 2020). In other words, developing accessible schools and improving procedures to facilitate access to support are part of a social contract in which school leaders and teams, as well as local stakeholders, are deeply involved. Schools need to consider education quality as a vehicle to enhance equal outcomes. By adopting an inclusive ethos and responding to diversity as an imperative for practice, school leaders can engage teachers in developing inclusive pedagogy and providing education of good quality for all (Artiles et al., 2010; Florian and Spratt, 2013; Florian, 2019).

> “Inclusive school development cannot be reduced simply to improving schools' physical accessibility or access to the curriculum”

A whole-school approach is needed. This chapter focuses on schools as a community and a resource for inclusive education, taking the perspective of schools as organizations that manage admissions and help fulfil the right to learning. It considers how inclusive school leadership affects participation, equal outcomes and a sense of belonging. It primarily regards mainstream schools but also considers how special schools, home schooling and various forms of support and counselling can be involved in the process of developing inclusive learning environments. Finally, it discusses the accessibility of the school environment, which requires policy support beyond the school community.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION DEPENDS ON FAIR SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AND SOCIAL RECOGNITION

A school culture of inclusiveness refers to values and beliefs underpinning its policy and practice to foster diversity at various levels (Booth and Ainscow, 2011; Ebersold, 2015). Flexibility in admissions, irrespective of ethnicity, language, gender, poverty, disability, learning achievement or behaviour, is an important indicator of inclusive school culture. The school leader's role in communicating these values and beliefs, regardless of the limits posed by school structures and social environments, is key.

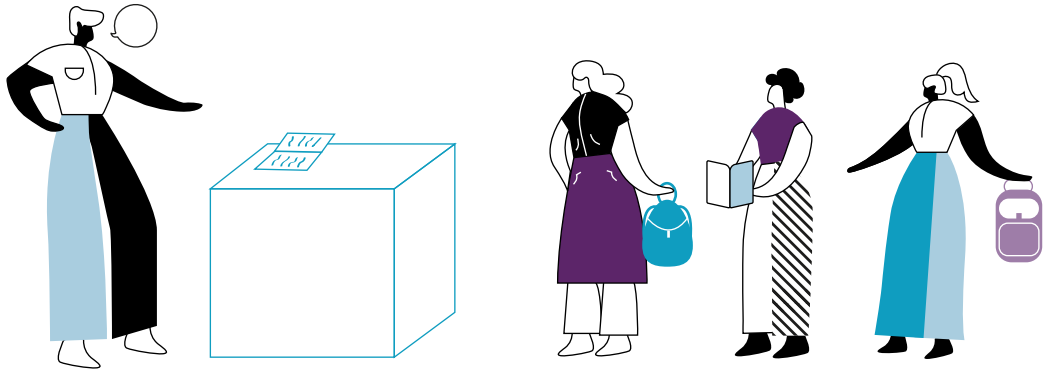
Although 24 of the 30 education systems in the region claim to accept all learners in mainstream schools, potential students are rejected in many countries as a result of exclusionary mechanisms and administrative barriers. For instance, in 15 countries, admissions depend on medical-psychological assessments and other selection procedures overseen by head teachers. Half the countries reporting that all learners have access to local schools use selection procedures for admission. In addition, 11 countries give structural reasons for non-admission, such as overcrowded classrooms in urban schools or lack of support staff, and 6 cite administrative barriers, such as requiring registration in the school catchment area. Other barriers include online registration and language preparation requirements. Hungary, Kosovo,[1] Romania and the Russian Federation mention exclusion for disciplinary reasons.

Some vulnerable groups are systematically under-represented in mainstream education. Of the 30 education systems reviewed, 17 do not include children with disabilities in primary and 21 in secondary education. Admission barriers exist for Roma children in 10 countries in primary and 13 in secondary education. Even when admitted, poor and marginalized students are more likely to underachieve at school. Education officers whose task is to prevent early school leaving may fail to reach out to their families as a result of discrimination or social, economic and cultural barriers.

> “Of the 30 education systems reviewed, 17 do not include children with disabilities in primary and 21 in secondary education”

Selection tactics lead to exclusion even when legislation is in place to prevent this from happening. In Romania, urban schools are more likely to refuse to enrol learners with special education needs when there are other schools to turn to. Some countries maintain priority registration in secondary schools, track learners at transition points – for instance, from pre-primary to primary education – or group learners according to achievement. In 15 education systems, mainstream schools have special classrooms or collaborate with non-residential special schools. In some cases, as in Serbia, separate classrooms provide partial participation: Children with a developmental disability are nominally enrolled in mainstream schools but placed in developmental groups, where they do not benefit from daily interaction and inclusion in mainstream classroom activities.

Even though **24 out of 30 education systems** in the region state that they accept all learners in mainstream schools, potential admissions are rejected in many countries as a result of **exclusionary mechanisms** and **administrative barriers**.



For instance, **in 15 countries,** admissions depend on medical-psychological assessments and other selection procedures set by the **school principal**.

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

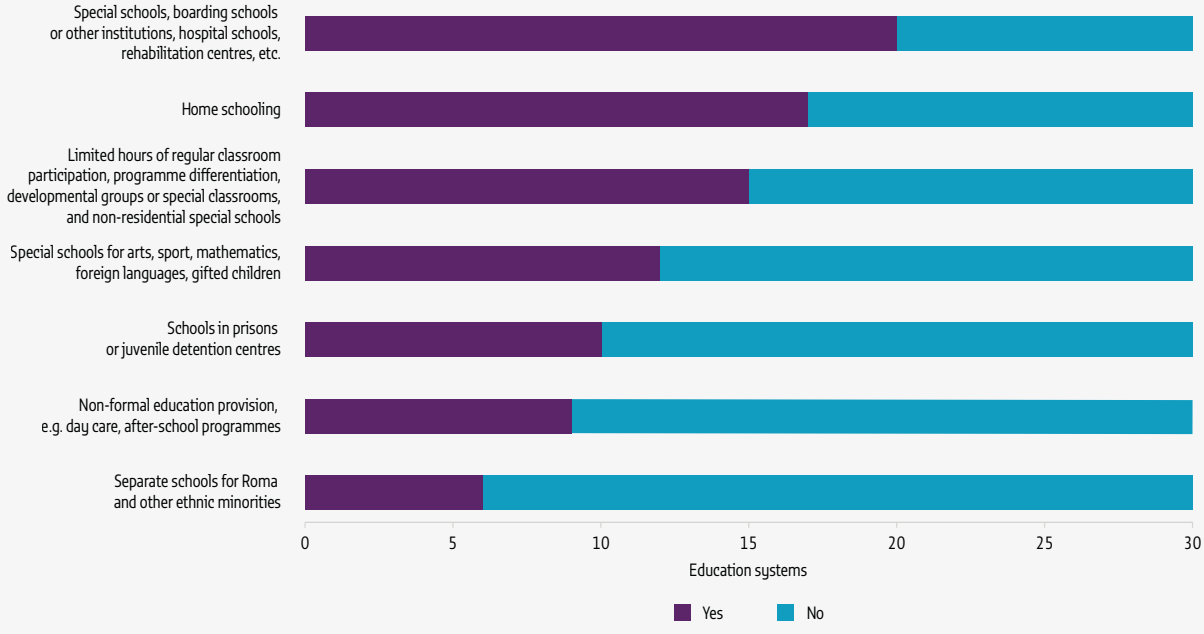
Alternative settings continue to exist (**Figure 7.1**), impeding equal access. Children with disabilities may receive home schooling when families cannot afford a special boarding school or live in remote areas. Local schools register a child year after year in the same grade, and this administrative grade retention allows the school to be flexible with the support offered to children but, usually, only a reduced curriculum is accessible. In some cases, special settings for children with a disability are presented as a privilege, as some specialized institutions maintain a high reputation, such as the school for the deaf-blind children in the Russian Federation. Community beliefs and stereotypes about certain groups, bullying or victimization and low expectations also allow alternative settings to emerge. In Montenegro, separate school facilities exist near Roma settlements.

The region has been characterized by above-global-average rates of institutional childcare, a legacy of an approach that wrongly regarded segregated provision as more efficient (Mladenov and Petri, 2020). Deinstitutionalization has lowered the number of children referred to such care. The number of children in residential care in Georgia fell from more than 20,000 in 1989 to fewer than 1,000 in 2016 as a result of national commitment and international support (Ulybina, 2020).

However, progress has been far from even across countries, despite substantial external technical and financial assistance. Slow progress has been at least partly attributed to underdevelopment of community services, including education (European Expert Group, 2012; USAID, 2013; Jones, 2019). In Armenia, despite a deinstitutionalization programme with ambitious targets, a lack of reasonable accommodations and individualized approaches in mainstream schools, as well as a lack of opportunities beyond grade 9, resulted in continued parental demand for residential institutions (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Regardless of whether selective admission and alternative provision are the result of a structural lack of resources and support, lack of teacher preparedness, arbitrary local decisions or negligence, they prevent a change in assumptions regarding the learning of all and the adoption of inclusive values that would enhance full participation. In Belarus, many professionals and parents lack awareness about the right to education. A continuing emphasis on developing cognitive skills for children with special education needs while neglecting their social skills hinders inclusive school culture (Radyhina and Turchanka, 2017).

FIGURE 7.1:
Alternative provision remains all too common
Number of education systems offering various forms of alternative education provision



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

To raise awareness on the need for full participation of learners who are excluded or learning in separate settings, affirmative measures may be needed. Serbia provides priority registration for students with special education needs, interpreters to help assess children from linguistic minorities and bonus points on entrance exams for national minorities. Such measures emphasize and secure a rights-based approach and set an example for schools of more flexible admission policies.

Schools may provide socialization and extracurricular or peer activities to enhance a sense of belonging for those who are in separate classrooms, home-schooled or not in school. In Romania, primary schools reach out to early school leavers, providing second-chance programmes through day or evening classes, part-time education or distance learning.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION DEPENDS ON ACCESS TO LEARNING AND LEARNING SUPPORT

Widening admissions to mainstream education is part of an inclusive vision marking a shift away from traditional medically based or competitive access to local schools. However, it is not sufficient to ensure access to high-quality education, equal treatment and academic support (Ebersold, 2015; Van Avermaet et al., 2011). School leaders with inclusive vision need to organize a wider range of activities and take responsibility for and value all learners irrespective of their background, needs or ability so as to create the best possible learning experience for learners and focus on raising achievement and a sense of well-being and belonging for all (European Agency, 2019a).

School inclusiveness requires within-school, between-school and beyond-school processes (Ainscow et al., 2012). School leaders may not be able to mobilize the last if the wider policy context leaves them little room for manoeuvre, as in the case of school admission policies. In Tajikistan, secondary schools provide little additional support because students have to pass a medical exam and those who might need such support are referred to special schools. Even when additional support is offered, it takes the form of individualized education, remedial teaching in summer breaks or grade retention.

Lack of financial support, including for health and care, leaves schools without enough staff to support diversity. National policy promoting participation of all learners in mainstream schools may not guarantee support for learners and teachers. Access to counselling may be limited in schools with high student numbers. School psychologists' role on school teams may not be clearly defined. Schools in rural areas of Lithuania and the Republic of Moldova lack psychologists and counsellors. In Romania, students with disabilities lack career counselling and job coaches. Even when support exists, it may not be continuous. In Mongolia, psychological support does not cater for recently included students except when safety concerns arise, such as in cases of bullying in dormitories.

Despite the lack of adequate staff, school leaders have more autonomy than other staff to respond to diversity concerns within their own school and share resources with other schools. A whole-school approach can build layers of learner support into the school's regular practice. For instance, school leaders can help create an environment promoting diverse teaching, personal support for learning and social relationships. They can also encourage school collaboration to increase education opportunities, including with special schools if they are available (Ekins and Grimes, 2009).

Organization of learner support is a key school responsibility

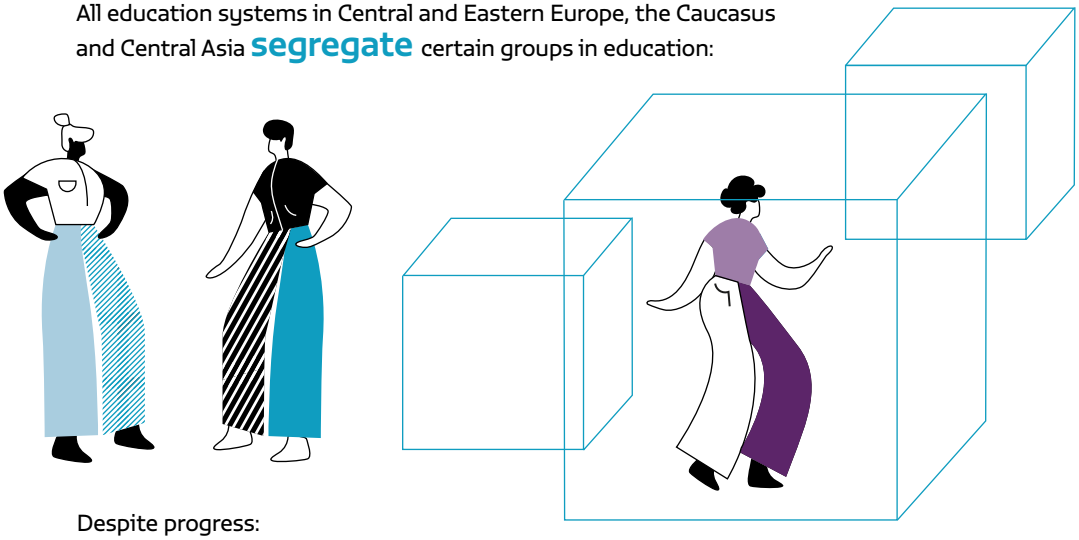
Countries are shifting towards inclusive and in-school support, and schools are shifting towards a broader and more flexible support system in their transition to inclusive education. Most of the 30 education systems in the region offer multiple support functions: counselling and mentoring roles for learner support in 23 countries, learning support assistance in 22 countries and specialist and therapist support in 21 countries.

The challenge is to overcome the targeted, exclusionary and often medical approach that has traditionally dominated the relationship with the most vulnerable students. Definitions of support for diversity differ significantly. Both mainstream and special settings claim to be applying 'inclusive pedagogy', which can detract from a focus on ensuring inclusion in mainstream schools.

“Lack of financial support, including for health and care, leaves schools without enough staff to support diversity”

> School inclusion teams, formed by school networks, exist in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia

All education systems in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia **segregate** certain groups in education:



Despite progress:

1) **21** have **separate schools** for linguistic minorities

2) **Six out of ten** Roma children attend classes in which all or most **learners are Roma** in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia.

3) **One in three** students identified with **special needs** in Central and Eastern European countries is placed in **a special school**

In the Russian Federation, common practices include additional small group support, individual support or remedial classes in mainstream schools. While these supposedly follow an inclusive pedagogy, they tend to focus on disability defined in medical terms.

Several models of inclusive support have been developed, all of which may be initiated by head teachers or local networks of inclusive schools. North Macedonia, Slovakia and Slovenia use a continuum of support in which each school has access to a counsellor for preventive, supportive and developmental activities. Counsellors can be inclusive pedagogues or other professionals, such as nurses or social workers, school psychologists or prevention coordinators for challenging behaviour.

School inclusion teams, formed by school networks, exist in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The teams support learners and teachers in mainstream schools and are responsible for development of personal learning and transition plans. In Serbia, preschool programme development is emphasized, with a focus on participation of children from the most vulnerable groups. However, only 10% of primary school teachers indicate that school inclusion teams address individual student needs, and the share of teachers in secondary schools reporting differentiated and personalized learning is lower still.

For complex assessment and specific interventions, head teachers may rely on psychological-pedagogical support teams. In Latvia, the Cross-sectoral Coordination Centre launched an initiative in 2019 to establish a nationwide pedagogical-psychological support service to create equal opportunities for students with special education needs, strengthen inclusive education and coordinate social and healthcare providers. The Republic of Moldova, in collaboration with the World Bank, set up resource centres for children with special education needs in mainstream schools. Support teachers play a central role in development of such teaching units, providing inclusive support and special psycho-pedagogical assistance, physiotherapy and speech therapy.

School leaders can also encourage teachers to participate in professional learning activities. In Estonia, the 2016–19 Competent and Motivated Teachers and School Leaders programme addressed school leader capacity for motivating teachers 'to approach each student individually, to participate in the development work of the school and in various forms of teacher training' (Estonia Ministry of Education and Research, 2014, p.11).

Special schools can play a new role in an inclusive education system

Special schools are increasingly regarded as a potential resource in the effort mainstream schools are making to offer appropriate support to high-risk learners and families. While this is broadly acknowledged, school leaders need to ensure that specialist support does not incite new exclusionary practices for some, but leads to a broader learner support for all within mainstream schools. Some countries focus on barriers in the learning environment, through counselling and professional development, while others focus on remedial teaching, special classroom support or other separate education provision (European Agency, 2019b). Collaboration with learning support assistants is increasing in mainstream classrooms, but their deployment does not always support diversity and inclusive school development and therefore needs careful consideration (Webster et al., 2013).

As in-school preventive and support activities develop, most mainstream schools cannot employ special pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists or other professionals who work in special schools.
Thus, instead, they use resource centres for counselling. In undertaking reforms, schools are developing a new role for special provision. In Azerbaijan, hybrid special schools will provide services such as rehabilitation and family counselling with an inclusive component to support deinstitutionalization. In Hungary, pedagogical support institutions are being redefined as 'unified special education, conductive education methodological institutions' to assist the education of children with special needs together with other learners. They offer units that provide education from the pre-primary to the secondary levels, developmental education for children with special education needs and a network of mobile special educators for schools lacking such experts.

Kosovo[2] is working to convert attached classrooms to resource rooms to facilitate inclusion and develop support teachers' role. Mongolia will establish child development support centres for individual or small groups of schools, with teams to provide support services. Poland is developing specialized centres to support mainstream schools (**Box 7.1**). In Serbia, the Action Plan for Inclusive Education aims to transform special schools into resource centres. Slovakia and Slovenia are developing psychological-pedagogical support centres and resource

> "Most mainstream schools cannot employ professionals who work in special schools; instead, they use resource centres for counselling"

BOX 7.1:

Poland is developing specialized centres to support mainstream schools

In its 2017 Strategy for Responsible Development, Poland committed to make its education system more inclusive. While the percentage of families opting for mainstream schools has been increasing, 34% of learners with special education needs were still taught in special settings in 2019/20. An audit found that such children and youth learning in regular settings faced multiple barriers (Supreme Audit Office, 2017). Among the key factors were the quality of initial teacher education and in-service training and the limited number of specialists in mainstream schools (Sochańska-Kawiecka et al., 2015), which result in lack of teacher preparedness and low confidence about working in diversified classrooms with learners who have special needs (Chrzanowska and Szumski, 2019). The support provided to schools by teacher training institutions, psychological and pedagogical counselling centres and pedagogical libraries has only partly filled the gap (Stronkowski et al., 2014).

Drawing on the expertise and experiences of specialists working in special settings might help in the transition (European Agency, 2019). In line with recommendations of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Abamowska et al., 2012), the Ministry of National Education has worked on identifying systemic solutions to make special schools support inclusive education. Assisted by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, within the framework of the European Commission's Structural Reform Support Programme, Poland has defined a new role for special settings. Between 2019 and 2022, it planned to establish specialized centres, co-financed by the European Social Fund, to support the transition to inclusive education. After a pilot phase, the project aims to set up centres operating in cooperation with other local entities, including special schools, as well as a coordinating hub and 14 regional centres.

2 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

centres, respectively, to provide counselling, prevention and teacher development. In Slovenia, mainstream and special schools cooperate on programme adaption in mainstream schools' special units, which are intended for children with special education needs.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REQUIRES APPROPRIATE SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

Four key obligations for fulfilling the right to education, as defined originally by the late United Nations special rapporteur Katarina Tomaševski, are availability, 'providing for a sufficient number of schools (and teachers)'; accessibility, 'ensuring unhindered, affordable and non-discriminatory access to education for all children'; acceptability, 'providing quality education, in a safe environment, while respecting specific features of certain groups (such as ethnic minorities) and accepting children's views on how their rights are implemented'; and adaptability, 'establishing education systems that can adapt to the needs of all children, in particular those with specific needs such as children with disabilities, minority and refugee children or working children' (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 16).

The role of the learning environment in overcoming barriers to access and ensuring education's safety and adaptability is recognized in target 4.a of Sustainable Development Goal 4 with its references to 'education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive' and to 'safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all'.

Almost all education systems in the region identified infrastructure as a barrier to inclusive education. Substandard building conditions hinder physical access to school, especially for children with disabilities and special needs. Minimally accessible, acceptable and adapted infrastructure means students can get to the school, enter it, move through it, use classrooms, and have access to water, sanitation and hygiene, play facilities, emergency evacuation and communication services.

Informative, comparable cross-country evidence remains elusive. Although many countries have national standards, they vary. A recent report argued that adapted infrastructure should be defined globally as 'any built environment related to education facilities that has been built or modified to enable accessibility by all users, including those with different types of disability' and referred to 'pathways, entry, evacuation and/or use of a building and its services and facilities (including at a minimum, educational, recreational, and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities). Examples of adaptations include ramps, handrails, widened doorways, modified toilets, clear signage, and tactile markers' (UIS, 2018, p. 15). Despite progress, this standard has not yet taken effect. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nešto više, a non-government organization, has created an interactive map providing information on facilities' degree of adaptability to people with disabilities according to five characteristics: entrance (no stairs and handrail); elevator; Braille signs; disability-adapted toilet; public transport; car access; and parking availability. As this definition suggests, schools may meet some but not all elements of a given set of standards.

Still, the proportion of adapted and accessible infrastructure that some countries report gives an indication of the challenge. In Croatia, 40% of elementary school buildings have an adapted entrance. In Kyrgyzstan, only about 8% of schools have the necessary infrastructure for children with disabilities. In Lithuania, only 10% of regular education is fully adapted for students with physical disabilities and only 3% for students with visual impairment, while 60% of schools are partially adapted. In Slovakia, 14% of primary and 21% of secondary schools are considered to provide access to 'adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities', which has been the global indicator of SDG target 4.a.

Infrastructure conditions are also unequal within countries. Potable water, adapted sanitation and hygiene are not ensured in remote rural schools of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mongolia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Tajikistan. Inadequate sanitary conditions and lack of changing rooms can lead to harmful school experiences for girls. Lack of appropriate transport is another barrier to school access. In Minsk, Belarus, a law permits people with disabilities to use specialized municipal transport free of charge, but only twice a week, which does not cover their transport needs fully.

> "Almost all education systems in the region identified infrastructure as a barrier to inclusive education"

> To improve monitoring and investment plans, countries need to define national frameworks that determine the principles and characteristics of accessible school environments

Even if standards were agreed upon, monitoring capacity tends to be weak, as data reported by schools are often not independently verified by external inspectors who could comment on facilities' quality and not just their availability (UNDESA, 2019). In Estonia, the government approved a plan in 2015 that described the situation, forecast basic and upper secondary school network requirements, outlined previous investment and determined infrastructure investment principles to 2020. Lithuania's education management information system, which has been collecting data since 2018, provides online information by municipality on various aspects of accessibility and adaptability in general schools. In North Macedonia, the Educational Inspectorate has monitored building conditions, leading to a plan to improve school accessibility. Serbia's Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit developed and integrated indicators on architectural and information accessibility to monitor education institutions' status and prioritize infrastructure work.

Several countries have been modernizing physical access to schools and developing appropriate school facilities. In Croatia, out of 2,119 primary school buildings, 7% were fully and 26% partially adapted by 2017. In Georgia, more than 20 schools have been built and more than 1,500 renovated since 2013. In Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 51 schools and 37 kindergartens were scheduled to benefit from entrance ramps in 2020. Incorporating full-access facilities from the outset is estimated to increase total building cost by 1%, while adaptation after completion can increase it by 5% or more, depending on the modifications (United Nations, 2019). In Montenegro, 13 new primary schools and 18 new regional facilities were built between 2003 and 2017, while 100 schools have been adapted and reconstructed since 2007.

To improve monitoring and investment plans, countries need to define national frameworks that determine the principles and characteristics of accessible school environments. In Bulgaria, an accessible architectural environment includes at least an accessible entrance and accessible communication spaces, rooms and spaces for common use, and sanitary and auxiliary spaces. Public spaces are connected by an accessible route. Specific requirements are taken into account for various types of disabilities. In Croatia, the School Network Without Architectural Barriers project aimed to make spatial accommodations in schools to improve equal access to education for students with motor disabilities. Georgia developed a new concept of interior design and arrangement of the education environment. In Mongolia, safety and physical environment standards developed for general schools have improved schoolyards, fences, lighting, security, playgrounds and sports fields with inclusive design. In Turkey, Education Vision 2023 includes a new approach to education environment and school space organization.

Promoting and implementing definitions and designing new school environments is a complex process. National guidelines need to support implementation at school level and clarify school responsibilities in the process. In Hungary, although inclusive design is formally a criterion for newly built education facilities, in practice it varies. Montenegro provides head teachers with counselling on adapting their schools to improve accessibility. School leaders need to know and understand how resource allocation works, as they must be involved in any adjustment considered for the education environment.

Accessibility is often improved by retrofitting the environment and adding accessibility features to support some, but not necessarily all, children. Hence the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted the concept of universal design: 'the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design' (United Nations, 2006, p. 4). Universal design aims to increase functionality and be applicable to everyone's needs, regardless of age, size or ability. Whether for school buildings, public walkways or physical appliances, universal design can be used to evaluate existing designs, guide the design process and educate designers and users about the characteristics of more usable products and environments.

Seven principles of universal design were developed by a group of architects, product and environmental

designers, and engineers: equitable use for people with diverse abilities; flexibility in use to accommodate a range of individual preferences and abilities; simple and intuitive use, regardless of user experience, knowledge, language skills or level of concentration; perceptible information that is effectively communicated, regardless of surrounding conditions or sensory abilities; tolerance for error to minimize the consequences of accidents caused by unintended actions; low physical effort; and appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation and use, regardless of user's body size, posture or mobility (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, 2019).

These principles, which guide inclusive practice from the start, are recognized by some countries in the region. In Bulgaria, they are meant to guide accessibility of information and communication, access to curricula and curriculum content, reasonable adjustments, technical means, specialized equipment, didactic materials and methodologies. In Georgia, all schools and resource rooms are formally obliged to be adapted to learners' additional needs and equipped using universal design standards. The Latvia Education Standards specify that schools should comply with hygiene requirements set out in regulations and offer health-promoting, physically and emotionally safe learning environments. These should be in accordance with students' age and developmental needs and with universal design requirements. Standards refer to easy-to-understand information, easy access and contrasting design of environmental objects on the floor and indoors.

CONCLUSION

School availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability are key elements of the right to education. Their fulfilment takes multiple forms in a variety of contexts and requires alignment of within-school, between-school and beyond-school processes. Following a history of education segregation in the region, schools increasingly welcome broader learner diversity, though obstacles remain. Exclusive school selection mechanisms and assessments often persist, without sufficient critical reflection, preventing full participation of all learners in mainstream schools. Transformative leadership is needed to overcome barriers and establish an inclusive school culture.

A common language and understanding of inclusive pedagogy and support for learning are crucial if inclusive practice is to be described and shared among school leaders, teaching and support staff, but these concepts remain novel in many contexts. Pedagogical, instructional and distributed approaches to leadership are necessary to make the most of collaborative practice available through school teams and resource centres. However, there is little evidence of systematic approaches to develop school leaders' capacity for whole-school development. As the next chapter shows, without school leader preparedness, the quest for inclusive school cultures, promoting access and all learners' full participation in the school community, remains unfulfilled.

Three workshops were organised for parents to connect better with the kindergarten and preschool teachers in Croatia, along with a community event organised and attended by parents and the wider community.

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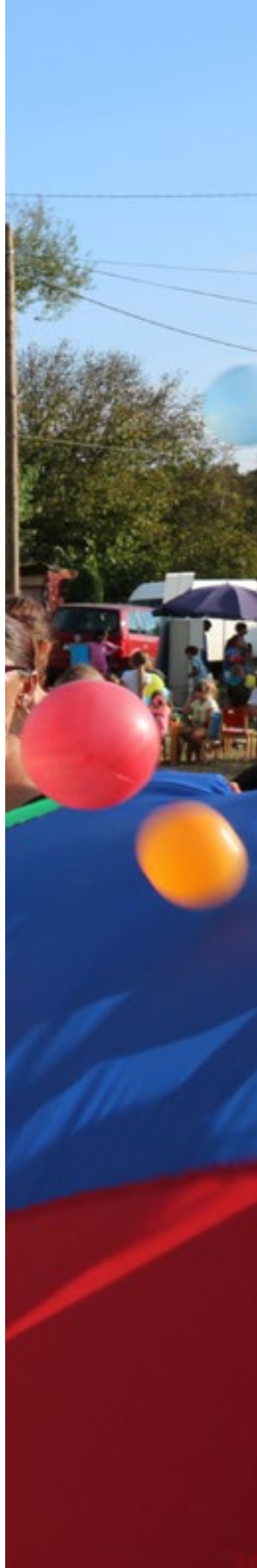
CHAPTER

8

Students, parents and communities



KEY MESSAGES

Several agents help create an equitable learning experience for all learners.

- Empowering learners through opportunities to express their views and be involved in decisions is key for personalized learning and for fulfilling their right to inclusive education.
- Keeping learners at the centre to achieve the goal of inclusion in education also requires genuinely involving parents and families as well as the wider community.

Parents can drive, but also resist, inclusive education.

- Policies supporting parental involvement in school governance are reported in 25 of the 30 education systems reviewed. In Serbia, a 2020 law emphasizes parents' responsibility to enrol their child and prevent discrimination and violence, and their right to participate in representative bodies, such as school and municipal parent councils.
- Keeping parents, guardians and families informed of their rights helps include them. The Republic of Moldova organizes information activities for parents, and establishes partnerships between parents of children with special needs and teaching staff, multidisciplinary team members and community social workers.
- Parents should have the right to choose their child's learning environment: 14 of the 30 education systems enshrine this right in law or policy. In many cases, parents are uninformed and their permission may not even be required regarding support decisions.
- Even some well-informed parents prefer early identification and placement in special needs sections or special schools, fearing that mainstream schools are unprepared.
- Negative attitudes about inclusive education are common: 62% of people in Romania and 70% in Uzbekistan said children with disabilities should be in special schools.
- Parental involvement can result in better outcomes for learners. In Hungary, Sure Start Children's Houses support children from poor, often Roma, families in the transition to pre-primary education at age 3. In Tajikistan, parents cannot influence education content but can determine the language of instruction.
- Parents can organize networks to press for inclusive education. In the Russian Federation, parents sued the government for access to schools for children with cerebral palsy.
- Involvement in school governance can make parents agents of change. In Croatia, it has enabled feedback on curriculum and annual programmes. But parental influence in school development and school evaluations was reported to be low in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

A move towards inclusion will not succeed without communities on board.

- In total, 23 education systems in the region have policies that support or partially support collaboration between schools and community stakeholders.
- Organized civil society groups have played a fundamental role as advocates and watchdogs on the right to inclusive education. In all, 24 education systems have legislation or policy setting out a role for organizations representing vulnerable groups, though not necessarily a role in both advocacy and watchdog tasks. In Romania, a grassroots push for desegregation of schools for Roma led to legislation and policy changes.
- Civil society organizations provide education services on government contract or their own initiative. Armenia's development of a national inclusive education policy is largely attributed to effective support by and collaboration with NGOs.
- Information campaigns can help raise awareness. In North Macedonia, two-thirds of the population was exposed to a campaign aiming to increase support for inclusion of people with disabilities in society: 46% of those exposed said environmental barriers needed to be overcome, compared with 32% of those not exposed.

A move towards inclusion cannot be sustained solely through interventions by experts and professionals. Societies need to embrace inclusion as a goal. Everyone needs to contribute – in the schoolyard, at school management committee meetings, during local and national elections. Inclusive societies require social and political transformation whereby everyone respects others' rights and believes in fulfilling everyone's potential. Such transformation requires active participation, not passive reception of instructions and guidelines.

Efforts to build inclusive education systems can easily be undermined when majority populations stereotype minority and vulnerable groups because of a predisposal to categorize, simplify and impose group identities, which contributes to negative attitudes and discriminatory actions. Children can ostracize disadvantaged peers through jokes or intentional aggression. Parents can block efforts to form inclusive classrooms, whether because they belong to a privileged group and do not want their children's progress negatively affected or because they believe their children's or community's special needs are better served through separate provision.

Inclusive education is a system in which many stakeholders are agents for creating an equitable learning experience for all learners. An inclusive school supports conditions to promote all students' achievement, well-being and sense of belonging and cultivates a culture that rejects discrimination and promotes equity (Goldberg et al., 2019). Keeping learners at the centre and achieving the goal of inclusion in education requires genuinely involving parents and families in learners' school experience and making use of the wider community. This chapter focuses on how parents, guardians and families as well as the community within which the school is based can impact on learners' achievement and wellbeing.

“Efforts to build inclusive education systems can easily be undermined when majority populations stereotype minority and vulnerable groups”

GENUINE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BUILDS TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

The involvement of parents, guardians and families in school life builds trust, which ultimately impacts positively on learners' achievement, well-being and sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018; European Agency, 2014, 2016). Almost every country in the region supports parental involvement in their children's learning: 28 of the region's education systems have policies supporting parental involvement in school governance. In Serbia, a 2020 law emphasizes parents' responsibility to fulfil the right to education by enrolling their child, their role in education quality through prevention of discrimination and violence, and their right to participate in representative bodies, such as the parent council and municipal parent council. Parents should also have the right to choose their child's learning environment, which is especially important for those with children in vulnerable groups.

Yet only 14 of 30 education systems in the region enshrine the latter right in a law or policy (**Figure 8.1**).

Parents of vulnerable children need to know their rights

Parental involvement depends largely on access to detailed knowledge about their rights, obligations and opportunities. Parents of children with special education needs or disabilities and those who, for instance, are Roma, immigrants or poor may need information on fulfilling their children's right to inclusive education and access to early identification and intervention, medical and therapeutic services, and early childhood education and schooling. In many cases, these parents are more likely to be uninformed, and their signature or permission may not even be required for decisions regarding psychological or pedagogical support.

The key to keeping parents, guardians and families informed of their rights and enabling them to make informed decisions on their children's education is to strengthen efforts to include them. The Republic of Moldova is organizing information activities for parents, activating parent councils, improving information modalities and establishing partnerships between multidisciplinary team members and parents of children with special needs, as well as between the teaching staff, the supporting teacher and community social workers.

In contrast to such government-led initiatives, many efforts in the region are isolated, partly carried out as pilot projects, partly implemented and supported by non-government organizations (NGOs) or civil society organizations (CSOs). In Bulgaria, school managers participating in the One School for All project, run by the Centre for Inclusive Education, an NGO, work on a document setting out a vision of inclusion as a foundation of quality. It is discussed, endorsed and communicated with parents, students and teachers (Centre for Inclusive Education, 2017).

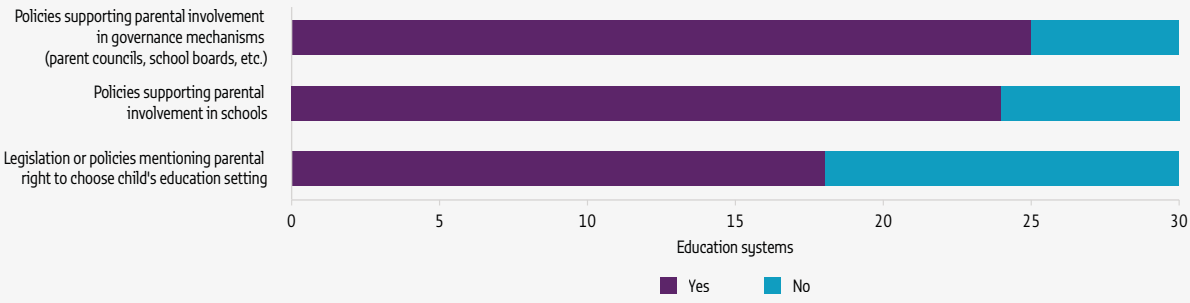
Parents need support to choose their children's education setting

The right of parents to choose the education setting of their child is a fundamental human right. Parents and families of vulnerable children may prefer and support inclusive education but may also be apprehensive about it. It is very important that the right of parents to choose the educational setting for their children does not come at the expense of their children's right to inclusive education.

Parents of children with disabilities may favour special education and resist inclusion in mainstream schools if they believe their children will not receive sufficient attention. They need to be confident that mainstream schools will understand and respond to their children's needs. Even some well-informed parents prefer early identification and placement in special needs sections

> “The key to keeping parents, guardians and families informed of their rights and enabling them to make informed decisions on their children's education is to strengthen efforts to include them”

FIGURE 8.1:
Two in three countries have a policy on participation in parental councils
Number of education systems prescribing different forms of parental participation and choice



Source: Data collected for the regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

or special schools, fearing that mainstream schools are unprepared. When choosing a school, especially in richer countries, parents take into account school and class size, distance from home, teacher interpersonal skills, frequency of communication with the teacher, possibilities for parental involvement, contact with the child's support system and whether the school shows a positive attitude towards children with disabilities (Mawene and Bal, 2018). A review of parental attitude studies showed that parents of children with disabilities were neutral about the concept of inclusive education but not in favour when it concerned inclusion of their child (de Boer et al., 2010).

In Georgia, two of the most pressing problems concerning inclusive education are negative attitudes and stereotypes towards students with special needs and lack of information among parents about their rights and responsibilities (Gachechiladze et al., 2019). In Romania, a nationally representative survey reported that 62% of people believed children with disabilities should be in special education (Moraru et al., 2014).

A review of UNICEF's Come to School campaign in Romania concluded that mainstream school attendance for learners with disabilities and special education needs was often a hard-won victory for their parents (Horga et al., 2016). In Uzbekistan, 70% of respondents indicated that special schools were the more appropriate setting for children with disabilities, while 15% supported special classes within mainstream schools (United Nations, 2019b). However, views are changing in some countries. In North Macedonia, the share of people who believed children with special needs should be included in regular education and attend regular classes with other children increased from 4% in 2014 to 24% in 2018 (UNICEF, 2017). In Slovakia, the number of learners with special needs educated in mainstream classrooms along with other pupils has more than doubled over the past 10 years.

> "Parents are increasingly seen as partners who can support teachers with valuable information, a view that makes parents feel listened to and appreciated"

Parents living on the margins of society and subject to discrimination themselves may be powerless to prevent their children from being discriminated against and stigmatized. By contrast, where school choice is possible or encouraged, families with adequate financial means are more likely to avoid disadvantaged schools and send their children to schools that cater to their academic or social aspirations. This choice can lead to enrolment patterns that increase segregation and reduce social cohesion. Tension can thus arise between the parent's right to choose a school and the learner's right to inclusive education.

Working with parents and families to foster a positive attitude towards inclusion is key. However, in North Macedonia, a survey of about 300 primary schools showed that just 9 schools had organized a meeting with the school community and 6 with parents to discuss inclusion and non-discrimination with respect to children with disabilities (North Macedonia Ombudsman, 2016). In Turkey, teachers report that even though they make progress with social cohesion in their classrooms, families teach their children not to be friends with children from 'other' groups.

Parents' involvement in their child's learning should be fostered

Informed parents are best placed to know their children's needs and the interventions that may be most successful (Sayeed, 2009). Increasing parental involvement can result in better academic and non-academic outcomes for learners, thereby reducing performance gaps across socio-economic groups (Borgonovi and Montt, 2012). Hungary, which has some of the world's largest socio-economic gaps in learning outcomes among 15-year-olds, has invested in an innovative programme in the past 15 years to engage the poorest, mainly Roma, parents in the smooth transition of their children into the education system (**Box 8.1**).

Parents are increasingly seen as partners who can support teachers with valuable information, a view that makes parents feel listened to and appreciated. While the General Education Law in Azerbaijan states that parents are responsible for following schools' internal guidelines and procedures and partnering with them, it also makes school leaders and teachers responsible for collaborating

with parents for children's education and development. The Czech School Inspectorate considers cooperation with parents the most effective tool in bringing about change. In March 2019, Mongolia's Ministry of Education and Science adopted a regulation on education quality and child development aiming to create a favourable environment for constructive voluntary engagement and requiring parents and guardians to be consulted on any decisions concerning children. A 2012 law in Tajikistan makes parents responsible for their children's education and upbringing. Although they cannot influence education content, they can, for example, determine the language of instruction. In Ukraine, the 2019 general secondary education law is based on 'new school' principles, one of which is teachers' responsibility for implementing the principle of pedagogy of partnership with parents and students (Ukraine Ministry of Education and Science, 2019).

Schools in Armenia, Georgia, Slovenia and Ukraine engage parents in various types of individual learning programmes or approaches for children with special needs or disabilities. Some countries also stress parental involvement in the school improvement process. In Latvia and Mongolia, regulations cover parental involvement in school self-assessment and in collaborative problem solving; in Latvia, that includes proposing school inspections to be carried out. In North Macedonia, the school inclusion team, which includes parents, develops and delivers inclusion activities at the school level, adjusting and applying them to teaching and learning practice.

Effective partnerships can be challenging. Parents need to communicate and cooperate effectively with teachers. They also need access to information about school organization and requirements and their children's achievements and challenges. The right to information on learner achievement is enshrined in legislation in Azerbaijan, Estonia and Latvia. Nevertheless, schools need to communicate well and provide clear information to all parents, including those harder to reach, for whom schools must provide flexible opportunities to become actively engaged in their children's learning process (European Agency, 2018).

Countries use a variety of communication channels and activities to reach and engage parents. Belarus organizes cultural, sport and non-formal education events with children with special needs and their parents. In Estonia, schools call a meeting of learners' parents at least once a year, giving all of them the chance to participate. Georgia's general education law makes it class teachers' responsibility to communicate with parents and offer information on their children's learning.

BOX 8.1:

Hungary involves parents in the transition of the poorest children into education

In Hungary, the Sure Start Children's Houses programme, which drew on its counterpart in the United Kingdom, supports poor families in ensuring that children not otherwise reached by institutional care can make a smooth transition into pre-primary education at the compulsory age of 3. Introduced in 2003 and expanded with European Union support, it has been co-funded by the government since 2012 and was recognized in the country's 2013 child protection law. Today, 180 Children's Houses serve about 2,500 children per year (Hungary Government, 2020).

In addition to day care and skills development, which parents can attend, the Children's Houses offer meals, parental education and community events. The programme establishes partnerships among parents, children, and health, social and early childhood care workers, but also with local communities in the most disadvantaged micro-regions and settlements with segregated neighbourhoods and ghettos, often inhabited by Roma (Havasi, 2019).

A key challenge was selecting appropriate locations. Some of the Children's Houses were too far from settlements, and the poorest beneficiaries, who had to be transported in buses, would not participate. But when houses were located in settlements, better-off beneficiaries would avoid them. Only a fifth of the Children's Houses had the right mix to facilitate the programme aims (Balás et al., 2016). A good practice was the involvement of Roma communities in the appointment of staff, mentors and social workers (Lukács, 2017).

In North Macedonia, parental involvement is part of a strategy dealing with enrolment rates. The country's share of 6- to 14-year-olds not in school remained constant at about 10% between 2006/07 and 2015/16, and most were in vulnerable situations, mainly Roma (Mickovska et al., 2017). The country's national education strategy for 2018–25, which aims to achieve universal coverage and improve inclusion in primary education, has established interventions at the policy, institutional and individual levels. For instance, scholarships and support by local coordinators led to a 95% retention rate of children targeted in 2019. Structured informal meetings between parents of out-of-school children and class teachers are used to monitor the support measures to establish positive, trustworthy and productive cooperation. Attendance rates in these meetings were higher than in regular parent meetings.

> In Georgia, Hungary, the Russian Federation and Turkey, associations have been formed to develop parental involvement capabilities

One concern is the predominance of paper-based communication methods, leaving opportunities offered by technology untapped. Some countries are innovating in that direction. Estonia uses social media channels in addition to local newspapers. In Latvia, parents of learners with additional support needs are informed by entries in an online journal and a learner's diary. Montenegro has established a portal allowing parents to monitor their children's grades, absences and behaviour, to communicate with the homeroom teacher and to obtain information on scheduled parent meetings as well as other notifications. In addition, it publishes general information such as the dates of parental meetings and excursions.

Teachers and parents can receive training to support communication and collaboration and enable genuine involvement. In Belarus, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as part of inclusive education legislation implementation, teachers and school leaders are trained in parental involvement, communication with parents of learners with special education needs and parent–school cooperation.

Some countries offer parent education programmes. In Belarus, schools organize quarterly parent academies offering education and exchanges. Parents can specify a topic of interest and the type of specialist with whom they want to talk, such as a psychologist on parent–child relationships, suicide prevention or working with children at risk. Mongolia also offers parent education to support children's development and lifelong opportunities.

In much of the world, parents build networks or associations outside schools to press for inclusive education policy and practice reform, often through the court system (Stubbs, 2008). Within the region, however, there is relatively little evidence of involvement in such national alliances and parent associations. In Georgia, Hungary, the Russian Federation and Turkey, associations have been formed to develop parental involvement capabilities. A group of parents in Petrozavodsk, the Russian Federation, sued the government and subsequently protested for access to mainstream schools for children with cerebral palsy (Meresman, 2014).

Involvement in school governance can make parents agents of change

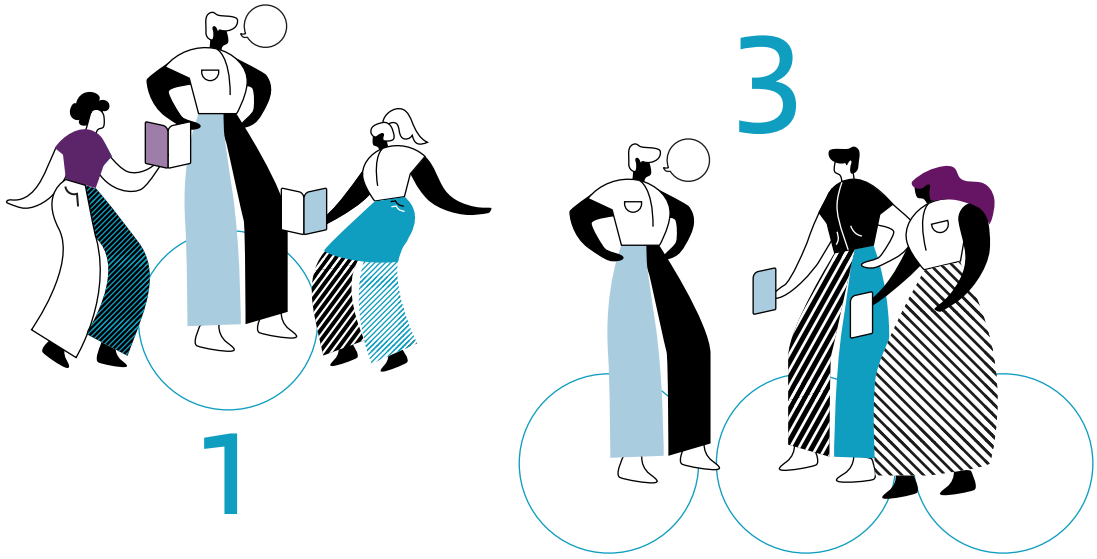
Parents and other community members should be involved in school management committees. As mentioned above, 25 education systems in the region have policies supporting parental participation in school governing boards and parent councils at the municipal, regional or national level.

The shape, focus and formal influence of these bodies vary. In Bulgaria, public councils are tasked with fostering inclusion by facilitating equal access to education, promoting motivation of ethnic minority children and encouraging parents to participate in the education process. Parental involvement in governance has helped provide feedback on curriculum and annual programme plans in Croatia and manage additional financial resources in the Russian Federation. In North Macedonia, parents are involved in governance through a school inclusion team, which addresses inclusive policies and practices at the school level, and an inclusive student team, which works on an individualized education plan or modified curriculum. In the Republic of Moldova, where national legislation contains explicit rules for parental engagement, school collaboration with parents has improved.

However, structures for parental influence in governance still face challenges in the region. In the Czech Republic and Hungary, parents' influence is low in processes such as school development and school evaluations. Municipal education councils in Lithuania scrutinize how municipal authorities implement national education policy, approve long-term education goals and mobilize society to reach them, but doubts have been expressed about their effectiveness (Smalskys et al., 2019). Ineffective parental participation has been linked to weaknesses in school capacity (Estonia and Kosovo[1]) and parental motivation (Albania and Kazakhstan). Other challenges include lack of diversity among participating parents, as some continue to face discrimination that impedes their involvement.

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Only 1 country in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia consults with students, **and only 3** with parents when carrying out **curriculum reform**



THE COMMUNITY CAN BE A POWERFUL ALLY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusion is a process that requires active community participation (UNESCO, 2009). Communities with positive views and attitudes towards inclusion can drive schools to provide equitable education opportunities. Communities can also hold governments responsible for the education of all learners, the commitment of resources to achieving this goal and the fight against all forms of discrimination and exclusion (European Agency, 2013). In total, 23 education systems in the region have policies that support or partially support collaboration between schools and community stakeholders.

In Estonia, a survey revealed local differences in the extent to which schools involved the community in their activities. Schools commonly connect and communicate with the community through joint events or maintenance workdays during which students, school staff and community members clean up the school surroundings or the local park. Several schools organize sport or family days.

In the Republic of Moldova, 24% of respondents in a 2014 study said they thought people with disabilities were frequently or very frequently discriminated against in education institutions (Malcoci and Barbaroşie, 2015). In response, the government began organizing community-level communication and information activities on the need to include children with special education needs in mainstream schools and why all community actors should support these children and their families, the aim being to reduce stigmatization and discrimination.

The Czech Republic notes that there is no evidence that guidelines to support formal or informal community networks are functioning effectively. The implementation report on Montenegro's 2019–25 Inclusive Education Strategy noted a need to further build on networks to deepen collaboration among the education system, departments and services, NGOs and communities.

> “In total, 23 education systems in the region have policies that support or partially support collaboration between schools and community stakeholders”

> In total, 24 education systems have legislation or policy setting out a role for organizations representing vulnerable groups

Civil society advocates for, monitors and delivers inclusive education

Social mobilization to promote inclusive education often goes beyond spontaneous activities by concerned parents and vulnerable people. Organized civil society activity of various forms has played a fundamental role in the demand for education of good quality.

In total, 24 education systems have legislation or policy setting out a role for organizations representing vulnerable groups. Such activity includes advocacy and watchdog functions to hold governments accountable for national and international commitments, as in Romania, where a grassroots push for desegregation of schools for Roma led to legislation and policy changes (**Box 8.2**).

NGOs also provide education services at various levels. Many governments recognize NGOs as equal partners in achieving inclusive education objectives. Armenia's development of a national inclusive education policy is largely attributed to effective support by and collaboration with NGOs. In Montenegro, civil society activities have helped raise the quality of inclusive education. On one occasion, the Ministry of Education collaborated with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex organizations to develop training materials that were disseminated in the school system.

In the Czech Republic, the Support for School Meals programme has been aimed at primary school students from poor families, subsidizing those who meet eligibility criteria. It is based on collaboration among the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, primary schools, organizations operating school catering facilities and a wide range of NGOs focusing on social assistance to families. As the last are not public entities, their activities are not subject to the same requirements as regional authorities, helping simplify programme administration. NGOs monitor and evaluate the impact of subsidized school meals on the basis of supported students' school attendance.

In Mongolia, the All for Education National Civil Society Coalition, which includes more than 30 CSOs, examined governance and decision-making processes in 10 geographically isolated and poor secondary schools that had not participated in donor-funded projects

BOX 8.2:

In Romania, civil society action mobilized government responses on Roma education

In Romania, bottom-up advocacy, monitoring and quality assurance actions led by CSOs and NGOs have prompted policy responses that have led to school desegregation for Roma students. In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research estimated that 53% of Roma students were enrolled in segregated primary schools (Open Society Institute, 2007). Another estimate suggested that 32% of Roma children were enrolled in segregated schools and 35% in segregated classes (Surdu, 2008). Moreover, chiefly because of misdiagnosis, many were referred to special schools (European Roma Rights Center, 2001), which provided low-quality education.

About 200 Roma NGOs run initiatives on education access and participation, and some have reported cases of segregation, with the help of a network of local human rights monitors. One such case, Romani CRISS vs Salaj School Inspectorate and Cehei School (2003), is considered a landmark. It resulted in sanctions by the National Council for Combating Discrimination, raising awareness of school segregation in the country and prompting a series of government responses.

A notification prohibiting segregation in 2004 was strengthened by a 2007 order detailing an approach to eliminate segregation. Such efforts culminated in Framework Order 6134/2016 of the Ministry of National Education against school segregation, which extended the prohibition of school segregation beyond ethnicity (other than exceptional self-separation to preserve ethnic identity) to disability, poverty and academic performance. The definition of segregation covers not just school units or classes but even which rows children sit in (Farkas and Gergerly, 2017).

Following a public consultation in three pilot counties, an order in 2019 introduced a methodology to monitor school segregation (Romania Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). All schools will be obliged to monitor segregation cases and send the information to County School Inspectorates, which will centralize the data and communicate them to the Committee for Desegregation and Education Inclusion. UNICEF will develop a digital platform to store data as part of a partnership with the ministry, which will also develop technical guidelines on the monitoring methodology.

These schools were not providing sufficient information and had not set up parent–teacher councils. The local school council was unable to hold the respective school management authorities accountable. The coalition set up the Community Schools initiative, an assessment

> The role of NGOs as education providers can be a challenge, depending on the extent to which they support special or inclusive education or replicate services

tool to mobilize community participation in planning, implementation and reporting of school operations.

The implementation evaluation of the 2011–20 Programme for the Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova recognized NGOs' 'decisive contribution' in training teachers, identifying needs, piloting models, developing the capacity of psycho-pedagogical assistance services and even directly providing such services as well as resources. The national council that coordinated the programme, formed in 2010 in the context of residential child care system reforms, was instrumental in coordinating ministry and NGO activities, and it was institutionalized as a thematic group of the National Council for Protection of Child Rights (UNICEF, 2019). CSOs representing ethno-cultural groups were also consulted as part of processes to protect minority rights in education (Council of Europe, 2018).

In Kosovo,[2] learning centres run by grassroots CSOs and funded by international donors aim to improve school access and learning outcomes of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. The centres operate in settlements or schools serving these communities. They support regular attendance, development of physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills, and reintegration of children who have dropped out of school. Staff run campaigns for enrolment in pre-primary education and often accompany children to the nearest preschools or, if these are too far, organize provision on the centres' premises. Learning centres are not part of the school system, but the government, recognizing their role, passed a law in 2018 providing a basis for public financial support. In 2019, EUR 0.5 million was earmarked to support their operation.

Ultimately, a lack of government engagement can undermine interventions' chances of long-term success. In the Russian Federation, involvement of parental organizations and NGOs supporting families with children with special needs has been increasing, making them among the most active stakeholders in civil society. They play a major role in developing parent and community awareness on various aspects of inclusion and in independent monitoring of legislation implementation. However, recent restrictions on international NGOs have hindered local NGOs' work.

The role of NGOs as education providers can be a challenge, depending on whether they complement or substitute for government services and the extent to which they support special or inclusive education or replicate services. In Montenegro, there is no robust quality assurance mechanism to ensure consistency of donor-funded initiatives. Many local and international organizations carry out in-service teacher training at schools, but there is no formal way to monitor their content, consistency with policy, possible overlaps and repetition, or differences in the quality standards various donors promote.

Campaigns can help drive change

Overall, 26 of 30 education systems in the region have run campaigns to raise awareness about inclusion. Of those, eight countries included references to awareness raising in their national strategies. In Azerbaijan, one of the main goals of the 2018–24 Inclusive Education Development Programme is to carry out advocacy and public awareness activities on the importance of providing access to education for people with disabilities.

A focus on vulnerable groups can lead to changes in attitudes. Media discourse on inclusive education can be negative, depicting children with disabilities as deviant and a threat to other students' education or presenting special schools as the only option for addressing their needs (Runswick-Cole, 2008). Conversely, accurate and balanced representation of disability as part of everyday life can challenge misconceptions and make an important contribution towards inclusion (United Nations, 2019a).

Effective campaigns thus focus on such a balanced representation. In Armenia, two campaigns presented success stories on the abilities of those with special needs so as to counter stereotypes about education of children with disabilities in mainstream settings. In North Macedonia, UNICEF conducted an awareness-raising campaign called Be Fair – For a Childhood without Barriers, which featured videos of people with disabilities, focusing on the key message of accepting children with

2 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

disabilities as one would any other children, aiming to mobilize the public in support of their inclusion in society. A survey relying on both spontaneous recall and prompts indicated that two-thirds of the population was exposed to the campaign. Of those, 46% said environmental barriers needed to be overcome, while only 32% of people not exposed to the campaign cited such barriers (UNICEF, 2017).

The range and focus of such campaigns vary greatly by country. In Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kosovo[3] and Montenegro, awareness-raising campaigns have tried to combat discriminatory views on specific ethnic minority groups. But many countries' campaigns raising public awareness of the bigger concept of inclusion focus on breaking stereotypes and promoting education access and children's rights, as opposed to a specific vulnerable group. The 2015 campaign Come with Me, the School Is for You! in the Republic of Moldova promoted education inclusion and sensitized public opinion on children's right to enjoy equal education opportunities and a friendly education system. In Serbia, a partnership among the education ministry, NGOs, the media and local actors organized a campaign called All to School – Future for All, which focused on changing perceptions about inclusion among parents, politicians and professionals in the health, social welfare and education sectors.

NGOs have run awareness-raising campaigns independently or in cooperation with governments in 21 education systems. In Belarus, cooperation between NGOs and the government challenges stereotypes to change perceptions about inclusion and help build a critical mass of support in society. An opinion survey showed that the percentage of those who believed 'joint' education benefited both children with disabilities and other learners increased from 32% in 2012 to 63% in 2019 (Belarus Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Building an inclusive school in a social context characterized by exclusion, discrimination and lack of acceptance is a major challenge. Learner voices need to be heard, listened to and acted upon. But what learners experience in education systems is often the result of the stance the school and the wider community take towards their parents. Parents and communities are the pillars on which to build a favourable environment in support of inclusive education. A key challenge is to counter negative attitudes, stereotypes and discrimination and prevent their further development, as they can hamper vulnerable students' education. Parents can be valuable allies but need sufficient information and positive interactions with schools. Parents of vulnerable children may be sceptical about sending them to mainstream schools without reassurance that the children will be fully supported and not alienated or marginalized.

While government bears the duty of education, grassroots NGOs and CSOs often step in to provide education services for populations that governments do not reach. Such organizations also lead the way in putting pressure on governments to fulfil their national and international obligations to guarantee the right to inclusive education for all. This role is recognized in formal monitoring mechanisms. Government leadership, dialogue among all parties, and a coordinated approach aligned with national education policies favouring inclusion are essential.

3 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Coronavirus has made life even harder for Oleksander and his family, who live in eastern Ukraine. With schools closed, Oleksander has to wait for his mother, who works as a nurse, to return home before he can do his homework. This usually isn't until 9 or 10 p.m.

CREDIT: Oksana Parafeniuk / Save the Children

CHAPTER

9

COVID-19

KEY MESSAGES

Despite strong government education response to COVID-19, many learners were left unassisted.

- Under unfamiliar and very challenging conditions, countries have responded with urgency. But access to online education was a challenge for the estimated 1 in 4 secondary school students in the region without a laptop and 1 in 10 without access to the internet.
- In some countries, the private sector supported access for poor students. Croatia's education ministry partnered with telecommunication companies on free broadband and SIM cards.
- Data on actual non-participation are hard to come by and difficult to compare. During the first school closure in the Czech Republic, 16% of students in basic schools with primary and lower secondary levels were not involved in online learning.
- Even patchier data suggest the more vulnerable were less likely to continue learning. In Ukraine, just 1% of students but 20% of Roma students did not take part in remote learning.
- Some countries used traditional approaches. In rural Hungary, schools took homework to students' homes once a week and collected it the following week. In Montenegro, schools provided printed homework materials for students lacking digital tools.
- Television programmes and video lessons targeted those hardest to reach. Uzbekistan ran video lessons on national television in Uzbek and Russian with sign language interpretation.

Teachers also need to learn how to use technology.

- Insufficient digital skills among teachers were a challenge. A study of about 1,000 primary school teachers in Poland found that 52% reported some difficulty using digital tools.
- Innovative solutions, such as teacher networks and collaboration with students, are needed, as otherwise only motivated or younger teachers tend to be involved in teacher training.

Flexible approaches to assessment try to take student needs into account.

- Many countries found flexible ways to evaluate learning. In Estonia, the grade 12 examination was voluntary, permitting students to graduate without it. In Kazakhstan, assignments and tasks for assessment were simplified and the number of tasks used for assessment reduced. As examinations in Kyrgyzstan were cancelled, a special committee determined the final score for every subject in each school.

Content needs to be adapted and attention given to socio-emotional well-being.

- Standard distance learning formats are geared towards motivated, already somewhat skilled and self-sufficient learners. In North Macedonia, a dedicated platform was developed to provide online assistance to teachers and parents of students with special education needs.
- As home environments and parental support grew in significance during the remote learning period, those with a disadvantage risked falling further behind. In Ukraine, when boarding schools sent students home, social workers were instructed to maintain communication with parents or even visit to ensure that social support, food supply and other needs were met.
- Civil society has been active in drawing attention to student well-being and mental health. In the Czech Republic, there were indications that some students were left without pedagogical support, and that responsibility for the education continuity of students with special needs remained solely with parents.
- In Hungary, municipalities continued to deliver meals free of charge for some groups, such as children with disabilities, the poor and those from large families. In Tajikistan, the lack of school meal provision inevitably affected the most financially disadvantaged households despite joint action among the World Food Programme, local authorities and schools.

In the course of a few weeks, the COVID-19 pandemic overwhelmed many national health systems. It led governments to impose partial or full lockdowns and curtail economic activity, threatening billions of livelihoods. One key measure to limit the risk of contagion was school and university closures. COVID-19 thus precipitated an education crisis, fuelled by the deep and multiple inequalities discussed in this report. While these inequalities have long existed, many were obscured in classrooms. Lockdowns and school closures suddenly brought them into sharp relief.

Under unfamiliar and very challenging conditions, countries in the region have responded with urgency, demonstrating commitment and resilience to continue provision through largely remote learning modalities. Yet education is not immune to the moral dilemmas other sectors have faced during this period. Millions of people had to make difficult decisions: Individuals had to decide whether to respect or evade quarantine restrictions, medical staff needed to choose among patients' competing needs and authorities had to decide how to allocate economic support.

The disruption of learning also confronted education policymakers with the 'do no harm' principle – the requirement that no plan or programme should be put in place if it might actively harm anyone at all. Unfortunately, just as countries look to the future to make an opportunity out of a crisis, it has become apparent that many of the attempted solutions risk leaving many children and young people further behind.

According to the second round of the UNESCO-UNICEF-World Bank joint survey of ministries of education on national responses to COVID-19, carried out between July and September 2020, in which 23 countries from the region took part, a range of equity-oriented measures were taken. In particular, 76% provided support to learners with disabilities (e.g. sign language in online learning programmes) and 52% provided flexible and self-paced, asynchronous learning platforms. But a minority of countries supported access to infrastructure for learners in remote areas (43%), designed learning materials for speakers of minority languages (38%) or provided additional support to poorer households, including cash transfers (38%).

While basically all responding countries took measures to minimize the impact of school closures on the well-being of students, relatively few countries did this following a system-wide approach. The preferred approach was psychosocial and mental health support to learners, for instance through online counselling, which two in three countries offered. For instance, 40% of countries offered support to make up for interrupted school meal services and only 25% expanded their child protection services.

This chapter reviews how countries in the region have addressed issues of coverage, access to technology, digital skills, learner support and instructional practices, with special reference to groups at risk of exclusion.

REMOTE LEARNING HAS TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES TO REACH DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Many students have been unable to participate uninterruptedly in the learning process under remote conditions. Countries in the region have used a variety of methods to estimate participation in remote learning. At the beginning of the remote learning period, Armenia introduced an electronic platform on which parents registered children based on social security numbers; it has served as an electronic journal. In Azerbaijan, estimates of connected students are based on students' and teachers' registration records in the Virtual School system. In Montenegro, all teachers were responsible for keeping in touch with their students via the learning platform and keeping a record of their participation.

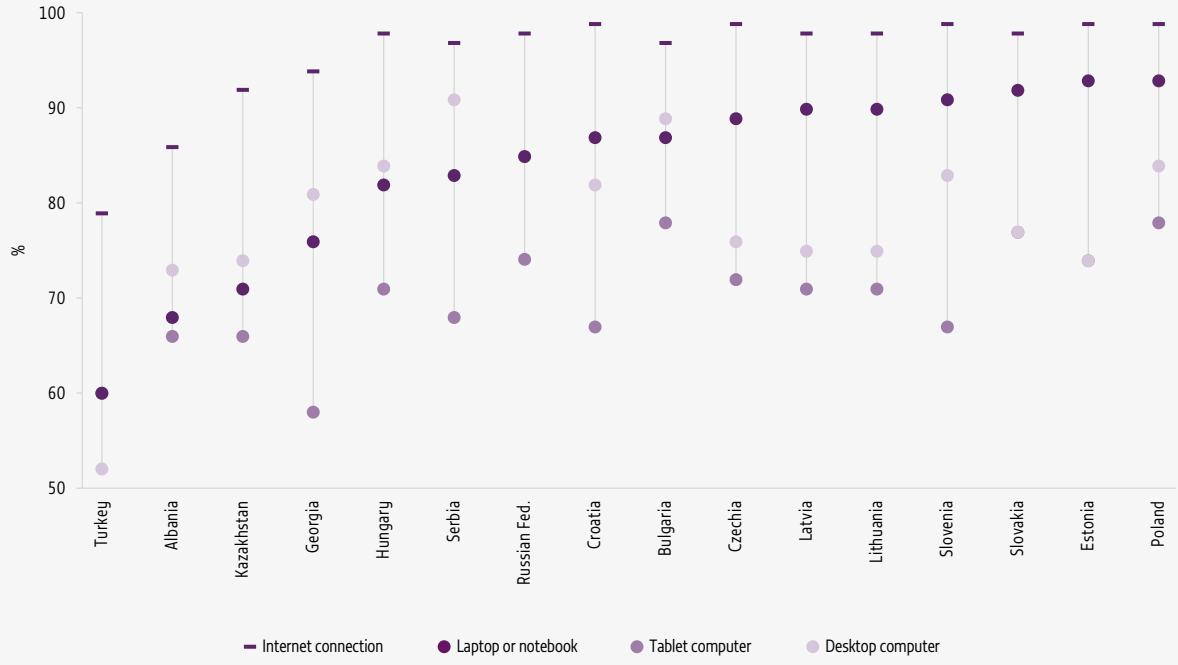
However, data are not consistently collected and cannot determine the extent of non-participation in a comparable way. During the first wave in the Czech Republic, it was estimated from telephone interviews with schools that 11% of students in basic schools with primary level and 16% in basic schools with primary and lower secondary levels were not involved in online communication (Pavlas et al., 2020). In Estonia, the Ministry of Education and Research, which contacted schools weekly to identify the number of students not reached, estimated that 1,500 primary and secondary school students, or less than 1%, were not connected. However, there were no data on inactivity among those connected. In Ukraine, around 1% of students stopped participating and a further 14% did not participate fully (Ukraine Office of Education Ombudsman, 2020).

There was no systematic documentation of participation in remote learning by population group, even though students who have special education needs or a disability, belong to an ethnic or linguistic minority or are poor are at considerably greater risk of not participating. In Bulgaria, one in five students with disabilities did not receive additional support needed for education continuity. About 20% of Roma students in Ukraine and 30% in Croatia did not participate in remote learning. In Estonia, Russian-speaking parents whose children were enrolled in Estonian language immersion programmes had trouble helping their children with schoolwork due to the language barrier (Estonia Ministry of Social Affairs, 2020).

In Croatia, students who do not speak Croatian at home, including national minority and refugee students, were unable to participate in education due to language barriers. GOOD Inicijativa, an association of non-government organizations (NGOs) advocating for education of good quality to promote human rights and democratic citizenship, lodged a complaint for violations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as non-Croatian-speaking children were not provided

> “In Bulgaria, one in five students with disabilities did not receive additional support needed for education continuity”

FIGURE 9.1:
One in four 15-year-old students did not have a laptop
Percentage of 15-year-olds who had access to internet and selected devices at home, 2018



Source: OECD (2019).

with appropriate education content in the same form and format as their Croatian-speaking peers. Croatian language classes, which would have enabled these children to learn on an equal basis, have not started on the country's School on Channel 3 programmes.
In Slovakia, education portals such as Učíme na diaľku (We teach remotely) and Planeta vedomosti (Planet of knowledge) contain material in national minority languages (Hungarian and Roma) (European Council, 2020; Poklembová, 2020). Public television also broadcasts Tumenca khere (With you at home), a weekly early grade programme for Roma children, in Slovak and Romani (Poklembova, 2020).

A common obstacle to participating in remote learning is lack of internet connection, computers or other electronic devices. The 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment provides evidence on constraints some households face in 16 countries in the region with relevant data. On average, 98% of students (but 86% in Albania) had internet access, 87% had a portable laptop or notebook (71% in Kazakhstan) and 79% a desktop computer (74% in Estonia). However, the population weighted average was 90% for internet, 75% for laptops and 71% for desktops, as Turkish students were less likely to have access to these three means (**Figure 9.1**).

In Poland, the Ministry of Digital Affairs and the Digital Poland Project Centre have offered local governments EUR 9 million, with support from the European Regional Development Fund, to buy computers, laptops or tablets for students and teachers. Funds can also be used to purchase software, hardware insurance, access to mobile internet or other resources needed for distance learning (Eurydice, 2020).

In some cases, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector have supported access to devices and internet. In Armenia, telecommunication operators teamed up with education authorities to donate computers and smartphones for students and teachers. Croatia's Ministry of Science and Education partnered with telecommunication companies on provision of free broadband and SIM cards for poor students.

In Estonia, while most families have a computer, one is not sufficient for households with many children. A citizen-led campaign connected such families with potential donors, leading to 1,200 devices being exchanged in the first month. The initiative then transferred its Facebook group-based cooperation with schools, local governments and companies to the Child Welfare Association (A Computer for Every Student!, 2020).

In recent years, many countries had begun investing in technological infrastructure development, but it had often not been properly tested system-wide when remote learning began. In Uzbekistan, an electronic register (kundalik) was introduced in 2019 as part of the digitalization plan for secondary education to provide students and families with a tool to communicate with teachers. However, its full use during school closures was hampered by inadequate internet infrastructure. The Telegram messenger application was preferred as a less demanding and more efficient means of communication (Khusanov et al., 2020).

Nearly all countries have issued guidelines and recommendations on teaching remotely, often emphasizing the need to provide access to education content for all student groups. Where guidelines and assistance addressed students with special education needs, however, it was not done systematically. In some countries, class teachers and social pedagogues reached out to students and their parents or guardians to agree on specific arrangements and education paths. In Georgia, a multidisciplinary group provided activities designed to develop academic, cognitive and motor skills among students with special education needs. In Slovenia, in addition to guidelines, the National Institute for Education offered long-distance counselling services and assistance for students with special education needs (Slovenia Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, 2020). The Slovenian Education Network provided additional guidance for teachers and professionals supporting individualized education plans (Košnik et al., 2020). In Ukraine, students with special education needs received support from teacher assistants, psychologists, speech therapists and rehabilitators via email, phone calls or online.

“Recently, many countries had begun investing in technological infrastructure development, but it had often not been tested system-wide when remote learning began”

Some countries have tried to mitigate obstacles through traditional approaches. In Berettyóújfalu, Hungary, schools took homework to students' homes once a week, when lunch was delivered to students, and collected it the following week. Students could send a photo of their homework to their teacher on a messaging app to receive feedback sooner (Cseke, 2020). In Montenegro, schools provided printed materials for homework to students without access to digital tools, particularly in suburban and rural areas. Slovakia's National Institute for Education, in cooperation with social workers and community centres, provided online support to professional staff to help reach Roma students and their parents (European Council, 2020). In Ukraine, teachers left study materials for Roma students in their mailbox; students also left their completed homework in the mailbox so it could be collected for teachers to mark and provide feedback.

Countries have also developed television programmes and video lessons for those hardest to reach. In Poland, at the education ministry's initiative, public television and radio broadcast education programmes with a particular focus on grades 1–8. Uzbekistan's Ministry of Public Education prepared live video lessons to run on national television channels in Uzbek and Russian, with sign language interpretation. They were also uploaded to official social media, a learning management platform and cloud storage platforms (Meliboeva et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2020). Armenia and Kazakhstan also provided lessons with sign language interpretation.

TEACHERS NEED TO BE A FOCUS OF SUPPORT

Lack of professional support and insufficient digital skills among teachers have often proved to be the main obstacles to education continuity. Teachers have pointed out that the guidelines they received were insufficient to support them. The guidelines did not indicate how to respond when teachers or students lacked access to internet or digital devices or when teachers lacked remote teaching skills. A study of about 1,000 primary school teachers in Poland found that 85% had no experience with distance learning before the pandemic outbreak, and 52% reported some difficulty using digital tools. In addition, 36% indicated that lack of equipment among students impeded distance education (Open Education Policy Network, 2020). Some countries, including Albania and Lithuania, have tried to provide digital devices for students and teachers to enable them to participate in remote learning.

Various countries organized in-service training or online consultations on remote learning. Examples include the two-week course 'How to conduct distance learning effectively' in Armenia and the online course 'Let´s get ready for distance learning' in Belarus. In Kazakhstan, in-service training that was intended to be provided in person was redesigned and transformed into online formats. Lithuania's Ministry of Education, Science and Sport organized around 50 consultations about online education, online safety and digital learning facilities. In Ukraine, the online marathon 'Education under the quarantine' provided an opportunity to exchange experiences on top of other in-service training opportunities.

One weakness of training initiatives is that they tend to involve only the most motivated teachers; for instance, digital skills development involved only 'active' teachers, leaving behind those who may have needed the training the most. Ideally, school leaders should identify individual needs, especially regarding digital skills and integrating technology into instructional practice, to target such teachers and encourage them to upgrade their skills. A related obstacle has been scheduling, as teachers have noted that their workload during the pandemic has been higher than average.

Considering teachers' current levels of digital literacy and average age, complementary solutions include strengthening partnerships among students and teachers, schools and families, and public and private actors. In addition, teachers have collaborated to support each other. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Centre for Education Initiatives Step by Step, an NGO, involved members of the Community of Innovative Teachers and proposed more than 200 ideas for classroom practice, shared by teachers, that were posted on a web platform. In Ukraine, teacher teams collaborated on individualized plans for students with special education needs.

FLEXIBLE APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT TRY TO TAKE STUDENT NEEDS INTO ACCOUNT

Most countries have not followed regular assessment and evaluation processes during the remote learning period. They leaned towards flexible, alternative approaches, trying to adapt methods appropriately. They mostly

> "A study of about 1,000 primary school teachers in Poland found that 52% reported some difficulty using digital tools"

> Examinations were cancelled in some cases and delayed in others, while in some the choice was left to students

focused on assessment based on learning achieved before remote learning kicked in, with guidelines encouraging the use of formative assessment so as not to let remote learning achievement play a major role in evaluation.

At the same time, assessment and evaluation are traditionally focused predominantly on academic learning rather than socio-emotional development. As schools in most countries have autonomy, in principle, to decide how they organize studies and evaluation, the need to redefine how learning is organized and assessed has become starkly apparent.

In Belarus, the Ministry of Education introduced additional learning days on Saturdays in April and May to catch up on lost school time. The Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia encouraged teachers to use formative assessment instead of numerical grading and concentrate on providing feedback and psychological support, even if that compromised academic knowledge and curriculum content coverage. End-of-year evaluations were to be based mostly on student performance before remote learning began. In Armenia, grades from the contact learning period were the basis for final grades, even though this approach caused dissatisfaction among teachers and parents. In Kazakhstan, assignments and tasks for assessment were simplified and the number of tasks used for assessment reduced.

In Montenegro, the state guidance on assessment urged reliance on student creativity, active participation, engagement and timeliness. Teachers were expected to grade in students' favour, with the final grade being at least as high as grades from the previous period. In Romania, central guidelines stated that the part of the curriculum not completed after school closed in March would be addressed during the following academic year. In the Russian Federation, national testing was carried out at the beginning of the new academic year to assess the degree of learning loss.

Countries chose different approaches to examinations. They were cancelled in some cases and delayed in others, while in some the choice was left to students. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the secondary school exit examination (matura) was cancelled. In Mongolia, all national examinations except the general university entrance examination at the end of grade 12 were cancelled. In Slovenia, national examinations for grades 6 and 9 were cancelled. Examinations were also cancelled in the Russian Federation.

Examinations took place in the Czech Republic once the COVID-19 measures were partially lifted. In Estonia, the examination at the end of grade 12 was voluntary rather than compulsory, giving students an opportunity to graduate without it. Students could also take state examinations in May and June or later. Examinations up to grade 9 did not take place, so completion was certified on the basis of annual grades. In Montenegro, the exam period was delayed to late May, and content from the remote learning period was not used, a choice also made in Turkey. In Serbia, paper-and-pen graduation examinations took place in June in school, even though an online approach had been piloted.

In Kyrgyzstan, transfer examinations between grades were cancelled. A special committee was formed in each school to determine the final score for every subject, taking into account previous exams, practical and laboratory work, quarterly and semi-annual grades and final semester achievements. In Slovakia, administrative decisions replaced secondary school entrance examinations, and a formula was used to calculate each learner's total score from marks in obligatory, specific and supplementary subjects, along with additional criteria set by schools. Schools were allowed to slightly exceed region-prescribed admission ceilings, and regional authorities decided if learners not admitted because of their score would be transferred to a school (CEDEFOP, 2020).

CONTENT NEEDS TO BE ADAPTED AND ATTENTION GIVEN TO SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

The alternative opportunities education systems have sought to provide to minimize learning loss seem to have been limited to one-way transmission of information rather than interaction, placing learners in passive roles.

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

> In Bulgaria, the Ministry of Education and Science opened a telephone hotline to provide psychological support for students, parents and teachers

A passive role without follow-up may not help cultivate student autonomy and self-efficacy skills that are fundamental both under remote learning and in the future. As children suffer from isolation, exemptions from the obligation to follow the core curriculum would give teachers an opportunity to be flexible and adapt to students' needs (Open Education Policy Network, 2020).

The need for personal attention and interaction is especially high among younger students and students with special education needs. In Estonia, teachers organized more live online lessons to compensate for lost face-to-face time. Often, they spent as much time guiding parents in how to support their children as they did guiding the students themselves. However, a lack of e-platforms and study materials designed for students with special education needs became apparent (Vapper, 2020).

Standard formats, whether online or through radio and television, are geared towards motivated, already somewhat skilled and self-sufficient learners, and neglect student and teacher needs for support to overcome obstacles. There are few examples of responsive assistance. In Estonia, schools with education technologists were entitled to systematic assistance for teachers, students and parents that targeted individual needs. However, many schools had been unable to fill the technologist position. In North Macedonia, a dedicated platform was developed to provide online assistance to teachers and parents of students with special education needs.

Addressing student social and emotional needs has been one of the most challenging aspects of education in the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers need support to address not just the academic needs of students but also their well-being. Online professional development, mentoring and coaching are needed, but successful integration of technology into teaching and learning requires rethinking teachers' role and their preparation and professional development. Enhanced communication and cooperation among students to promote their socio-emotional development are also needed.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, only medical support, organized by CSOs, was provided for students with severe difficulties. Official instructions on how to support students with special needs were markedly absent. Latvia's government provided self-care assistance but not education support for students not allowed to stay at special schools where they received professional support. In Tajikistan, psychological support to learners, teachers and other school personnel could not be ensured during school closures, since smaller schools in rural and remote areas were less likely to have a psychological service. Alternatives to school-based psychologists were limited, as district and regional educational departments could not hire psychologists from outside schools (Mirzoev, 2020).

In Bulgaria, the Ministry of Education and Science opened a telephone hotline to provide psychological support for students, parents and teachers. In Kosovo,[2] the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, in cooperation with UNICEF, made psychologists, physiotherapists and therapists available daily. A list of them and their contacts was uploaded to the inclusive education platform. It is estimated that 3,000 students have benefited from such education and psychosocial services.

Online communication and video connections can lead to a feeling of intrusion and cause stress for disadvantaged students who may not be comfortable revealing their home and living conditions. Although countries in the region are doing relatively better than the OECD average in that respect, one in five 15-year-old students in Bulgaria lacked a quiet place to study (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020).

There have been few measures supporting student and teacher well-being during the pandemic. As home environments and parental support grew in significance

2 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

during the remote learning period, those with a disadvantage risked falling further behind. In Ukraine, boarding schools sent students home without checking the conditions and their families' capacity to provide safety and care. The government tried to mitigate the risk by providing parents with information and recommendations on remote learning, meaningful leisure time and sanitary needs. The Ministry of Social Policy developed actions to protect children, including online or telephone communication between social workers and parents or guardians aimed at addressing social support, food supply and other needs. Social workers were encouraged to visit families at risk, where possible.

A number of CSOs have raised the need to address student well-being and mental health during remote learning. In the Czech Republic, various NGOs drew attention in the media to the need to take action on mental health and provide assistance to students from adverse home environments. There were indications that some students were left without pedagogical support, and that responsibility for the education continuity of students with special needs remained solely with parents. In Georgia, CSO programmes for homeless out-of-school children assisted them in developing basic academic and life skills.

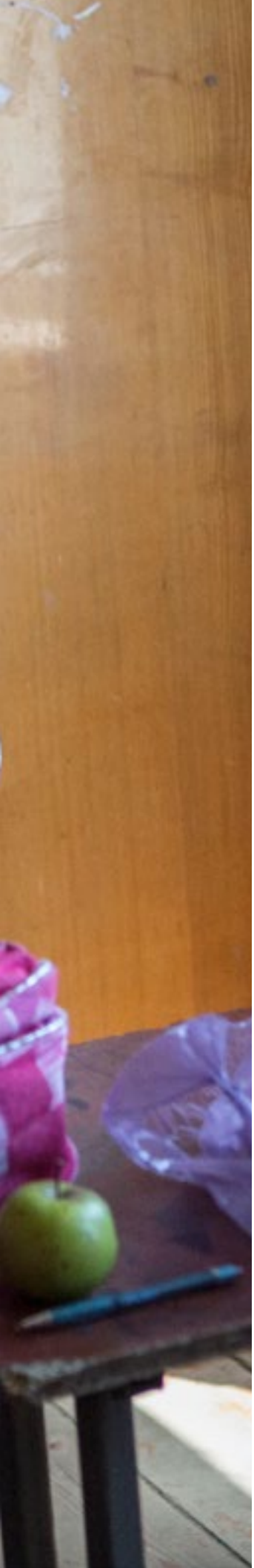
In Hungary, municipalities have continued to deliver meals, which are offered free of charge for some groups, such as children with disabilities and families that are poor or have three or more children (European Council, 2020). In Lithuania, free packed meals were provided to poor students. During temporary school closures in Tajikistan, the World Food Programme, in coordination with regional/district education departments and schools, distributed leftover food to the neediest families with children in primary school. However, the lack of school meal provision inevitably affected the most financially disadvantaged households (Mirzoev, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a major setback for inclusion in education, although the magnitude of its impact is not yet clear. The crisis has shown that ensuring learning for all during a pandemic is not simply a matter of tackling the digital divide. Education systems have been subjected to a test of their ability to ensure education continuity by adjusting instructional design, curriculum content, education delivery and assessment, teacher preparation, and support and guidance at home, especially for academically challenged and less motivated students who risk falling further behind. Although the focus has inevitably been on distance learning, countries are not fully prepared to address the full range of pedagogical challenges for all students that online approaches to teaching and learning entail. It is necessary to focus not only on academic learning but also on the socio-emotional aspects that help develop independent, self-sufficient, motivated and contented students. Most children and youth are suffering a direct, although hopefully temporary, loss of learning. But concerns remain about the indirect effects of the associated recession, which is throwing millions of people into poverty. Governments need to take a close look at the inclusion challenges posed by the pandemic to reconstruct a better education system accessible to all learners.

A public school in Maradisi, a village in a region of Georgia populated by ethnic minorities.

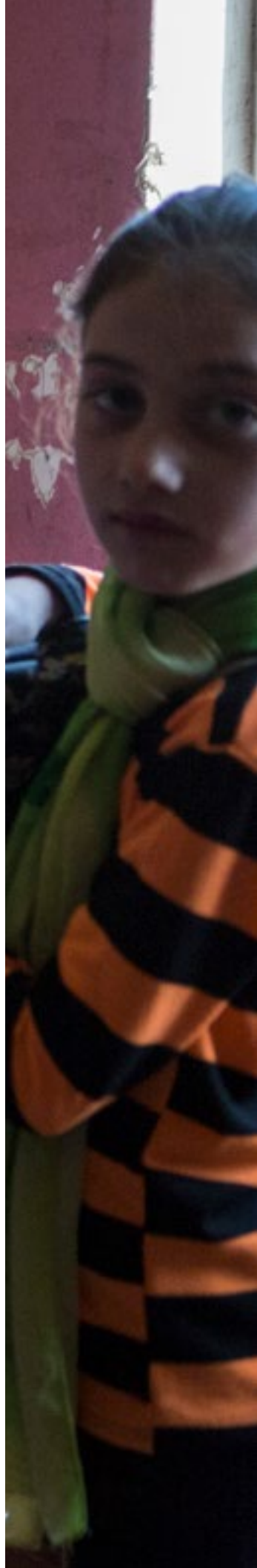
CREDIT: Natela Grigalashvili



CHAPTER

10

Conclusion and recommendations



All countries committed in 2015 to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 and 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education' by 2030. However, inclusive education arguably meant different things to different people at the time.

The right to inclusive education had been established in the landmark Article 24 of the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which shaped perceptions of inclusive education as associated with a single group. But it was the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities itself, in its General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 in 2016, that offered a new interpretation, arguing that inclusion should not be associated with only one group. Rather, the mindset and mechanisms that generate discrimination and rejection in education participation and experience are the same for all who are excluded, whether due to disability or to gender, age, location, poverty, ethnicity, language, religion, migration, displacement, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, incarceration, beliefs or attitudes. Every society needs to own up to the mechanisms within it that exclude people – which is also the premise on which this report is based.

Inclusion in education is a process consisting of actions that embrace diversity, build a sense of belonging and are rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and should be respected. Education systems need to be responsive to all learners' needs and to consider learner diversity not as a problem but as a resource. Inclusive education is the foundation of an education system of good quality that enables every child, youth and adult to learn and fulfil their potential. Inclusion cannot be achieved if it is seen as an inconvenience or if people harbour the belief that learners' ability levels are fixed. Inclusion in education ensures that differences of opinion are freely expressed and different voices are heard so as to help achieve cohesion and build inclusive societies.

Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia has made progress towards a rights-based approach to inclusive education. In the past 20 years, education levels, already among the world's highest, have increased rapidly. Out-of-school rates have fallen by half. Adoption of the CRPD and the influence of international bodies, such as the Council of Europe and European Union, have led to important reforms. From Estonia to Slovenia and from Armenia to Ukraine, countries have been moving away from a medical model in pedagogical discourse and thus improving identification of special education needs, as in Bulgaria. The percentage of children with disabilities in special schools fell from 78% in 2005/06 to 53% in 2015/16. The percentage of children without parental care in residential institutions, who are more likely to be barred from mainstream education, fell by 30% in the same period.

Two in three education systems have adopted a definition of inclusion that embraces marginalized groups beyond learners with special education needs or disabilities. Tajikistan's inclusive education strategy addresses disability, ethnicity, migration and gender. Turkey, which hosts more refugees than any other country in the world, has absorbed more than 600,000 Syrians in its public schools and adopted flexible support and assistance. In countries including Poland, schools are also making their support systems broader and more flexible. Of the 30 education systems reviewed, 23 offer counselling and mentoring, 22 learning assistance and 21 specialist and therapist support.

But the shift to inclusion is far from complete. Many countries in the region have yet to shed one of the most poignant legacies of the second half of the 20th century: segregated education, once wrongly regarded as an efficient solution. In 15 of the 30 education systems, school admission depends on medical-psychological assessment and other selection procedures. Overall, one in three students with special needs in Central and Eastern Europe is placed in a special school. Even those no longer enrolled in such schools may be placed in other non-inclusive arrangements, such as special classes or home schooling.

Support measures, at heart, may still follow the targeted and exclusionary approach that traditionally dominated. What is considered in some countries to be inclusive pedagogy may instead be a medically defined focus on disability. In Belarus, integrated classes use two curricula: a standard one for general education and another for special education; joint instruction is limited to a narrow list of subjects. Even in countries with high levels of commitment, such as Albania, implementation of laws and policies can lag due to capacity and resource gaps in school organization and teacher education. In Uzbekistan, where the shift towards inclusive education is at a very early stage, a survey found that 70% of people believed children with disabilities should be in special schools.

Other forms of segregation and discrimination persist, hindering inclusion. About 60% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth in the Balkans do not attend upper secondary school; just 3% complete it in Montenegro. Members of these groups are also disproportionally diagnosed with intellectual disabilities. In Slovakia, Roma constituted 63% of all children in special classes and 42% of those in special schools in 2018. While 11% of

15-year-old students from the bottom 25% in terms of socio-economic status scored in the top 25% in reading in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the share was below 8% in Bulgaria and Hungary, among the lowest levels in the world and less than half those in Estonia and Kazakhstan.

A rights-based commitment to national minorities has resulted in 22 of the 30 education systems creating separate schools or classes in the home language, with additional content on history and culture for linguistic minorities. However, this parallel provision often works against inclusion; few examples provide truly inclusive practice with ethnic majorities and minorities learning together from one intercultural curriculum, as in Slovene-Hungarian bilingual schools. In the extreme case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an education system segregated along ethnic lines perpetuates prejudice.

Mongolia has high levels of inequality: 94% of the richest but only 37% of the poorest complete secondary school, despite innovative approaches to address the needs of nomadic groups, which are disproportionately represented among the poor. Gender equality in education has become a highly contested topic. In Belarus, the education code implies a traditional gender lens, and training guidelines reinforce gender stereotypes. The Turkish curriculum, reformed in 2016, barely mentions women's rights. Just 7 of 23 countries have policies or action plans explicitly addressing and prohibiting school bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and/or variation in sex characteristics. Russian Federation law prohibits talking in school about the existence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

As the region enters the final decade of action to achieve SDG 4 and fulfil the commitment to achieve 'inclusive and equitable quality education' and 'lifelong learning opportunities for all', the following 10 recommendations take into account the deep roots of barriers and the wide scope of issues related to inclusion, which threaten the region's chances of achieving the 2030 targets. The task has only been made harder by COVID-19 and the resulting recession. School closures have led to distance education solutions, which, as forward-looking as they may be, nevertheless risk leaving the most disadvantaged learners further behind.

1. *Widen the understanding of inclusive education: It should include all learners – and all means all.*
   Inclusive education should encompass all learners. In laws and other documents, 19 of the 30 education systems reviewed in the region define special education needs in relation to disability. While 12 also include a variety of other learner groups, these tend to be mainly gifted learners. By contrast, 23 of the 30 systems have a definition of inclusion in laws or other documents, of which 20 focus on multiple marginalized groups, beyond learners with special education needs or disabilities. But even this expanded scope should be seen as just one step towards eventually moving away from any form of categorical or group-based definition or learner identification. Clarity in terminology at all levels of implementation will be critical.

   Inclusive education aims to dismantle barriers by relying on the principle that 'every learner matters and matters equally'. It can deliver improvement in academic achievement, social and emotional development, self-esteem and peer acceptance. Ensuring student diversity in mainstream classrooms and schools can prevent stigma, stereotyping, discrimination and alienation. It can contribute to social justice, recognition of difference and representation of all groups in education policies and programmes, counteracting tendencies that allow exceptions and exclusions. Provision of inclusive education of high quality is linked to social inclusion.

2. *Put students at the centre: Inclusion is not just a result; it is first and foremost a process and an experience.*
   Students may feel unrepresented or stereotyped in teaching materials. A Council of Europe review of history, civics and geography curricula in 14 countries found no mention of national minorities in Albania, one in the Czech Republic, and no mention of Roma in 9 countries, including Bulgaria, Serbia and Slovakia, where they are a sizeable minority. Only the Republic of Moldova reported involving students in curriculum design. Aside from student councils in some countries, little evidence is found of student voices being heard and acted upon.

   Yet everybody's view should count in efforts to provide an education of good quality, which should not just deliver academic success; the right to be in good physical and mental health, happy, safe and connected with others is as important as the right to learn. Alongside family, schools are a key environment for development of children's well-being. A positive classroom atmosphere, where teachers recognize and support students' effort, is crucial. A sense of belonging to the school and the peer group is vital, especially for vulnerable children at greater risk of exclusion. Social diversity in schools is necessary for children to interact with peers from different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and to strengthen social cohesion.

3. *Engage in meaningful consultation with communities and parents: Inclusion cannot be enforced from above.*
A key barrier to inclusion in education is lack of belief that it is possible and desirable. Parents, guardians, families and communities may have discriminatory attitudes with respect to gender, disability, ethnicity or religion. Negative attitudes thwart or cancel efforts to implement inclusive education reforms, as recent debates on gender equality indicate. When offered the choice, parents will try to avoid disadvantaged local schools, thus entrenching segregation, which has reached high levels in some countries in the region. Conversely, parents of vulnerable children may opt out of mainstream schools if they feel these do not cater for their children's needs.

Governments should open space for parents and communities to voice their preferences as equals in the design of policies on inclusion in education. In total, 25 out of 30 education systems in the region have policies supporting parental involvement in school governance. Such involvement has helped provide feedback on curriculum and annual programme plans in Croatia and manage additional financial resources in the Russian Federation. But many efforts in the region to encourage parental participation are isolated initiatives carried out as pilot projects or implemented by non-government organizations (NGOs). Communities can help democratize education, foster dialogue and bring sidelined voices into decision making. Schools need to communicate well and provide clear information to all parents, including those harder to reach. Parents also need a voice in decisions based on medical and psychological assessments; inclusive alternatives need to be made available.

4. *Make space for non-government actors to challenge and fill gaps: Ensure that they work towards the same inclusion goal.*
Organized civil society activity has played fundamental advocate and watchdog roles regarding the right to inclusive education. In Romania, a grassroots push for desegregation of schools for Roma led to legislation and policy changes. Armenia's development of a national inclusive education policy is largely attributed to effective support by and collaboration with non-government organizations NGOs. Awareness campaigns help shift public opinion in favour of inclusion. In North Macedonia, two-thirds of the population was exposed to a campaign aiming to increase support for inclusion of people with disabilities in society: 46% of those exposed said environmental barriers needed to be overcome, compared with 32% of those not exposed. In total, 24 education systems have legislation or policy setting out a role for organizations representing vulnerable groups, though not necessarily in both advocacy and watchdog tasks. Governments should create conditions enabling NGOs to monitor fulfilment of government commitments and stand up for those excluded from education.

NGOs are also filling gaps in service provision, from education delivery to teacher training, either on contract with the government or on their own initiative. Valuable non-state practices should be adopted in national policy. Governments must provide leadership and maintain dialogue with NGOs to ensure that such services lead to inclusion, meet standards, do not replicate what other providers do or compete for limited funds. Instead, they should be sustainable, embedded in and aligned with national strategies, plans and policies.

5. *Ensure cooperation across government departments, sectors and tiers: Inclusion in education is but a subset of social inclusion.*
Partnership is the keyword in government efforts to achieve inclusion. Ministries sharing administrative responsibility for inclusive education must collaborate on identifying needs, exchanging information and designing programmes. Analysis of responses from the 30 education systems showed that inter-ministerial collaboration in policy development, implementation and coordination was common. In Lithuania, the education, health and social ministries have agreed to jointly develop measures to help children identified with autism or other developmental disabilities. However, collaboration on data collection is missing in nearly half of the education systems. Data sharing needs to be reinforced to promote early interventions and mitigate the impact of adverse initial conditions on school progression and learning. The Russian Federation reformed its needs identification system to engage multiple government services.

Vertical collaboration between central and local authorities is needed for delivering inclusion. In Estonia, while county education departments usually have only a supervisory role, some counties have proactively established development plans and encouraged school network building. In its process for relocating and resettling third-country asylum seekers and refugees, Croatia engages representatives from not only ministries, agencies, NGOs and humanitarian organizations but also local and regional governments. Coordinated actions on

quality assurance are crucial to achieving successful inclusive education practice.

6. *Share expertise and resources: This is the only way to sustain a transition to inclusion.*
In many ways, achieving inclusion is a management challenge. Historically, human and material resources to address diversity have been concentrated in a few places, because of the legacy of segregated provision, and are unequally distributed. Mechanisms and incentives are needed to reallocate them flexibly to ensure that specialist expertise supports mainstream schools. In several countries, resource centres are being used to transition to inclusion.

Changes to funding mechanisms are also needed. Special, separate education funding linked to formal decisions of social and medical services leads to strategic behaviour by parents, schools and local authorities seeking eligibility for resources. Countries should allocate funds based on recognized needs of schools or local authorities for support services. In the Czech Republic, a per pupil allocation is being replaced by an amount per staff member with the aim to take into account the cost of support measures and salary levels. Schools should be granted autonomy to allocate funds flexibly to support those with the greatest needs, as in Slovakia. Care should be taken to communicate with local governments clearly and ensure they have the capacity to develop efficient funding plans.

7. *Apply universal design: Ensure that inclusive systems fulfil every learner's potential.*
The simple but powerful concept of universal design is associated in education with design of accessible school buildings for learners with disabilities. Few countries monitor infrastructure standards well. Lithuania collects online information by municipality on various aspects of accessibility and adaptability in general schools. In Kyrgyzstan, only about 8% of schools have infrastructure that is adapted and accessible. The universal design concept has also been extended to describe approaches that minimize barriers to learning through flexible learning environments. The huge potential of assistive technology for learners with disabilities has not yet been fully tapped. Montenegro uses textbooks in the Digital Accessible Information System format, which allows easy recording of written material containing audio and visual information.

But the underlying idea of flexibility to overcome barriers in the interaction of learners with the education system applies not only to accessible form but also to accessible content and assessment. All students should learn from the same flexible, relevant and accessible curricula, which recognize diversity and enable teachers to respond to various learners' needs. Romania's curriculum has offered a comprehensive framing of Roma history since 2017. Challenges arise in how textbooks reflect concepts such as gender equality or ethnic identity. Azerbaijan introduced gender equality criteria in textbook reviews. Various models of adapted assessment can help learners demonstrate their progress and increase opportunities for those with special education needs. In Georgia, sign language standards have been elaborated to assist inclusion of learners with hearing impairment, and standards for learners with visual impairment are in preparation. Nevertheless, national assessment systems have a long way to go to become fully inclusive and respond to individual needs.

8. *Prepare, empower and motivate teachers and support personnel: They should all be prepared to teach all students.*
Teachers need training in inclusion, not as a specialist topic but as a core element of their initial and ongoing education. Head teachers should be prepared to communicate and instil an inclusive school ethos. Among 14 countries in the region, only about one in two lower secondary school teachers in 2018 felt prepared to work in mixed-ability classrooms and one in three in culturally diverse classrooms. The ageing of the teaching force makes this need more pressing. In Lithuania, 27% of teachers with up to five years of experience, but only 17% of those with more than five years, had been trained to teach in a multicultural or multilingual setting. While some countries have made progress, others continue to follow a medical approach that risks perpetuating entrenched views of some students as deficient and unable to learn. Few programmes enable future teachers to gain work experience in inclusive environments. Competences related to inclusion are not always required for teacher licensing and certification.

Support personnel are often lacking, and their roles diluted. In about a dozen education systems, for every 30 teachers, there is 1 specialist and 1 teaching assistant, on average. Teaching assistants are just becoming part of policy in countries such as Albania and Serbia. Support personnel is often not used effectively: Time often ends up being dedicated to tasks other than teacher and student support. It is necessary to prevent teaching assistants from taking sole responsibility or segregating learners.

9. *Collect data on and for inclusion with attention and respect: Avoid labelling that stigmatizes.*

Which data are collected and how they are used determine whether inclusion is served. Historically, the region has focused data collection efforts on learners with special education needs and disabilities. Identifying groups helps make those who are disadvantaged visible. But it can also reduce children to labels, which can be self-fulfilling. The desire for detailed or robust data should not take priority over ensuring that no learner is harmed. Not all children facing inclusion barriers belong to an identifiable or recognized group, while others belong to more than one.

Household surveys help disaggregate education outcomes at the population level and yield important insights about education inequality by individual and intersecting characteristics. But the formulation of survey questions on nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity remains a sensitive issue in some countries.

Inclusion-related data collection must cover inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes on all learners and for multiple uses, not just resource allocation. While cross-national learning achievement surveys provide valuable insights on students' sense of belonging at school, education management information systems should also look into monitoring student experiences of inclusion as part of a quality assurance and accountability framework. The Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia has been integrated within the overall school quality assurance policy. Monitoring should not only serve the function of collecting data on inclusion but also be inclusive in methodology.

10. *Learn from peers: A shift to inclusion is not easy.*

Inclusion in education represents a move away from discrimination and prejudice. Neither the pace nor the specific route of this transition can be dictated; each society may take a different route. But much can be learned from sharing experiences at all levels, whether through teacher networks and learning communities or through national, regional and global platforms.

Countries in the region must work together and take advantage of multiple opportunities for policy dialogue to steer their education systems and their societies to appreciate diversity as something to celebrate, not a problem to rectify. A key challenge is to exchange experiences on implementation to bridge persistent gaps between policies and practices and ensure that learners remain at the centre of policymakers' and practitioners' attention.

Annex

INFORMATION ON INCLUSION IN 30 EDUCATION SYSTEMS

As noted in the introduction, this report is based primarily on data collected from 30 education systems in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (covering 29 countries and 1 territory, Kosovo[1]), following a structured template. The resulting profiles are accessible on the regional report's webpage. The tables in this annex summarize information in response to key questions based on analysis of the profiles and on supplementary desk research conducted by the teams that prepared the profiles.

The information is recorded as follows:
Y – yes, found in the information analysis
N – no, not found in the information analysis.

Reference to many of these questions is made in the respective report chapters.

1 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Laws and policies

Laws on special education and inclusion
There is a separate law on special education
There is reference to special education in other laws
Laws make reference to integration
Laws make reference to inclusion
There is a link to special education needs/disability in inclusion laws
Definitions of special educational needs
Special education needs are defined in law or formal guidelines
Special education needs definition is linked to disability
Special education needs definition covers multiple marginalized groups
Definitions of inclusion
Inclusion is defined in law or formal guidelines
Inclusion definition focuses on special education needs and/or disability
Inclusion definition covers multiple marginalized groups
Definitions of vulnerable groups
Vulnerable groups are defined in law or formal guidelines
Vulnerable group definition focuses on special education needs/disability
Vulnerable group definition covers multiple marginalized groups
Laws supporting minority group rights
Constitution/(Education) laws support child rights
Constitution/(Education) laws support disability rights
Constitution/(Education) laws support gender equality
Laws support ethnic, linguistic and/or religious minority rights
Laws support internally displaced, asylum seeker, refugee, migrant rights
Laws prevent discrimination/segregation against all minority groups
Minority group rights in general education law
Rights of minority groups are included in general education law
Education law refers to inclusive education
Inclusive education law focuses on special education needs/disability
Inclusive education law covers multiple marginalized groups
Strategies and action plans
There is an overall strategic plan for education
There are strategies/action plans for inclusive education
Plans target special education needs/disability
Plans target other vulnerable groups
Plans focus on gender equality
Separate schools for linguistic minorities
There are separate schools for linguistic minorities

	Albania	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Bosnia/Herzeg.	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czechia	Estonia	Georgia	Hungary	Kazakhstan	Kosovo[1]	Kyrgyzstan	Latvia	Lithuania	Mongolia	Montenegro	N. Macedonia	Poland	Rep. Moldova	Romania	Russian Fed.	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	Tajikistan	Turkey	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y
	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
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	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N

Data

Education systems provide data on:
Potential population in compulsory education system (i.e. number of children who should by law be in some form of compulsory education)
Number of learners:
• enrolled in all forms of education (i.e. maintained by education ministry or other authorities)
• not in any form of education (but by law should be in education)
• enrolled in mainstream schools
• enrolled in mainstream schools who spend at least 80% or 4 days per week in inclusive groups/classes with their peers
• enrolled in mainstream schools who spend at least 80% or 4 days per week in separate groups/classes, away from peers
• enrolled in separate, special units and/or schools away from peers
Education systems provide gender-disaggregated data on:
Potential population in compulsory education system (i.e. number of children who should by law be in some form of compulsory education)
Number of learners:
• enrolled in all forms of education (i.e. maintained by education ministry or other authorities)
• not in any form of education (but by law should be in education)
• enrolled in mainstream schools
• enrolled in mainstream schools who spend at least 80% or 4 days per week in inclusive groups/classes with their peers
• enrolled in mainstream schools who spend at least 80% or 4 days per week in separate groups/classes, away from peers
• enrolled in separate, special units and/or schools away from peers
There are frameworks on:
Monitoring/evaluation of inclusion in education policy implementation
Quality assurance at all levels (national, subnational, school)
Use of range of data sources for evaluation/self-review at different levels

2 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

	Albania	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Bosnia/Herzeg.	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czechia	Estonia	Georgia	Hungary	Kazakhstan	Kosovo[2]	Kyrgyzstan	Latvia	Lithuania	Mongolia	Montenegro	N.Macedonia	Poland	Rep. Moldova	Romania	Russian Fed.	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	Tajikistan	Turkey	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
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	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N

Governance and finance

Cross-ministry collaboration for:
Policy development, implementation and coordination
Identification of needs/Referral for services
Data sharing
Monitoring and evaluation
Quality assurance and accountability
Other forms of collaboration
Shared responsibilities at central/local levels for:
Policy development, implementation and coordination
Identification of needs/Referral for services
Data sharing
Monitoring and evaluation
Quality assurance and accountability
Other forms of collaboration
Accountability mechanisms to promote inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups
Appeal process for rights violations
School inspection
Other quality assurance (e.g. teaching standards, support services)
Monitoring and evaluation (e.g. attendance, achievement, funding data)
Funding for disadvantaged students aimed at schools
School grants for operating expenses (e.g. transport, books)
Conditional grants to stimulate inclusive practices
Funding for disadvantaged students aimed at families
Scholarships for students with socio-economic disadvantage or disability
Scholarships for Roma students
Allocations in kind: school meals
Allocations in kind: transport
Allocations in kind: textbooks or school materials

3 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

	Albania	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Bosnia/Herzeg.	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czechia	Estonia	Georgia	Hungary	Kazakhstan	Kosovo[3]	Kyrgyzstan	Latvia	Lithuania	Mongolia	Montenegro	N. Macedonia	Poland	Rep. Moldova	Romania	Russian Fed.	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	Tajikistan	Turkey	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N
	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
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	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
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	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
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	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
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Curricula, learning materials and assessments

Stakeholders involved in curriculum development
Education ministry
Teachers
Institutes, agencies, inspectorates and other public education institutions
NGOs, foundations and associations
Faculties/academies
School management
Experts
School professionals and/or support specialists
Parents
Students
Education forms/models for national minorities
Separate schools/classes for national minority students in home language
Additional subjects for national minority students in home language
Bilingual education in majority and minority languages

Teachers and support personnel

Initial teacher education topics
Inclusive education theory
Individual education plans
Working with students from vulnerable groups
Gender
Multi-/Interculturalism
Prevention of extremism
Inclusive school climate
Adjustment of curriculum
Cross-curricular or separate subjects related to inclusion
Cross-curricular
Separate
Obligatory or optional subjects related to inclusion
Obligatory
Optional
Elements of teacher education programmes
All universities have same inclusion-related curriculum
Initial teacher education includes inclusion-related practice/internship
Time given for inclusion-related practice/internship

4 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

	Albania	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Bosnia/Herzeg.	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czechia	Estonia	Georgia	Hungary	Kazakhstan	Kosovo[4]	Kyrgyzstan	Latvia	Lithuania	Mongolia	Montenegro	N. Macedonia	Poland	Rep. Moldova	Romania	Russian Fed.	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	Tajikistan	Turkey	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
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	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
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	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N

	Albania	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Bosnia/Herzeg.	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czechia	Estonia	Georgia	Hungary	Kazakhstan	Kosovo[4]	Kyrgyzstan	Latvia	Lithuania	Mongolia	Montenegro	N. Macedonia	Poland	Rep. Moldova	Romania	Russian Fed.	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	Tajikistan	Turkey	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
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	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
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	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
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	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N

Schools

Admissions and exclusion from mainstream schooling
Mainstream schools admit all learner groups
Particular groups may be excluded from or not admitted to local schools:
• for administrative reasons (e.g. not registered in the locality)
• based on medical-psychological assessment and/or admission and selection procedures set by the school principal
• for structural reasons (e.g. remoteness, overcrowding, no support staff)
• for other reasons (e.g. discrimination, underachievement, work, early marriage, costs, lack of information or access to registration)
Learners can be excluded from local schools for disciplinary reasons
Groups most at risk of exclusion from mainstream primary education
Children with disabilities
Roma children
Children in poverty and homeless children
Children in rural areas
Children belonging to ethnic and linguistic minorities
Girls
Boys
Migrants and/or refugees
Groups most at risk of exclusion from mainstream secondary education
Children with disabilities
Roma children
Children in poverty and homeless children
Children in rural areas
Children belonging to ethnic and linguistic minorities
Girls
Boys
Migrants and/or refugees
Alternative provision
Limited regular classroom participation hours, programme differentiation, developmental groups, special classrooms, non-residential special schools
Special schools, boarding schools/institutions, hospital schools, rehabilitation centres
Home schooling
Schools in prisons or juvenile detention centres
Separate Roma/ethnic minority schooling, e.g. in Roma settlements
Non-formal educational provision, e.g. day care, after-school programmes
Special schools for specialized programmes, e.g. arts, sports, mathematics, foreign languages, schools for gifted children
Pedagogy and learner support in mainstream schools
Personalized learning
Counselling and mentoring
Specialist and therapist support
Learning support assistance

5 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

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	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
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	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
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	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
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	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N

Students, parents and communities

Support to parental involvement
Parents' right to choose child's education setting enshrined in law/policy
Parental involvement in schools supported by policy
Parental involvement in school governance supported by policy
Support to school–local community collaboration
A law or policy supports school–community collaboration
A law or policy partially supports school–community collaboration
Support to community collaboration and involvement
A law or policy supports learning communities, e.g. school collaboration, involvement with universities, support services to provide research evidence and develop innovative practice
There is a cooperation programme between schools and universities
Awareness raising of inclusion in education
Campaigns raise awareness at local or national level
Awareness raising is part of a national strategy
Civil society runs campaigns independently or with governments
Civil society involvement in education
A law or policy sets out a role for non-government, disabled people's or other organizations representing vulnerable groups
Civil society addresses learners with special needs and/or disabilities
Civil society addresses learners from ethnic minorities

6 References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

	Albania	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Bosnia/Herzeg.	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czechia	Estonia	Georgia	Hungary	Kazakhstan	Kosovo[6]	Kyrgyzstan	Latvia	Lithuania	Mongolia	Montenegro	N. Macedonia	Poland	Rep. Moldova	Romania	Russian Fed.	Serbia	Slovakia	Slovenia	Tajikistan	Turkey	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N

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CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE,
CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

Inclusion and education:

ALL MEANS ALL

This report covers a geographically vast and diverse area, which was welded together into a region with similar education structures and approaches under state socialism in the second half of the 20th century. Access to education was high. However, education systems also used a discriminatory approach, whereby children with disabilities attended special schools, once wrongly regarded as an effective solution, segregated by type of disability, if not fully excluded from education.

Since 1989, the region has been trying to overcome this heavy legacy and shift towards a rights-based approach to education, often with the support of international organizations. Laws and policies have embraced a broader concept of inclusion. Teacher education and professional development programmes are being revised or restructured. Yet progress is uneven. Many changes are happening on paper, while deeply held beliefs and actual practices remain little altered. At the same time, education systems have been grappling with the fallout from political conflict and economic crises that exacerbate inequality and maintain tensions over social issues. Characteristics such as gender, remoteness, poverty, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and religion and other beliefs and attitudes are associated with unequal distribution of education opportunities.

Produced by the *Global Education Monitoring Report* team, in partnership with the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education and the Network of Education Policy Centers, this report draws on in-depth profiles of 30 education systems in the region. It also presents the additional risks to inclusion now posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on the 2020 *Global Education Monitoring Report*, it documents barriers facing learners, particularly where multiple disadvantages intersect. Its recommendations provide a systematic framework for identifying and dismantling these barriers, according to the principle that 'every learner matters and matters equally'.

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Global
Education
Monitoring
Report

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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