

JOINT EU/COE PROJECT “REGIONAL
SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION”

Overview of the existing policy framework in inclusive education in Croatia

Policy Support Component Expert Meeting
Belgrade, 1-2 October, 2013

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION- THE MAIN CONCEPTS AND DISTINCTIONS

“Ignorance ... is a guarantee of marginalisation.” (Lewin, 2000)

- contextualising inclusive education in the human rights, social justice and diversity framework
- shifting focus from ‘them’ to us- inclusivity level as a critical tool for (self) evaluation of educational systems
- avoiding the ‘charity trap’ or being kind is not enough- inclusive education as a social justice project aimed to end exclusion and marginalization of children based on dimensions such as poverty, disability, ethnicity, socio-cultural background, gender or sexual identity

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AS
EDUCATION FOR ALL? EXCLUDED
TARGET GROUPS**

- National minorities
- Roma
- Children and persons with special needs
- Gender and sexual minorities
- Children and youth at risk
- Elderly citizens

**INTERNATIONAL STANDARD-
SETTING DOCUMENTS FOR
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CROATIA**

- The Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (CoE, 1995a)
- The revised European Social Charter (CoE, 1995b)
- The European Convention on Human Rights (CoE, 1950)
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989)
- The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960)
- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006).

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CROATIA

- relevant legislation, policies, regulations and educational strategies in Croatia are relatively progressive and geared towards inclusion
- the national policy and legislative frameworks are particularly focused on the protection of minority rights to education in respective minority languages, with a strong emphasis on increasing the participation of the Roma minority and the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools (Batarelo Kokić, Vukelić, Ljubić, 2010)

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CROATIA

- Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette, 2008a)
- The Act on Preschool Education (Official Gazette, 2007)
- The Act on Primary Education (Official Gazette, 2003a)
- The Act on Secondary Education (Official Gazette, 2003b)
- Law on Vocational Education (Official Gazette, 2009b)
- The Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (Official Gazette, 2003c)

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CROATIA – NATIONAL MINORITIES

The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 2001)

The Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (Official Gazette, 2002)

Action Plan for Implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2008a)

Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 2000)

The Anti-discrimination Act (Official Gazette, 2008c)

Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion of the Republic of Croatia (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2007a)

National Programme for the protection and promotion of human rights (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2007b).

National Programme for the Roma (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2003)

Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2008b).

MINORITY EDUCATION

Three models of minority education have been implemented at primary school level (MoSES, 2009b):

Model A relates to schooling in the national minority language (Croatian programmes are translated into the national minority languages; the Croatian language is taught for four hours per week)

Model B relates to bilingual teaching (social sciences and humanities are taught in the minority languages, and natural sciences in Croatian; the Croatian language is taught for four hours per week)

Model C relates to nurturing the mother tongue and culture (five hours per week of the minority language throughout the school year; summer schools etc.)

**LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION IN CROATIA – GENDER
AND SEXUAL MINORITIES**

Different legal acts explicitly ban discrimination based on sexual orientation –
Antidiscrimination Act (Official Gazette, Nr. 85/08)

Act on Amendments to Criminal Code (Official Gazette, Nr. 105/04)

Act on Amendments to Labour Act (Official Gazette, Nr.
137/04 - cleansed text)

Gender Equality Act (Official Gazette, Nr. 82/08)

The National Policy for Gender Equality (2011-15)

Media Act (Official Gazette 59/04)

Scientific Activity and High Education Act (Official Gazette,
Nr.123/03)

Asylum Act (Official Gazette, Nr. 79/07)

Volunteers Act (Official Gazette, Nr. 58/07)

**LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION IN CROATIA – STUDENTS
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Regulatory Act on the Number of Students in Combined Classes and Educational Groups in Primary Schools (Official Gazette, 2009a)

The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with a Disability (Official Gazette, 2005)

National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2007 – 2015.

Regulatory Act on the Promotion of Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette, 1995)

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- the principle underlying Croatian legislation is that integration/inclusion is always best for a child, and that only in the most severe cases should a student be placed in either partial integration or separate special education classes or schools
- the majority of children with special educational needs at primary level are included in regular classrooms
- there is a limit of 3 students with special educational needs per class, and a class with 3 students with special needs can have maximum of 20 students
- there is full integration if a child has a mild disability and partial integration for those with a moderate disability; children with severe disabilities may be educated in special schools or institutions
- according to OECD (2007a) data, 66% of children with special educational needs attend mainstream schools (Batarelo Kokić, Vukelić, Ljubić, 2010)

**NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR EQUALIZATION OF
OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES 2007 – 2015**

The strategy has the goal of advancing and strengthening the protection of persons and children with disabilities.

Its main task is to harmonize all action policies in the area of protection of persons with disabilities with the standards achieved at the global level, and to make all areas of life and all activities accessible to persons with disabilities.

Based on the principles of non-discrimination and of interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights, the strategy highlights and stresses the importance of effective cooperation with DPOs in order to foster the mainstream and inclusion of disability.

**(PHYSICAL) INTEGRATION DOES
NOT MEAN INCLUSION**

“...education is widely – albeit wrongly – perceived as inherently good. Getting all children to school is thus mistaken for their right to education.”

(Tomasevski, 2003)

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CROATIA: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

- inflexible or unclear legal regulations (e.g. Regulatory Act on the Number of Students in Combined Classes)
- funding
- unsuitable school buildings (most schools have architectural barriers to wheelchair access)
- quality of pre-service and in-service teacher education
- lack of research focusing on the relationship between legal acts and their implementation in the formal education system
- centralized educational system
- lack of cooperation between policy makers, teachers, parents and civil society organizations-
'ghettoization' of needs

TEACHER EDUCATION

Pre-service teacher-training programmes include basic knowledge of child development and subject-related teaching methods, but offer little or no practical experience. This is particularly the case for interaction between student teachers and pupils with special educational needs. Furthermore, teacher educators pointed out that teacher-training institutions are not inclusive, and candidates with disabilities are commonly discriminated against in university entrance exams (Batarelo Kokić, Vukelić, Ljubić, 2010)

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CROATIA

- Inclusive education for inclusive society: taking a closer look around
- Spajić Vrkaš, V., Vrban, I., Rusac, S. (2013), 'Human rights of elderly persons in the city of Zagreb'



THANK YOU
for your attention!

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