



# **Policy recommendations for Erasmus + ITIDE project**

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## European goal of the project

Throughout the EU, learners with special educational needs/intellectual disabilities (SEND/ID) are still not achieving or being included in education at all levels according to their potential (NESSE, 2013). One of the factors contributing to this deficit is inadequate understanding of SEND/ID within key groups: the educational workforce, professionals in related disciplines, and parents and carers of learners with SEND/ID. This project aimed to address this deficit by making available outstanding open access practice leading training materials on SEND/ID to spread accessible accredited vocational learning in this area to groups within EU states. In doing so, we expected to support progress towards the Europe 2020 target of reducing early school leaving. The objectives of the project were to:

- develop a suite of training materials by adapting and disseminating the existing materials ([www.complexneeds.org.uk](http://www.complexneeds.org.uk))
- produce parallel versions of the materials in the different languages of the involved partners.
- provide accreditation for the materials through HEI training partnerships.
- provide guidance for end users on the use of the training materials as learning resources.
- disseminate the materials in the countries involved and in the wider EU.

The population of children with SEN/ID is increasing (WHO, 2011) at a time when the EU's inclusion agenda and international legislation require that an increasing number of these pupils should be educated in mainstream schools. The OECD (2012) advocates that educators integrate students with SEN/ID in their teaching, planning and accountability frameworks, do more to involve families and become active agents of their own professional growth. Effective and appropriate training can make a difference. Research has shown that increased educator competency in SEN/ID improves inclusive practice, which in turn enhances learning outcomes and life chances for a pupil group who are vulnerable and resistant to education (EADSNE, 2010; UNESCO, 2009). The online training materials available as a result of the ITIDE project provide quality resources which can be adapted flexibly to suit the needs and expertise of the individual or group of educators or end users.

## Procedure and steps towards ITIDE policy recommendations

The ITIDE Project sought to adapt an existing suite of online Special Educational Needs (SEN) training materials ([www.complexneeds.co.uk](http://www.complexneeds.co.uk)) to the national context of six European countries, including Ireland. The Project was conducted over a period of 3 years and involved five phases carried out in each country of the project consortium

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1. **Literature Review** – A review of the existing literature, legislation, and best practice in SEN provision in Ireland. The outcome of this phase was a report which established the state of research and practice in Ireland, and acted as part of an initial needs assessment.
2. **Develop prototype materials** – Selected modules, particularly relevant to the Irish context, were chosen to act as prototype materials for a pilot of the training programme. These materials were adapted from the original UK source materials to reflect the Irish context and legislative background.
3. **Pilot of prototype materials** – The adapted sample of materials were piloted over a period of four months among primary, post-primary, and special schools in Ireland. The resultant report generated a number of recommendations for amendments and additions to the materials.
4. **Refinement of materials** – Taking into account the feedback generated from the pilot of the prototype materials, the entire suite of SEN training materials was edited and adapted for use in England, the Republic of Ireland, Spain, Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey. A revised suite of materials was produced.
5. **Final version of materials** – Following the finalisation of the training materials they were uploaded to a training portal, and made freely and openly available online. A mobile app was also developed over the course of the project to allow access to the materials using mobile and handheld technologies.

## **National recommendations**

### **a. Austria**

Within the current situation in Austria there is an ongoing political process concerning inclusion, at which significant changes in the process can be observed. Based on the ratification of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disability general political processes address full participation and full inclusion of all persons with disability.

Therefore this issue has a major impact on the current assessment of inclusive education and on future steps towards full participation and inclusion. As pointed out that the degree of inclusion depends to the high degree on 9 member states of the Austrian Federal Republic at the moment (Pretis, 2016).

The inclusion rates differ from 50 % to 95% in the school system. This refers also to inclusion rates in the kindergarten system, where up to 3.83% of the children show special needs and up to 94% of the children are mainstream included in kindergarten systems.

However, also regarding these aspects significant regional differences can be found. Inclusion in the pre-kindergarten-sector (day-mothers, creche) is in development; statistical data to these aspects rare.

### **General political strategy towards inclusion in Austria**

As pointed out before the political strategy of full inclusion of all children in education leads to a significant system change towards 2020. By 2020 all special schools should be closed by law in Austria. Children with special needs should be included in mainstream educational settings. To do so, the first operative steps have been undertaken: the training of primary school teachers is fully inclusive, this means that special teachers for primary schools are no longer trained.

Step by step special schools are closed concerning operative teaching activities. This means that most of the children with special needs are mainstream included and former special schools are transformed into resource centres, which support educational processes of children with special needs and their teachers in mainstream schools. Although school administration supports these processes, operative teachers might face significant changes in their teaching strategies,

cooperation with other professionals and/or methodological approaches.

On the other hand some parent organisations of children with complex learning difficulty or with autistic spectrum disorders express their concerns about the step by step closure of special schools. Their main argument focuses on social emotional processes and processes of “belonging” to small homogenous groups in special schools. Parents express their concerns, that their children with special needs in mainstream inclusion might not obtain the support and help which is needed.

On the other hand evidence-based literature highlights that the majority of children with special needs benefits to a higher degree in mainstream school than in special school (insert literature). This also refers to children with severe and complex learning disabilities, e.g. Hintermayr et al. (2015) pointed out the concerns of the situation in kindergartens.

At the moment the discussion in Austria about inclusion therefore can be seen as ambiguous: educational stakeholders, politicians and education administration fully support mainstream inclusion of all children; teachers and some parents express their concerns about concrete implementation of inclusive thinking into the school system. Teachers and parents express their concerns that full inclusion will require necessary infrastructure and resources in terms of time, money, assistance, teachers, barrier free, learning facilities and so on. Teachers and parents wonder whether the school and the political system will be able to provide these structural requirements towards inclusion. They express their concern that the social economical strategy to cut/save costs by means of inclusive strategies might not be verified. So it is highlighted by parents and professionals that until now algorithms on how to assess the need for help or support in school settings are missing.

### **Lessons learnt from ITIDE**

Lessons learnt from the ITIDE process support the policy recommendations in the area of training in the Austrian context. Piloting the ITIDE training materials highlighted the need of professionals to be prepared and exchange about concrete steps and methods towards inclusion.

Data show that inclusive attitudes can be seen in the majority of involved professionals. The aim of piloting was to collect information on what professionals need, to express concrete tools and to identify necessary resources to address the

needs of all children in educational settings. Also within the Erasmus+ project “Early Inclusion” ([www.early-inclusion.eu](http://www.early-inclusion.eu)) the need for concrete information about diverse children for educators and concrete methods of inclusive support are highlighted in this context.

Another lesson learnt during the Erasmus+ process is that initiatives towards inclusion within the European Union might differ significantly. Each country might choose a different starting point towards inclusive, political and organizational strategies. For Austria this means that the developed materials should be strictly seen under the aspect of an educational offer for all children (inclusion is an entitlement, but not a MUST from the side of the parents). Therefore the materials transferred from the original background in the UK and some adaptations towards the existing Austrian political strategies are needed.

Another lesson learnt within the ITIDE process highlights the possibility to use new media, electronic media or information communication technology as a tool towards inclusion. In this context another Erasmus+ project [www.letstry-ict.eu](http://www.letstry-ict.eu) declares new strategies within the educational context using supportive electronic media.

ITIDE project results are in line with the ongoing Austrian processes focusing on the necessary steps towards inclusion (Pretis, 2015). Each concrete lesson could be transferred from the ITIDE project towards diverse levels of the European Qualification Framework. The first lesson we learnt concerning policy recommendations for professionals on level 3 and 4 was that this is a primary target in Austria. As in this area inclusive training still is missing (with some exceptions in the field of the day-mothers and day-fathers). Therefore the level A of ITIDE materials or EQF-levels 3-4, are useful for the Austrian professional training systems, mainly concerning day-mothers, day-fathers and assistant teachers in the kindergarten. These professionals within the formal Austrian professional training system usually cover 600 hours training without specific focus on inclusion. With exception of a specific further education or training concerning the so called “Mikado” day-mothers or day-fathers in Styria, this target group of EQF-Level 3 and 4 did not receive any formal training about inclusive strategies, methods or actions till now. Therefore, the ITIDE materials fit to a high extent to the training needs of this target group. As training of these target groups on level 3 and 4 is based on NGO activities (BFI, Verein Tagesmütter, Volkshilfe, Hilfswerk, etc.) and as all these training providers

organise their own institutional training activities mainly in terms of further education an accreditation of ITIDE materials (for Austria) was not possible. However, the relevant training providers were informed about the materials and were invited to implement them into their training strategies.

At the moment the training situation on Level 5 mainly concerning kindergarten teachers in Austria, is also subject to a change process. Politically it is discussed, whether the current level 5 professionals should be upgraded to level 6 degree (Bachelor). This discussion is between educational planners (who support this process) and financial planners, who express their concerns that level 6 training would be more costly. On the other hand, within the school system, as mentioned before, special education in terms of school teacher training no longer exists, so ITIDE materials within the current processes fit to the training needs of the new generation of inclusive primary level teachers, as inclusive thinking/acting is part of their formal training.

Level 5-6 training for special kindergarten teachers provides inclusive method and thinking. However, it could be seen as a process of change; an upgrading to level 6 or 7 is discussed. In conclusion, concerning the situation in Austria and training needs, ITIDE materials can be and will be mainly used on EQF Level 3 or 4 (by the identified NGO-based training providers) as in this specific area highest training needs are visible.

### **Recommendations**

A) support and communicate the positive benefits of inclusion of all children, provide necessary empirical data about the benefits but maybe also concerning concerns towards inclusion.

B) provide algorithms in the educational system to be able to assess the need for support and help in diverse educational systems (kindergarten, school, etc.).

C) provide concrete tools, methods and examples of how all children can be included in mainstream educational settings, e.g. the inclusion method market of the Erasmus+ project [www.early-inclusion.eu](http://www.early-inclusion.eu) can be used.

D) train teachers, assistant teachers and other professionals to think and act in an inclusive way, so that parents can be convinced, that their child belongs to a group of peers and feels well in mainstream schools and kindergartens.

## **b. Bulgaria**

The ITIDE intellectual outputs have been thoroughly piloted and implemented in Bulgaria. In spite of the political will to overcome the educational segregation in the recent years, it is necessary to make qualitative changes in the legal framework and to make efforts to establish and broaden the implementation of good practices in inclusive education. Unless additional and targeted efforts are made, change cannot be expected at this stage, as attitudes are outdated, new legislation and practices in inclusive education with their inconsistent contradictions and ambiguity are perceived slowly and the resources available are limited.

During this process the Marie Curie Association as national coordinator in cooperation with representatives of the National Advisory board in Bulgaria have made the following policy recommendations towards inclusive education improvement in Bulgaria:

- The National Plan for the Integration of Children with SEN and / or with Chronic diseases in the system of public education should be processed in the spirit of inclusive education and with a view to evaluating the achievement of the goals set and the setting of real timeframe for achievement of those goals. Unspecified activities should be clearly defined in terms of resources - financial and human, which in turn are subject to public analysis and evaluation.
- The resources of the educational centers for support and personal development - financial and human - should be revised and enhanced in terms of further training of teaching and supportive personnel for students with severe disabilities (possibly by implementing the ITIDE resources as part of those further trainings).
- The number of the specialists at the mainstream schools should be increased: speech therapist, psychologist, special pedagogue, etc. In cases where the school cannot hire a relevant specialist, a timetable has to be drawn up makes it easier for pupils from schools to use the services of the specialist (even external ones).

- Standards must be developed and introduced for the development of the individual educational programs for children with special educational needs when they cannot take part at the compulsory curricula.
- All schools must have a supportive environment - accessible architectural environment, specialized and technically equipped classrooms for working/training with children with disabilities.
- Further training for mainstream teachers should be provided to acquire skills to work with children with special educational needs especially for those with severe disabilities.
- Further training course should be provided also to students of pedagogical subjects at Higher education in Bulgaria where the ITIDE material could be a main reference output.
- Inclusive education legislation should be promoted through a promotional/awareness campaign which should highlight the social benefits of the inclusive education.
- Successful (best) practices in inclusive education for children with special educational needs in view of their subsequent implementation and the design of quality access policies education should be taken into account by the policy makers.
- A network with a database for children with special needs should be built as part of the regional educational inspectorates together with child protection departments and all ministries and agencies. The database must contain the child's place of residence, age, sex, his ethnicity, the barriers to training and educational progress for each school year.
- Inclusion, not isolation. The focus of the policy reforms in this area should be to include children/students with disabilities "normal" social life. It is necessary to construct the understanding that the isolation of these children for a certain period of time in special schools or educational supportive centers does not solve the problem of their place in society, but it postpones it for several years and makes it harder to solve.

## **c. Ireland**

Following the completion of the project, the team have set out a number of policy recommendations that will act to maintain and enhance the progress made through the project. These include, but are not limited to -

### **1. Inclusion of further practical strategies –**

Feedback from users in the pilot study indicated that the existing materials contained a large amount of theory, and they expressed the need to compliment this content with practical strategies that would translate this theoretical background into classroom practice. It is recommended that the materials be updated over time to include more classroom strategies, particularly those that are being used successfully by other educators working in the field.

### **2. Inclusion of materials specific to mainstream schools –**

The users during the pilot study commented that they valued the training materials for dealing with various categories of SEN. However, they felt that these strategies were based primarily around the context of the special school. It is recommended that the materials be updated to include a better balance between strategies for special and mainstream schools, with a greater emphasis on the latter.

### **3. Updated literature and content –**

It was noted during the adaptation of the pilot and final materials that many of the references to literature in the training suite were more than 10 years old. It is recommended that a periodic review and update of all references, literature, multimedia and supporting documents take place to reflect the most current literature and policies.

### **4. Embedding training in whole-school training process –**

During the pilot phase of the project it was reported by the participants that they

would recommend the training materials to colleagues. This indicates that the materials are suited to be shared amongst educators and may be used as a basis for school-based training programmes. It is recommended that schools adopt the materials as part of a whole-school staff training for both existing and new teachers, and ensure that all staff are equally equipped to facilitate the inclusion of pupils with SEN in their classrooms.

The structure of the training programme incorporates training at different levels, intending to train those at entry level, to fully qualified teachers, and school management. It is recommended that the training encompass all levels of school staff, including support staff, such as SNAs, and those on management and oversight committees. This is to ensure that any changes in practice are not just happening in the classroom on a daily basis, but also at the level of school policy and the planning of provision.

#### **5. Embedding training as part of teacher training courses –**

Following on from the above recommendation, it is also recommended that the training materials form part of initial teacher training programmes. This is to ensure that teachers will have some grounding in SEN provision before entering employment in schools. It will also mean that those newly trained teachers will have a consistent level of training which they will be able to continually draw upon as their career progresses.

#### **6. Content specific to the Irish context –**

As the original version of the training materials ([www.complexneeds.org.uk](http://www.complexneeds.org.uk)) were specifically focused on the context in the UK, it is recommended that the material be augmented with content specifically aimed at the Irish context. The materials contain many generic and international elements, but it may be preferable to at least include a section on the particular needs and structure of the Irish education system.

It is hoped that these recommendations will be used, in consultation with the ITIDE Project partners, to inform the continued improvement of the ITIDE Project materials. It is also hoped that they will be adopted by a wide audience of educators at all levels

throughout the Irish education system.

#### d. **Spain**

Although in Spain educational segregation can be considered to be overcome, it is necessary to strengthen the changes for the application of good practice in inclusive education. The Spanish legislation in relation to inclusive education has undergone a progressive enrichment since the promulgation of the Spanish Constitution 1978, In this respect the Spanish Constitution 1978, in its articles 14, 39 and 49.

Article 14: Equality before the law. Chapter two of Title I, of rights and freedoms.

"Spaniards are equal before the law, and no discrimination based on birth, race, sex, religion, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance may prevail."

Article 39: Protection of the family and children. Chapter 3 of the Guiding Principles of Social and Economic Policy. "The public authorities ensure the social, economic and legal protection of the family, as well as the integral protection of children, the same as before the law regardless of their filiation, and of mothers, regardless of their marital status; Children will enjoy the protection provided for in international agreements that safeguard their rights. "

Article 49: Attention to the physically handicapped. Chapter Three of the Guiding Principles of Social and Economic Policy, Title I of the Fundamental Rights and Duties. "The public authorities shall carry out a policy of anticipation, treatment, rehabilitation and integration of the physically, mentally and sensorially handicapped, to whom they will provide the specialized attention they require and will especially protect them for the enjoyment of the rights that this Title grants to all citizens ".

In 1978, with the National Plan for Special Education and in 1985, with the promulgation of the Royal Decree of the Ordinance of Special Education, the integration of children with disabilities in ordinary schools began to be considered. The previous laws were limited to recognizing the right to education of all citizens, but conceiving Special Education as a process parallel to the ordinary educational system.

Royal Decree 334/1985, dated March 6th, on Special Education management,

indicates the initiation and schooling of special education as well as the support and adaptations of Special Education (Chapter I, Articles: 2. Chapter II, Articles: 5-1-2, Chapter III, Articles: 13). It will involve, for the first time, the integration of students of this educational modality - This is a preventive approach where early detection is the competence of the educational field.

From this decree, important achievements have been achieved, such as the schooling of all people in a single system, as well as the increase of psychopedagogical teams and the expansion of centres and resources to adequately attend to students with special educational needs).

The Organic Law 1/1990 of General Administration of the Educational System (LOGSE) ordered that the educational system establishes the necessary resources so that the students with special educational needs reach the same established objectives of a general nature.

It is governed by the principles of standardization and integration, introducing for the first time the concept of SEN to refer to those boys and girls who, carrying out their schooling in ordinary classrooms, require special supports and even some kind of curricular adaptation to overcome deficiencies or problems of development or learning.

In 1992, the teams of educational and psychopedagogical guidance (EOEP) emerged. Through the Order of December 9, 1992 are general functions of the teams: to develop, adapt and disseminate materials and instruments of educational guidance and psychopedagogical intervention that allow teachers to meet the demands of psycho-pedagogical evaluation of students and propose the type of schooling most suitable for them, as well as to collaborate in the development of parent training programs.

The R.D. 696/1995 on the provision of education for pupils with special educational needs sought to integrate pupils with disabilities into ordinary schools as much as possible.

The Order of February 14 of the same year, no student with n.e.e may be excluded from the possibility of schooling. It is committed to the normalization and school integration, by the schooling as soon as possible, by the proposal of schooling based

on psychopedagogical needs assessment, by the participation of parents in the process and by the reversible nature of the decisions. We also wish to point out that Order 235/2002 establishes a mechanism for direct communication between the educational system and representative associations of persons with disabilities through the forum for the educational care of persons with disabilities.

The Organic Law of Education (LOE, 2006) deepens the commitment to promote the inclusion of all students, responding to the principles of quality and equity. The current law, LOMCE (2013) has among its objectives to promote the maximum personal and professional development of people. General policy strategy towards inclusion in Spain Advances in Inclusive Education in Spain has evolved towards inclusive education in the last 30 years, integrating pupils with some type of SEN in the same system, whether due to learning difficulties or socio-economic or cultural reasons. We want to point out that numerous achievements have been made in the Spanish education system in the area of inclusive education It has achieved the schooling of all students in a single system, an increase in personal, material and infrastructure resources to meet the SEN of students. The use of Special Education Centres has been restricted to cases where ordinary education is neither possible nor advisable. These centres have been transformed into resource centres to support children with special needs and their teachers in ordinary schools. Although teacher training on inclusion issues has improved, there is still a need to develop training programs.

### **The future lines**

Although significant progress has been made in inclusive education, it is necessary to continue working and one of the basic aspects is training. The ITIDE project improves the specific training of teachers in inclusion and SEN. as well as the quality of the answers offered to students with SEN

The lessons learned from ITIDE Experience with the use of ITIDE training materials has been very positive. It has highlighted the lack of training of professionals and their need and interest in improving. The data show that the attitude towards inclusion is positive although professionals recognize that they need to know the specific characteristics of the children, the concrete methods of support and intervention, the concrete tools and the resources needed to respond to their needs.

Some adaptations are needed in the materials to adjust them to the reality of our country. The ITIDE project has contributed to show us the benefits of using ICT as a tool to improve educational inclusion.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Spread the positive benefits of including all children, provide necessary empirical data on benefits, but perhaps also in relation to inclusion concerns. Recommend that training materials form part of initial teacher training programs. It is necessary for teachers to have basic training in relation to the needs Special education, before entering employment in schools and throughout their professional life. Without such training, inclusion is not possible. The improvement of teachers working with children with special educational needs is essential, especially when they have severe disabilities.

It is necessary to provide opportunities for training, concrete tools, methods and examples of how all children can be included in conventional educational settings. It is also necessary to work with families, advise them and support them in the education of their children.

One of the aspects that has deteriorated is that of the human and material resources of the educational centres. We believe that the number of specialists in schools that offer a quality response should be increased.

To point out that ITIDE resources can be an element that favours educational inclusion. The concrete proposals for improving ITIDE Project, we suggest the following:

1. Deepen more about intervention strategies, based on the following criteria: - According to needs. - According to age. - According to type of schooling. Include cases where the types of intervention are detailed.
2. Include more content on early childhood (0 - 6 years) from the perspective of early care.
3. To include more practices on the inclusive response, in the attention of students with special educational needs and learning difficulties in ordinary schools.

4. Include contents on the family-centred model and response in natural environments (McWilliam).

### **e. Turkey**

#### **Ongoing political processes concerning inclusion**

Inclusion of children with disabilities into regular preschool classrooms is a common practice that has been implemented for several decades in industrialized nations around the world and many developing countries including Turkey have been developing and implementing laws, regulation, and services to support inclusion and teaching in natural environments. "*Inclusive education*", based on the basic philosophy that states "Every child is different from each other and they have the right to attain education with their peers in coequal conditions", has been at the center of education reform in Turkey in recent years. The current definition of inclusion provided in special education laws developed in Turkey aligns with the definition of inclusion provided in the contemporary literature. However, implementation of inclusive practices is still in its early stages and baby steps are taken towards to develop a more comprehensive system of special education and inclusive practices.

In Turkey, inclusion was legally adopted in 1983 with the passage of Children In Need Of Special Education Law (Law No. 2916). Although the term *inclusion* (or integration) was not used in this law, the article 4(e) stated that "The necessary measures are taken in order for children with disabilities whose conditions are appropriate to be educated among their typically developing peers in schools designed for typically developing children". In addition to initial support for inclusion, the Law 2916 provided initial support for early education of children with disabilities. Despite the fact that the article 4(e) in the Law 2916 was a positive improvement toward inclusive education, inexplicit statements about the type of precautions to be taken and characteristics of children to be included caused different interpretations resulting in delayed implementation of inclusive practices (Akcamete, 1998). Following the Law 2916, the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports (MoNEYS) published a number of regulations and legal documents on special education, inclusion, and related topics to provide guidance to a newly developing field of inclusive education. For example, 1985 and 1986, the MoNEYS issued two legal documents (Regulation

for Special Education Schools and Notice no: 1986/36) that provided support for early education of children with disabilities, inclusive education and support services. In 1988, the MoNEYS issued the Notice on Education of Children with Special Needs through Inclusion, which stated that children with disabilities will be enabled to participate in and take responsibility within and out of class activities of inclusive classrooms to socialize and develop self-confidence; and they will learn skills based on their needs and abilities within these activities (Kuz, 2001).

The Regulation on the Educational Practices for Mentally Handicapped Children issued in 1992 was one of the first legal documents that had a separate subsection on Inclusion under the Special Education Practices in Primary School section. In addition, this regulation provided information about inclusion in preschool for children with mental disabilities. Within this regulation inclusion was defined as programs in which children with mental disabilities are educated and trained along with their peers in schools designed for typically developing children. Article 67 of the regulation stated that when there are not adequate numbers of preschool children with mental disabilities to open a special education classroom, children with mental disabilities are served in inclusive preschool classrooms with 1/10 children with special needs/typically developing children ratio. Compared to previous laws and regulations, this regulation included articles regarding inclusion that were more clear and detailed. However, the regulation did not provide guidance on how inclusion can be put into practice.

Although a number of laws and regulations were enacted since the passage of Law 2916 in 1983 that aimed to promote inclusion, inclusive practices did not gain momentum until the passage of Decree Law 573 on Special Education in 1997. In this law, inclusion was defined as “educational settings developed to enable individuals with disabilities to interact with others and to achieve their educational goals at a maximum level.” In addition, the Article 12 on inclusion stated that “Education of individuals with special needs is provided along with their peers in every level and type of school based on the individualized education plans using appropriate methods and techniques.” In addition to articles about inclusion, the Decree Law included two articles with respect to early childhood intervention and preschool education for children with disabilities. Article 6 in early childhood intervention provides a basis for education and support in natural environments by stating that “special education

services in early childhood are conducted at homes and centers based on the principal of informing and supporting the family.” With Article 7, preschool education for children with disabilities became compulsory and depending on individual child development and growth, preschool education for children with disabilities could be extended. The most important novelty this law introduced was to give parents the right and responsibilities with respect to their children’s education in early years. Additionally, as mentioned above, attendance to school for preschool age children with disabilities become compulsory. Despite these improvements, the law did not include guidance on how home-based early intervention services and center-based inclusive preschool practices would be implemented.

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) Special Education Services Regulation effectuated in 2000 included more explicit statements about inclusion and inclusive practices. In Article 67, inclusion was defined as "practices that allow children with disabilities to be educated and trained along with their typically developing peers in public or private preschools, elementary schools, high schools, and mass education institutions while providing them with supportive special education services.” In addition to providing the most contemporary definition for inclusion, the Regulation included principles and criteria for inclusive education. Two important principles listed under Article 68 were that (a) every individual with special needs has a right to be educated along with his peers and (b) services are designed based on the needs of individuals, not their deficiencies. Criteria for inclusive education emphasized the importance of preparing educational settings for inclusion and training/informing teachers and other stakeholders for the inclusion of children with disabilities. The regulation also highlighted the significance of individualization of special education services and the teamwork in the process of delivering special education services.

The Special Education Services Regulation effectuated in 2000 has been revised several times and the most current revision was conducted in 2012. In the latest version, compulsory schooling age for preschool children with disabilities was changed to 37 to 66 months (with a possibility to extend it up to 78 months) and the regulation provided additional guidelines for inclusive education. In the revision conducted in 2006, *the least restrictive environment* term was added and defined.

In parallel with development of laws and regulations on inclusion, many children and students with a variety of disabilities have begun to benefit from inclusive

education The number of school-age children with special needs who are educated in inclusive settings has significantly increased over the last 10 years (Cakiroglu & Melekoglu, 2014) and approximately 72% of children with disabilities in primary school age group were placed in inclusive classrooms during the 2013-2014 school year (MoNE, 2014). In the case of preschool children with disabilities, there is no reliable and systematic data to evaluate the change in schooling rate in general and the percentage of young children with disabilities receiving educational services in inclusive early childhood classrooms. However, it is reasonable to expect that the number of preschool children with special needs who are educated in inclusive classrooms will be increasing in the coming years, as improving early education and schooling rate for preschool children has become one of the priority areas for the Government of Turkey (Rakap, Parlak-Rakap & Aydin, 2015). Despite the positive and strong legal basis and legislative support and the increase in the number of young children with special needs who are placed in inclusive early childhood settings, research shows that there are existing problems in implementation of inclusive practices successfully (Batu, 2010; Kargin, 2003; Rakap, Cig, Parlak-Rakap, 2015; Sucuoğlu, 2004).

### **Lessons learnt within the ITIDE project**

ITIDE process may have an impact on Turkey in several ways;

- 1-ITIDE materials may give a chance of useful and practical information on preservice personnel preparation programs at EQF levels of 3,4 and 5 in Turkey.
- 2- ITIDE materials may give a chance of useful and practical information for professional development programs or practices at EQF levels of 3,4 and 5 in Turkey.
- 3- ITIDE materials may give a chance of the best example to Ministries of Education and Social Work and Family while developing professional development programs and practices.
- 4-Not only professionals but also families may benefit from materials

### **Policy recommendations for TURKEY**

Despite the long history of legislative support for inclusion, actual implementation of

inclusive practices is in its early stages in Turkey.

As there is no nation-wide screening process to identify children with or who are at-risk for disabilities, many of these children do not enter into the school system until formal schooling age. In the case of children who receive diagnosis of a disability during preschool years, only those who have mild to moderate disabilities are placed in inclusive classrooms (MoNE, 2012). Children with significant disabilities are served either in special education classrooms within preschool programs or in separate special education schools. So there is a strong need to establish a screening and diagnosis and placement system in Turkey.

For inclusion to be successful for teachers and children, designing settings to facilitate access for children with disabilities will not be sufficient (Rakap, 2013). Children with disabilities need individualized instruction to participate in activities designed to support their development and learning (Horn & Banerjee, 2009; Odom et al., 2004; Snyder et al., 2015). Although the number of children who have access to inclusive programs in Turkey has gradually increased over the last several years, supporting their participation within these settings is problematic for many teachers because of insufficient systems-level support. Researchers investigating inclusion in early childhood have repeatedly reported that preschool teachers lack confidence and skills to address the developmental needs of children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Batu, 2010; Buisse, Wesley, Keyes, & Bailey, 1996; Early & Winton, 2001; Rakap, 2013; Snyder, Denney, Pasia, Rakap, & Crowe, 2011; Varlier & Vuran, 2006). These research findings also suggest that preschool teachers need professional development to support their implementation of evidence-based practices (Odom et al., 2004; Snyder, Hemmeter, Meeker, Kinder, Pasia, & McLaughlin, 2012; Snyder & Wolfe, 2008). There is an urgent need for developing professional development programs in Turkey to train teachers who work with children with disabilities in inclusive early childhood settings. Any efforts designed to help teachers of children with disabilities learn about evidence-based practices to support development of these children should include a follow-up component that provides teachers with support during their initial implementation (Rakap, 2015; Snyder et al., 2015). Professional development efforts designed to support inclusive practices may focus on implementing evidence-based practices during classroom activities, supporting families of children with disabilities about the implementation of naturalistic approaches within home routines, preparing and implementing individualized

education programs, arranging classroom environment, and collaborating with other professionals to meet the needs of young children with disabilities.

With respect to training future teachers to work with young children with disabilities, teacher education programs should include more courses focused on the characteristics of children with disabilities, working with families, inclusive education, and approaches to instruct children with disabilities in natural environments. One compulsory introductory course in special education is not sufficient for teachers to gain skills to work with children with disabilities.

For inclusive practices to be successful, legislative support is not sufficient by itself. Ministry of National Education and its local education agencies should take necessary measures to implement laws and regulations. Moreover, these entities along with teacher preparation programs should provide in-service and pre-service teachers with professional development opportunities that would enable them to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

## **f. UK**

### **Ongoing political processes concerning inclusion:**

The Carter (2015) Review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) recommended that input around SEND be incorporated into ITT courses. Key points made about course content are that it should include:

- ITT should equip teachers so they can ensure that all pupils in the class, including lower and higher achievers, should make progress and keep pace with the curriculum.
- ITT should prepare all new teachers to support SEND in their classrooms, providing a solid grounding in the most pertinent issues and setting an expectation for on-going high quality professional development.

Legislation continues to emphasise the need for inclusion, and that progress of all pupils is the responsibility of the class teacher. However, there is evidence that, although more pupils are included within mainstream schools, they are segregated within class so that they work mostly with other children with SEN and with teaching assistants, and socialize and interact more with them than with other peers or the class teacher:

“Over 2011/12, we carried out minute-by-minute observations on 48 pupils in Year 5 who had Statements for moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and interviewed 200 school staff and parents. The results show that the educational experience of pupils with Statements is characterised by a high degree of separation. Compared to average-attaining pupils, they spent over a quarter of their week away from their class, teacher and peers.

A clear point to emerge was the almost constant accompanying presence of a teaching assistant (TA). Compared to average-attaining pupils, we found that pupils with Statements spent less time in whole class teaching with teachers, and were

more than three times more likely to interact with TAs than teachers. TAs also had the main responsibility for differentiating tasks, often in the moment, having had little or no opportunity before lessons to prepare with the teacher. Teachers typically had a lower level of involvement in planning for and teaching Statemented pupils, most likely reflecting their limited knowledge of how to meet the needs of these pupils.” (Webster & Blatchford, 2013).

The current context of education, in England at least, is that the system should be school/sector led. More devolution to schools from the government of the responsibility for learning and for inclusion means that schools have ‘lost contact’ with useful materials designed and held centrally. However, a survey of SEN support in schools and colleges (Johnson et al., 2017) says that the main source of information for teachers is other professionals. The ITIDE materials are ideal as a resource to underpin and supplement this, and as a readily accessible means of free CPD that can be used individually or collaboratively across settings.

### **Policy recommendations**

The ITIDE ‘complex needs’ resources are a freely available and accessible suite of high quality materials which can be adapted flexibly to the needs of those accessing them.

However, resources such as these are still not universally available or taken up by schools though freely available. The Stakeholder survey identified that people liked the quality of the training received but wanted more, particularly in areas where they felt their skills were deficient. With current funding levels and structures, there are always going to be pressures on face to face training so it is important to find a way to support people in using online resources. Policy therefore needs to look at addressing the availability (and awareness) amongst schools, settings and professionals of appropriate information, CPD etc. The ITIDE materials would form a useful addition and resource for ITT programmes and for CPD training across the educational and health care sectors. Government support in increasing their use through publicity and endorsement is essential.

There is also a need for further study: the focus of the ITIDE project was the translation, adaptation and use of the complex needs materials in Europe. These now need building into training structures in individual countries where the culture of inclusion varies and therefore so does training and access to training. In UK, it would be useful to rewrite the materials for effective instructional design to be delivered on smart phones to increase their accessibility. There is also scope for developing materials for the full range of SEND, not just complex and severe needs.

## **Policy recommendations at EU level**

At the conclusion of this project, we know that there are no better materials for training on inclusion available online throughout Europe. The project has demonstrated the need for this kind of material. However, the way the materials are used must depend on the culture of each country, the historical and legislative context around inclusion, and the professional development culture around what counts as CPD/learning: this will lead to different questions and answers in each country.

Recommendations that can be made on a European level are:

- The online materials which have been adapted and translated are a useful and valuable resource for individual or collaborative learning, which can be accessed independently or constitute part of a course delivered by 'experts' in the field. There is a need therefore for continued publicity within the EU to ensure that they continue to be used both in initial teacher training and for continuing professional development.
- Because the materials continue to be current and of use in a variety of contexts, it would be useful to apply more recent standards of instructional design so that they are fit for modern platforms on a country by country basis. This would increase their flexibility and accessibility for learners equipped with more modern technology.

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