

**“Regional Support for Inclusive Education”
Support to Pilot Schools for implementing inclusive education
policies and practices**

**Analysis of focus group reports
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Platform of organizations implementing school-based support:



Focus groups in network schools

Focus groups were held in 49 pilot schools in the Joint European Union and Council of Europe project *Regional Support for Inclusive Education*.

4 FG were held in each school:

- parents,
- students,
- school staff, and
- local community.

196 focus groups with more than 1700 stakeholders



Focus groups in VET schools

- 14 VET schools (5 mixed)
- 56 focus groups
- with more than 400 stakeholders

Focus groups in network schools

The goals of the focus group analysis:

- to provide evidence for a more targeted and needs-based support for the creation of the school development plan and development of school projects;
- to establish, to what extent the culture, policies and practices of the schools are inclusive, what are the main barriers to inclusion and what types of support are needed.

The Platform's definition of inclusive schools

The Platform defines inclusive schools as ones in which:

School staff, students, parents and community members work together in order to help each child develop to his/her full potential, in an environment where all feel welcomed, respected and valued, and develop competencies that contribute to social cohesion and to the development of inclusive society.



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Cultural and social barriers to inclusion encountered in many schools

- *Gender stereotypes;*
- *Violence (blood feud, bullying, other);*
- *Mocking of students with special needs in school;*
- *Mocking of students who do not attend religion classes;*
- *Resistance of parents of students with no special needs against having students with special needs in school.*

The culture of marginality in some VET schools

- School culture suffers from acceptance of own 'marginality' – perception of VET school as not important in a social world where only tertiary education is seen as 'serious' is an obstacle to development.
- In mixed Secondary schools –VET students and programs are marginalized and often there is total segregation of 2 groups of students

The culture of marginality: what to do?

- In schools encountering this type of attitudinal challenge coupled with socio-economic hardship, additional effort is needed to build the staff's and students' confidence with **leadership** trainings.
- To work on raising the **awareness** of school staff and students, as well as parents, of the school being an open learning community where everyone is entitled to learning in a friendly environment. Learning events for parents and the community to enhance the notions of openness and the value of learning from each other.
- In mixed schools all non program activities should be open to both group of students.

Policies: where there are some

Country	Policies reported as existing in school (number of schools)						
	Support for students with limited mobility	Policies on assistance to SEN students	Policies on openness to students independently of culture/ religion	Support to under-performing students	Support to students in social fragile circumstances	Inclusion strategy	Policy on bullying
Albania	0	0	7/2	0	0	0	1/0
B&H	2/0	2/0	2/0	2/0	0	0	1/0
Croatia	0	2/0	0	0	1/0	0	1/0
Kosovo	6/2	6/2	7/2	7/2	7/2	5/0	5/0
Macedonia	1/0	4/0	3/0	5/0	2/0	2/0	7/2
Montenegro	0	4/1	0	3/0	0	0	0



Policies: why this data should be interpreted with caution

- In some cases, schools have reported the existence of individual learning plans (ILP) as equalling a 'policy' on inclusion for students with special needs.
- Other schools considered requirement of national law regarding additional classes for students at risk as equalling policy.

Such cases cannot be really considered school policy. Policy is created by the school and for the school and encapsulates a common understanding as well as measures.



Policies: how can we help?

- School plans should foresee capacity building for the development of school policies on inclusion. Development of policies can help the school to arrive at a common understanding of inclusion and define measures.
- Schools should be provided with practical step-by-step how-to and examples of what a good written policy looks like.
- Support team can create a shortlist of practical criteria for a 'clear and effective' school policy.
- Policy development process should be participatory.



Practices: what is being done for inclusion

Many schools have reported targeted inclusive education measures:

- *Individual learning plans;*
- *Remedial classes and additional tutorials for students with learning difficulties or at risk of dropping out;*
- *Subsidising the access of students at risk of socio-economic exclusion to school and to extra-curricular activities;*
- *Etc.*



Practices: which practices create obstacles?

However, very often non-inclusive practices are reported:

- *Teachers are selective or partial and do not support all students equally (but depending on parents' wealth, politics, religion, ethnicity, etc.);*
- *Lack of transparency in assessment;*
- *Separate schooling of ethnic minority students in 'satellite' schools that are seen as less important;*
- *Lack of a strong stand on violence or bullying, lack of security measures;*
- *Top-down decision making without soliciting opinion of staff, students and parents.*



Practices: what priorities for change?

- Students' security and freedom from discrimination are absolute top priorities. ***Measures to stop abusive practices and to create policies that would be effective in stopping violence should be at the top of school plans.***
- A common understanding of what practices are to be supported and what practices should be avoided, shared by all stakeholders – a communication strategy is needed.
- Holistic support is lacking, it should emerge in school plans.



Practices: what priorities for change?

- Training and capacity building during the project should have special emphasis on teachers' ethic and developing code of conduct , folowed up by mentoring by teacher trainers/ mentors to ensure implementation.



Types of support needed

- *Infrastructure-related needs: e.g. lack of arrangements for students with limited mobility;*
- *Awareness-building needs;*
- *Training needs of staff: in some cases, lack of access to continuing professional education (CPD) ;*
- *Capacity building needs of schools and of local authorities. Training of staff per se is not enough, should be followed up by mentoring and/ or hands-on help with implementation.*



Thank you for your attention!

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