EASPD-Barometer of Inclusive Education in Selected European Countries

Dissemination Executive Summary Paper

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1.   Concept and Methodology

Inclusive education is strongly endorsed by the UNESCO Salamanca Statement of 1994 and by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006. The European Union and most member states have committed themselves to carry out the necessary changes at all levels to achieve inclusive education. In this context the general aim of the European project 'Pathways to Inclusion' (P2i) coordinated by the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) is to contribute to national and European implementation processes of inclusive education for persons with disabilities who have special educational needs (SEN). The P2i- project aims to raise awareness of the rights of pupils with disability and to develop ways to ensure they can benefit from high quality education in an inclusive setting, where special needs are taken into consideration and pupils do not face discrimination due to their disability.

The consortium consists of partners from 10 EU member states (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, The Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia). Two partners are universities (Fontys-OSO, NL and University of Siegen, D), the other eight partners are rooted in their national service provision fields[1].

The following 'Barometer Assessment of Inclusiveness of Policies and Practice of Inclusive Education' is the result of a comprehensive research on the situation of inclusive education at a national level in the ten partner EU-countries. It summarizes a wide range of information and knowledge regarding inclusive education including the latest policy developments in the field as well a comprehensive picture of their implementation in the ten partner countries.

The P2i-barometer is of interest to all who are involved in education practices at all levels: persons with disabilities, families, teachers, policy makers, service providers, etc. It will hopefully establish a basis for and means of discussion with all who are involved in the decision making process on this topic. It could also be the start of a more comprehensive European activity that enlarges the barometer assessment process to all EU-countries.

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1   The P2i-consortium consists of: European Association of Service Providers for persons with Disabilities (EASPD, BE), Fontys Opleidingscentrum Speciale Onderwijszorg (Fontys OSO, NL), Association for Lifelong Learning (ALLL, HU), Vlaams Verbond van het Katholiek Buitengewoon Onderwijs (VVKBuO, BE), National Federation of Voluntary Bodies (NFVB, IE) Die Steirische Behindertenhilfe (AT), Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (FAIDD, FI), CUDV Draga Training, Occupation and Care Center (SI), Zentrum für Planung und Evaluation Sozialer Dienste, University of Siegen (ZPE, DE), Institut d'Education Motrice Charlemagne -Mutualité Française Indre et Loire (IEM Charlemagne, FR), Centro de Educação para o Cidadão Deficiente (CECD, PT)

1.1 Normative Basis: Declaration of Salamanca and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)

With the Statement of Salamanca[2] (1994) inclusive education has become an official but non binding programmatic objective of the international community framed in a human rights perspective. The Statement said clearly, that regular schools

"are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes … building an inclusive and achieving education for all' (Art. 2, Statement of Salamanca);

and says schools should

' include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties, (and) adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education'" (Art. 3, Statement of Salamanca).

It was the start for intensive international efforts to develop inclusive educational systems wherever possible.

When the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)[3] was finally accepted in 2006 (13th of December), it stated the right for inclusive education as one of the central dimensions of human rights of persons with disabilities. The UN Convention states in Art. 24

*"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an **inclusive education** system at all levels and lifelong learning…"*

Even though Art. 24 focuses in some parts on primary and secondary schools, it also states that all levels of education must be included and policies must also refer to pre-school, tertiary and other lifelong education forms.

The prescriptions of Art. 24 UN CRPD are systematically taken as the normative basis in this barometer assessment and interpreted as criteria for assessment of the existing situation regarding legislation, given practice and transformation developments.

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2   as a result of the UNESCO-World Conference On Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994, see: http://www.unesco.de/fileadmin/medien/Dokumente/Bildung/Salamanca_Declaration.pdf, 02-06-2011

3   http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml, 02-06-2011

1.2 Progressive implementation with a maximum of all available resources

It is important to note that education in international law is seen as a part of overall economic, social and cultural rights. As long as institutional practices are not directly discriminative the UN CRPD does not demand an immediate, but a progressive overcoming of segregating systems that are rooted in educational traditions of a certain state[4]. Nevertheless, Article 4 of the UN CRPD says that states have "to take appropriate measures" and "with a maximum of all available resources" to fulfill the inclusive demands of the Convention. To monitor the progress a monitoring system was agreed upon that is able to identify the steps taken by each state. States that have ratified the Optional Protocol of the Convention have to report to the UN every two years on the present position and on progress towards full implementation.

1.3 Conceptual Idea and Structure of the Barometer assessment

Orientation to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC)

Whether or to what extend inclusive education of children with disabilities is implemented depends on the political will and the educational policies of governments and other political actors. Laws, structures and procedures have to be changed, resources have to be provided or shifted, conflicts have to be solved etc. In European politics, it has become apparent that systematic comparison and reporting between member states according to agreed criteria can produce public and political attention. The 'open method of coordination' (OMC) aims to create political dynamics and to develop a mutual learning process involving the scrutiny of specific policies, programs or institutional arrangements presented as good practices in the national strategic reports. It is a political framework

> *"for national strategy development, as well as for coordinating policies between EU countries on issues relating to poverty and social exclusion, health care and long-term care as well as pensions. The open method of coordination is a voluntary process for political cooperation based on agreeing common objectives and common indicators, which shows how progress towards these goals can be measured" (European Commission 2011[5]).*

Relating to this, the concept of a 'European Barometer on Inclusive Education' has been developed and used to assess and compare different national situations.

Assessment methodology

The barometer instrument conceptually follows the idea of an 'informed rating' on inclusive education of persons with disabilities and/or special educational needs (SEN) in participating European countries. The objective is to use available data to identify tendencies and produce information that is relevant for policy makers and other stakeholders to promote the implementation process of inclusive education[6].

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4 Gewerkschaft für Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW 2008: 34)

5 See: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=753&langId=en, 02-06.2011

6 The P2i-project was inspired by the Germany Inklusionsbarometer presented by SOVD in 2010, see: http://www.sovd.de/fileadmin/downloads/pdf/sonstiges/neu_-_Landkarte_Inklusion.pdf, 02-06-2011

Questionnaires were developed that address the national level in each country. The complete versions of national questionnaires and a full version of the barometer results with all references can be found on the project website[7]. The barometer assessment is structured in three parts: 'Statutory Legislation and prescriptions' (A), 'Situation in practice' (B) and 'Progression of Implementation' (C). These three parts are covered by a questionnaire developed by the University of Siegen and were intensively discussed in project meetings. The national partner experts of the P2i consortium completed their questionnaire with collated data. They were asked to involve other national experts in their research process and to idetify main references and comments. Data sources were official government reports, official statistics, scientific studies or other sources such as the Special Needs Report of the European Agency for Special Educational Needs[8]. Finally the national partner experts of the P2i consortium were asked to do a rating on the situation of inclusive education in their respective countries.
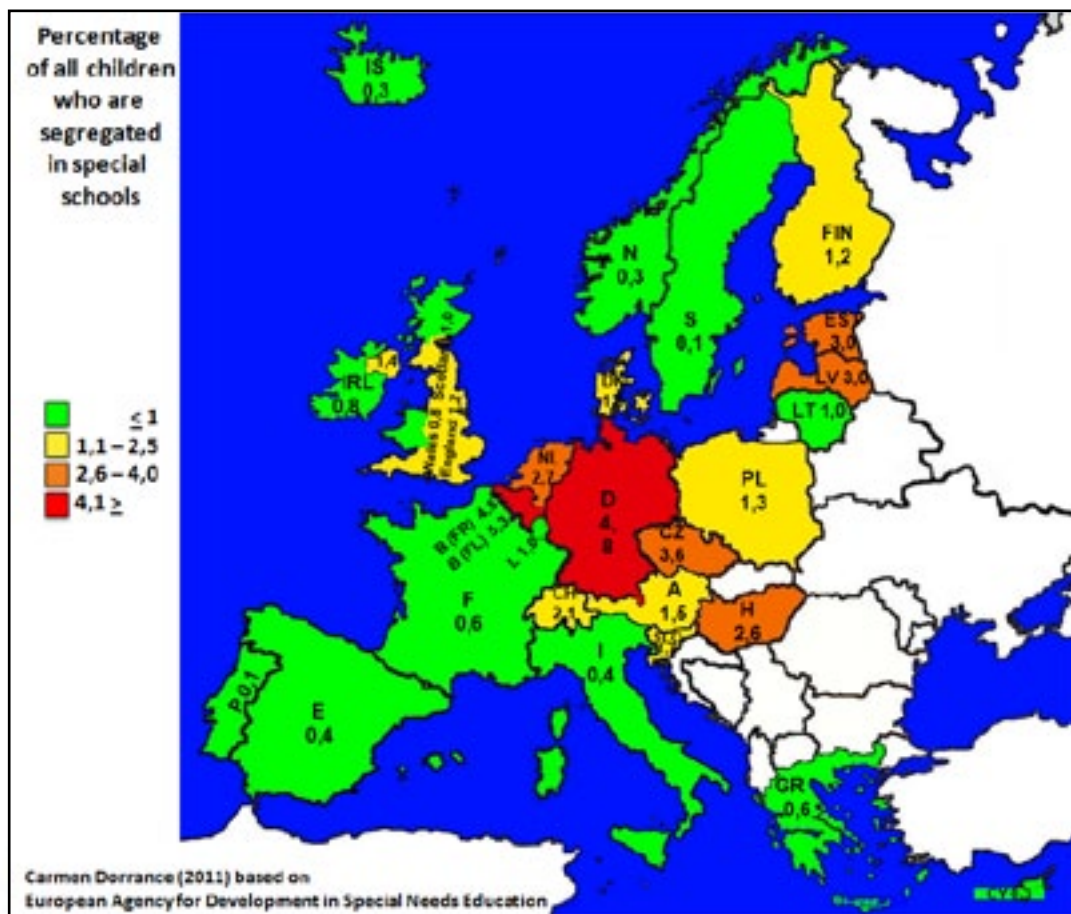
The assessment model is based on a differentiated analysis of available data on inclusive education. It proved to be a useful tool, based on valid and accepted methodologies, thus becoming acceptable according to scientific standards. Its results are to create or endorse debates within the participating countries on better implementation of inclusive education more than to come to clear diagnosis and prescriptions.

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7   www.pathwaystoinclusion.eu, 02-06-2011

8   http://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/special-needs-education-country-data-2010/special-needs-educa-tion-country-data-2010, 02-06-2011

2. Barometer Results

The map below shows the differences regarding inclusive education of persons with special educational needs across Europe. The data have been taken from the recent report of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2010 (European Agency 2011). The percentages of children and young people with SEN that are not included in regular schools vary from below 1% to 6%. As outlined above the reasons and explanations for these discrepancies are multifactorial, and must partly be seen in the light of different statistical reporting systems and different definitions for pupils with special educational needs. But of course the percentages of persons excluded from inclusive education also reflect educational traditions and policies on how to address special educational needs in the educational system of a country. Particularly in the light of the obligations of member states having signed and ratified the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it is important to analyse more precisely how statutory legislative prescription on inclusive education can be assessed, and how practice and implementation progress is developing.

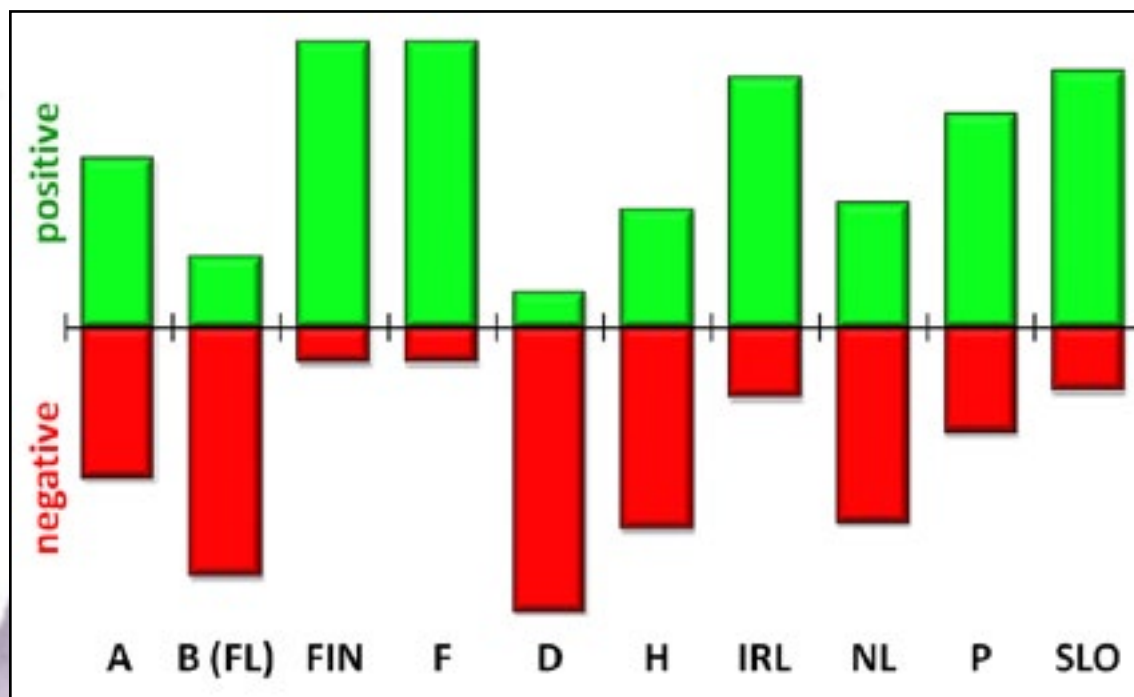### 2.1 Assessment Part A: Statutory Legislation and Prescriptions

In all European countries education is a highly regulated sector of society. Statutory legislation and prescriptions structure the educational system and provide a framework for the practice and development of inclusive education. This framework rules the allocation of resources, the environment under which schools and other educational facilities work, their conceptual orientation, teacher training and many other institutional preconditions that can be favourable or hindering for inclusive education.

In Part A of the questionnaire (with 18 questions) the P2i national partners were asked to assess the legal basis for inclusive education in their countries. Results show that in spite of legal changes in all countries which have supported inclusive education, many pupils with SEN can enroll in a regular school only under certain organizational and financial caveats. In nearly all participating countries pupils with disabilities do not have effective access to primary and secondary inclusive education with the same ease as others in their community.

In most partner countries legislation is not consistent nor sufficient. In countries with a strong tradition of special education, legislation has to bridge the 'old system' of special schools with new approaches for inclusive education. In other countries inclusion oriented legislation has not been accompanied with the allocation of necessary resources to provide inclusive arrangements for all persons with SEN in regular schools or other educational facilities. Efforts to make new resources available or shift resources from the special system to mainstreaming have been of limited success so far. Thus, both by inconsistent legislation and practice persons with disabilities in many cases have no access to inclusive education in mainstream services in their community on an equal basis with others. This is not to say there has been no progress. In some countries positive changes in educational laws have been introduced which have produced real changes to practice.

The following table shows how national partners assessed[9] statutory legislation and prescriptions in their countries:In this table the green bar above the line indicates the number of questions with a positive answer. The red bar under the line, indicates the number of questions with a negative answer.

Results of Barometer assessment Part A:
Statutory Legislation and PrescriptionsPercentage of the positive and negative answers of the 18 questions in Part A (representing the opinions of the partner experts)

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9   All questions were yes/no-questions; green means percentage of yes-answers; red means percentage of no-answers. Positive mean positive implementation of the UN CRPD.
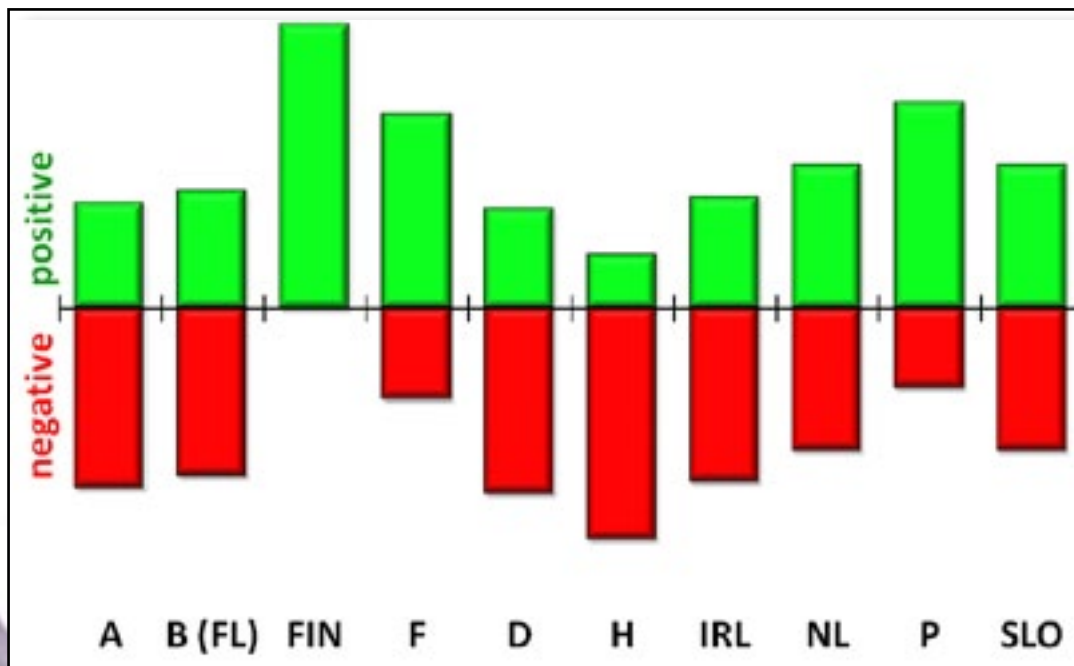
2.2. Assessment Part B: Practice of Inclusive Education

In Part B of the questionnaire (with 19 questions) P2i national partners were asked to assess the practice of inclusive education in their countries. Results show that even though there seem to be positive changes towards a less segregating school system in all participating countries, nevertheless inclusive education is not yet a high priority. The percentage of all pupils with disabilities or other special educational needs excluded from regular education is still very high measured against the expectations of the UN CRPD. However, the percentage of segregation varies considerably between participating countries and differs also from age level to age level of the education systems in all countries.

Importantly also, although there has been a general slow increase in inclusive education, this has not been accompanied by a general decrease of persons with SEN in special schools or other segregating facilities. On the contrary, especially in countries with a traditional special education system, the number of children and youngsters in special schools has in fact also been increasing In particular this is true of those with more severe disabilities or educational needs. So a pattern of reform can be identified as 'progress by addition' than progress by (structural) change'.

The following table shows how P2i-experts assessed the current practice of inclusive education in their countries:

> Results of Barometer assessment Part B: Practice of Inclusive Education
> Percentage of the positive and negative answers of the 19 questions in Part B
> (representing the opinions of the partner experts)

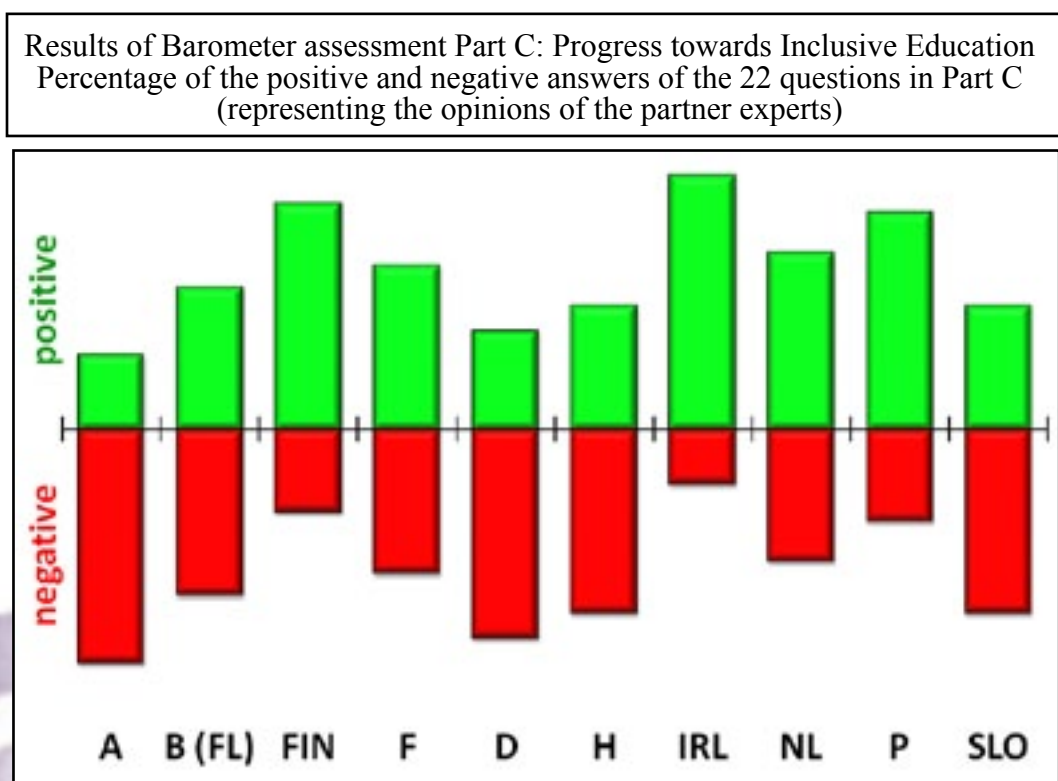## 2.3. Assessment Part C: Progress towards Inclusive Education

In Part C of the questionnaire (with 22 questions) P2i national partners were asked to assess the development and progression of inclusive education in their countries. There are important indicators on different levels that give reason to assume that the education system in participating countries will become less segregating and more inclusive by 2015.

Firstly, there is a growing sensitivity to human rights issues in societies that results from effective campaigning for non-discrimination and equal rights of people with disabilities. Secondly, there is also a public questioning of the special school system as a result of the surprisingly intensive reception of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities in many European countries. Thirdly, professional opinion has become stronger in putting forward the argument that inclusive education brings better results for pupils with SEN than segregating approaches.

Fourthly, demographic developments will probably contribute to more inclusiveness of the education systems because the absolute decrease in the overall numbers of children will provide better school and classroom conditions.
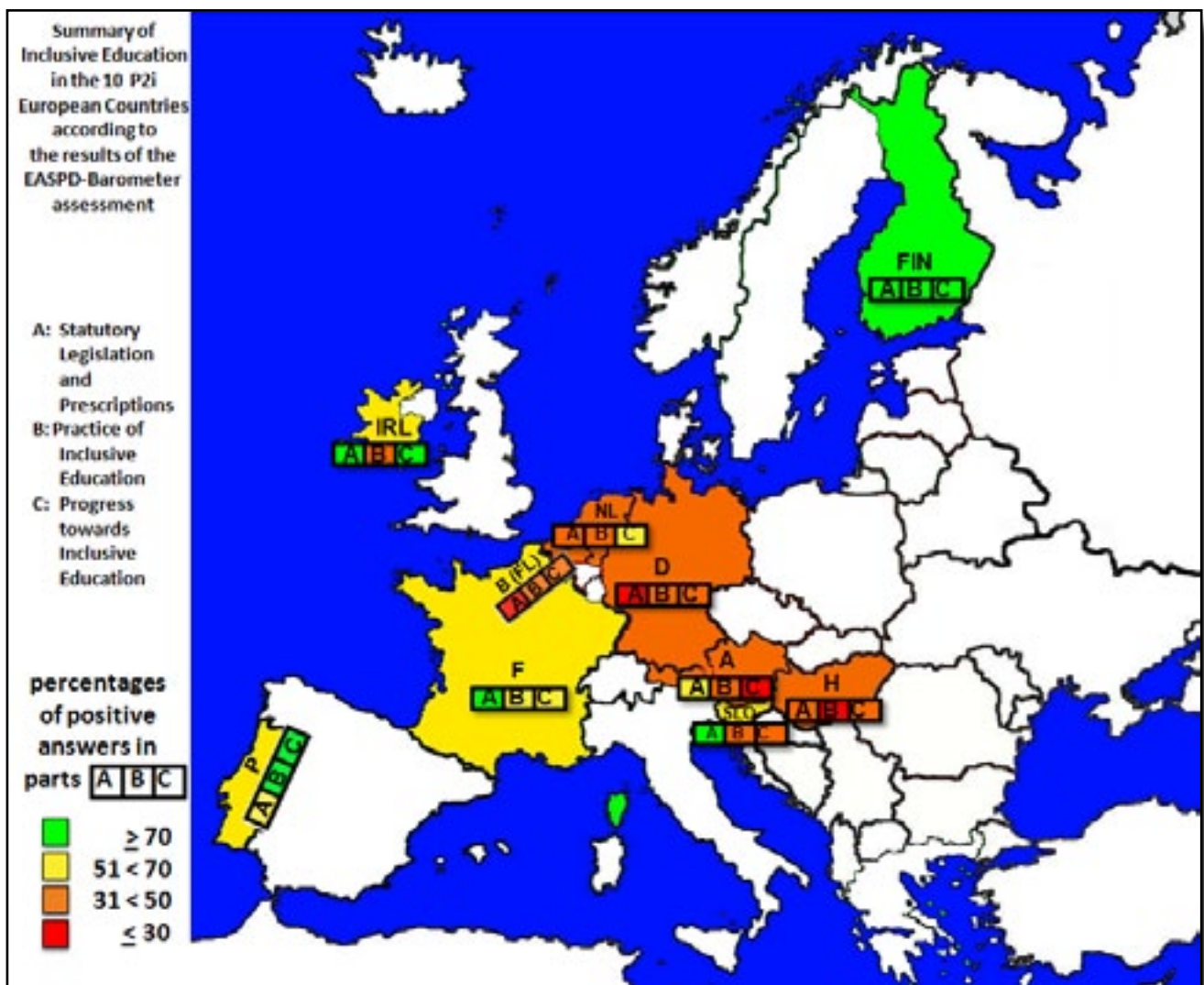
There are also some very concrete policies recently started in some participating countries to close or reshape the special school system and concrete initiatives of authorities for special schools to give attractive financial incentives to regular schools ready for inclusion. Also local governments are increasingly willing to change their educational system for children with SEN. But it is still realistic to assume that developments for more inclusive education will be an on-going but mostly rather slow process.

The following table shows how national partners assessed[10] the progression of inclusive education in their countries:

Results of Barometer assessment Part C: Progress towards Inclusive Education
Percentage of the positive and negative answers of the 22 questions in Part C
(representing the opinions of the partner experts)

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10 All questions were yes/no-questions; green means percentage2 of yes-answers; red means percentage of no-answers. Positive answers are in the sense of the UN CRPD.

Map: Summary of Inclusive Education in the 10 P2i European Countries according to the results of the EASPD-Barometer assessment

Summary of Inclusive Education in the 10 P2i European Countries according to the results of the EASPD-Barometer assessment

A: Statutory Legislation and Prescriptions
B: Practice of Inclusive Education
C: Progress towards Inclusive Education

percentages of positive answers in parts A B C

■ ≥ 70
■ 51 < 70
■ 31 < 50
■ ≤ 30

3.   Conclusion: Summary and recommendations

Summary

The P2i-assessment on the situation and perspectives of inclusive education for persons with special educational needs (SEN) conducted in 10 European countries can be summarized as follows:

Increasing awareness

There are clear indicators that in all participating countries there has been an increase of awareness both of the educational potential and the citizen's rights dimension of inclusive education for children with SEN. This is reflected in positive statements towards inclusive education formulated by governments, parents' organisations, teacher unions and other relevant public actors. It is also reflected in legal developments for support of inclusive education concerning education and school laws.

Rights for inclusive education without rights for the needed resources

The assessment results show that in the past years in all participating countries there have been changes in educational, youth welfare and social laws to support the possibilities of children with SEN to be educated in inclusive settings. In two out of ten participating countries (Finland, France) legislation was rated 'fully supportive' for inclusive education. In all other countries legislation has not been accompanied with the allocation of necessary resources to provide inclusive arrangements for all persons with SEN in regular schools or other educational facilities. Efforts to make new resources available or to shift resources from the special system to mainstreaming have been of limited success so far. Thus, both by legislation inconsistent with UN CRPD values and also sometimes by practice, persons with disabilities in many cases do not have access to inclusive education in mainstream services in their community on an equal basis with others.

Significance of categorization and diagnostic procedures

In all participating countries, there are institutionalized procedures by which children with developmental problems that affect their learning performance are processed into the status of a 'disabled child' or into the status of a child with other special educational needs. For the person with learning problems this is important, because this status gives access to support measures other children do not get. For the school system the categorization process is important because traditionally it directs the placement of the child. In countries with a strong tradition of special education ,"diagnosis" and categorization are still the mechanisms for placing children into different types of special schools, which are profiled around the so-called 'primary defects' of children (e.g. hearing impaired, blind, physically disabled, intellectually disabled, emotionally disabled, language disabled' etc.). In other countries ,categorization is more used for placing children in 'special units' of ordinary schools or for allocating additional hours of support in normal classrooms.

One view is that categorization of students must be eliminated because of its inherent stigmatization and replaced by general school budgets and perhaps additional budgets for providing measures to prevent the necessity for categorization. An alternative view is that assessment and categorization processes in welfare state arrangements are unavoidable gate-keepers of resources. Thus progress to inclusive

education must meet the challenge to find intelligent ways of categorization that allow access to additional support in mainstream educational settings without producing segregating and stigmatizing effects. Therefore it is all the more important to look for examples of good practice related to non-discriminative forms of categorization.

Path-depending developments

The assessment results show that developments in inclusive education are path-depending, i.e. restricted in their options and speed by the traditions of the general educational system and the special education system of each country. These traditions have led to certain institutional structures in educational systems, power and interest structures, 'taken-for granted-assumptions' and routines that are now being questioned, but nevertheless hold a high degree of resistance to change. The educational and political challenges of implementing inclusive education have to be coped with from different structural backgrounds and starting points. One very important aspect of this is how national school systems deal with children with SEN who have behavioral problems or are "slow learners". By tradition, in Germany, Belgium and Hungary this has led to an extensive structure of specific special schools that does not exist in most other European countries.

The longer and the more established the tradition of special education in a country is, the more difficult and conflicting is the reform process towards inclusive education. The more universalistic and comprehensive the tradition of a school system is, the easier are developments towards inclusive education.

Both decentralized regulation and privatization of school systems are not per se supportive for inclusive education. They need a strong legal framework which individuals with SEN and local actors can refer to in particular situations to realize their rights.

Increasing inclusiveness and increasing segregation ('progress by addition')

Data in all participating countries show an increase in the number of persons with SEN in inclusive educational settings on all age levels. Inclusive education is realized the most in pre-school facilities where more children with SEN are educated in inclusive than in special institutions. At primary school level the percentage of pupils with SEN in regular schools is growing remarkably quickly in all participating countries, but with big differences (approximately 10–50%) according to starting points and traditions. At secondary school level, the development of inclusive education is slower.

The general increase of inclusive education has not caused a general decrease of persons with SEN in special schools or other segregating facilities. On the contrary, especially in countries with a traditional special education system the number of children and youngsters in special schools has also been increasing. So a pattern of reform can be identified that rather follows the principle of 'progress by addition' than progress by (structural) change'. More persons are involved in the SEN-systems and as a consequence, persons with more severe educational needs still are mostly excluded from inclusive education,

Resource barriers against inclusive education

Assessment results show that in all countries there are still very elementary barriers against inclusive education to be yet overcome. In some countries the majority of mainstream school buildings do not comply with accessibility standards. In addition, assistive transport is often only provided to special

schools. There are also often problems in adaption of equipment. Deficits are also identified concerning the availability of functional assistance and care provision, even though in some participating countries many positive developments have also been reported.

Assessment procedures in development

In all partner countries the process for more inclusive education also led to a critique of and in most countries conceptual changes of assessment procedures. Whereas traditionally assessment procedures functioned to place persons with SEN in special institutions, new concepts of assessment are oriented to the person and his or her social-ecological context and strive to create educational arrangements in inclusive settings, identifying needs, supporting measures and conditions for an individual plan.

Parents' involvement in decision making

Decision-making processes for providing special needs education have been opened up for parents' involvement. Parents have been given more rights to be involved in decision making about the school career of their child. But resources are often not guaranteed when parents opt for inclusive education.

Conceptual aspects and teaching models

Assessment results show that in all countries there have been intensive developments of teaching models for inclusive education. These have included involving special school staff to support inclusive education in mainstream schools or to prevent segregation in cases of children at risk of segregation.

The decisions of school authorities to reduce classroom sizes in inclusive settings have been handled very restrictively in most participating countries.(what does this mean exactly?) Due to demographic changes in some countries, especially with falling populations in rural areas, classrooms in preschool facilities and primary schools classroom sizes have become smaller, thus creating more favourable conditions for inclusive education.

Availability of adaptive and communicative technology in inclusive education

Assessment results of the questionnaire show that in all countries adaptive technology is not completely restricted to special schools and is also available in inclusive settings. This is also reported for alternative and augmentative communication technology. Nevertheless,even though new models of mutual support between special competence centres and mainstream schools have been developed, very often knowledge, competence and creativity to apply, adapt and use technological means is still difficult to find in inclusive education.

Teacher training without (sufficient) inclusive orientation

There are differences in the teacher training orientations between the partner countries. In countries with a strong tradition of special education most academic teacher training curricula still completely separate the mainstream and the special school sectors. The education of teachers for children with SEN is still dominated by the special school's perspective. In these countries inclusive education has not yet become a mandatory topic for mainstream teacher training . In other countries there are concerns about the relevance and quality of inclusive education teaching, especially in the initial phases of teacher training.

Monitoring of progress in inclusive education

Whereas in some partner countries, there are several statutory or official institutions that systematically monitor the progress of inclusive education and regularly publish data, in other countries there is no systematic monitoring of the number of pupils with special education needs in mainstream schools or other educational settings. The paucity and variability of data collection seriously impairs effective monitoring as required under Art. 24 of the UN CRPD.

Progression towards inclusive education

Initially during the Project all partners felt the trend towards greater inclusion would continue and perhaps accelerate. However ,as the project has continued there has been increasing concern as to whether this positive development can be maintained under the pressures of the economic crisis.

Recommendations for political action

The following recommendations are based on the results of the various research and evaluation activities within the P2i-project , including the local studies on situation and development of inclusive education in participating countries. The recommendations reflect the insight that the implementation of inclusive education touches all political levels and many areas of social and cultural life. Correspondingly the provision of inclusive services needs a multilevel and cross-sectorial strategy to effectively implement the right of all persons with disabilities to inclusive education, especially to cope successfully with the challenge of managing change where there is as much conflict as consensus.

European-Level

The European Commission should continue and increase efforts to use the 'open method of co-ordination' to promote the implementation of inclusive education according to Art. 24 of the UN CRPD.

- The Barometer tool is a simple and easy to use instrument to further the 'open method of coordination'. The P2i-network recommends that a standardized instrument and methodology, such as the barometer, should be used on a regular basis in all countries to compare the evolution of inclusive education, to monitor the facilitation of social cohesion and non-discrimination in primary, secondary. tertiary and vocational education.

- Policy makers at European level should further develop a positive approach towards inclusive education as a part of the EU and Council of Europe strategies, with particular reference to Lifelong Learning, Social Inclusion, Anti-Discrimination, Citizenship.

- The European Commission should include concrete actions in the new EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 to promote inclusive education.

- The Disability High Level Group of the European Commission should specifically include a focus on inclusive education.

Countries

- National member states should continue to develop effective legislation on the rights of persons with disability and/or special educational needs to inclusive education. This legislation should be reviewed in accordance with the prescriptions in Art. 24 of the UN CRPD. This must include the right of persons with disabilities to have access to all necessary resources and the review of assessment procedures to make them supportive for inclusive education.

- National member states, or where relevant governments responsible for education on federative level ,are recommended to develop a strong policy on inclusive education and seek for support and reform alliances. National policy must include a government plan with an implementation strategy. The government plan for inclusive education should be specific, immediate and strategic. It should be top-down but also encourage and collate local initiatives. It involves taking the necessary measures to guarantee all pupils access to an inclusive education system-to take a person centred, holistic and Universal Design approach. This includes a strategy of helping existing special schools to manage the transition towards resource centres and to enable their staff to achieve the new task of supporting mainstream schools in realising special needs education programmes.

- The change process should be conceptualised within the framework of the European Disability Strategy 2010 - 2020 and conducted as a participative learning process, which is transparent and based on professional knowledge on inclusive education and change management.

- The change process should follow the clear aim of making the regular education system fully inclusive.

- Statutory committees, working groups or other institutionalised structures on national, regional and local level that are exclusively related to special education should be replaced by new inclusion oriented structures.

- Governments responsible for education must develop a plan for reallocating resources to achieve high quality individualised inclusive education.

- Governments responsible for education should establish consultative task forces to support the development and implementation of local plans for inclusive education in achieving a national inclusion strategy.

- Governments should reform the teacher training system in order to enable future teachers and school staff to meet the requirements of an inclusive school system.

- Governments must organise and promote sufficient support for all stakeholders, including:
    - joint training opportunities and seminars on inclusive education.
    - assistive tecnology communication methods.
    - pedagogical/psychological and other support.

- Governments must provide positive incentives for inclusive schools.

- Awareness raising campaigns should be set up by the governments in order to highlight the capabilities and needs of persons with disabilities in the education system.

Local level

Local governments should develop a strategy to implement inclusive education in all schools and other education services in a participative way - actively involving all other stakeholders. This local strategy on inclusive education must fit in with the general aim of the overall plan and must also have immediate, short term and strategic goals. It should contain measures and milestones that lead to a change process towards inclusive education systems within the given period of the European Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020.

• Local governments should also establish local task forces to enable special and regular schools on their way to inclusive education.

• Local governments must ensure that all children no matter what degree or type of disability have access to high quality education in an inclusive learning environment in the community.

• Disability organisations, service providers and other stakeholders should actively contribute to the implementation process and should function as critical friends and watchdogs of the process and its progression.