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IBE-UNESCO Preparatory Report for the 48th ICE on

<u>Inclusive Education</u>

**Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education –
Eastern and South Eastern Europe; Sinaia, Romania, 14-16 June 2007**

Abstract

The International Conference on Education (ICE) is a major international forum for educational policy dialogue among Ministers of Education and other stakeholders (researchers, practitioners, representatives of intergovernmental organizations and NGOs). The ICE is organized by the International Bureau of Education (IBE), the UNESCO institute specialized in assisting Member States in Curriculum Development to achieve quality Education for All. The IBE Council, composed of 28 UNESCO Member States, has proposed in January 2007 that the 48th ICE session, to be held in Geneva in November 2008, should focus on the theme "Inclusive Education: the Way of the Future". The 48th ICE will focus on broadening the understanding of the theory and practice of inclusive education while discussing how governments can develop and implement policies on inclusive education. The IBE is hosting a series of regional preparatory workshops dedicated to exploring and advancing inclusive education in preparation for the ICE 2008. The Eastern and South Eastern Europe Regional Workshop on Inclusive Education was held in Romania in partnership with the Center Education 2000 +, from June 14th to16th, 2007. This report details the discussion that took place at the workshop, the status of inclusive education in participating countries, and concrete ideas on what the next steps should be on how to advance on inclusive educational policy in the region.

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I. Introduction

The IBE-UNESCO, through the Community of Practice (COP) in Curriculum Development[1], is organizing a series of Regional Preparatory Workshops on Inclusive Education (see List in Appendix 1) in the overall aim of initiating a participatory and consultative process to highlight key issues and challenges in inclusive education to be presented at the 48th session of the International Conference of Education (ICE 2008).

The first workshop, covering the Eastern and South Eastern European region, was held in Sinaia, Romania (June 14th -16th 2007). The meeting objectives included sharing visions, strategies and practices regarding inclusive education at the regional and national level, identifying common challenges related to inclusive education, and providing structured technical inputs from a regional perspective for the debates taking place during the 48th ICE. Some of the expected outcomes were a common understanding of the inclusive education concept, its key issues and challenges, and a discussion about what the next steps should be.

20 high-level educators and curriculum specialists from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Moldavia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbian and Ukraine, as well as from the Center Education 2000+ (Romania), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Open Society Institute (OSI), the European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES-UNESCO), and IBE staff, attended the regional workshop. We acknowledge the generous engagement and deep professionalism of the workshop's participants (see Appendix 2: List of Participants).

An inclusive education agenda should consider several critical dimensions. Accordingly, each preparatory regional workshop centers on four sub-themes around which the IBE Council has proposed to articulate the 48th ICE.

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[1] IBE, in conjunction with curriculum specialists from different regions of the world, set up from 2005 onwards the Community of Practice in Curriculum Development (presently gathering 790 members from 91 countries). It is understood as an open and plural worldwide space that contributes to generate collective thinking and action on curriculum issues within the framework of a holistic approach to determining and implementing the Education for All (EFA) goals.

(i)   *Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope and Content* (to broaden the understanding of the theory and practice of inclusive education);

(ii)   *Inclusive Education: Public Policies* (to demonstrate the role of governments in the development and implementation of policies on inclusive education);

(iii)   *Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions* (to create education systems which offer opportunities for life-long learning); and

(iv)   *Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers* (to foster a learning environment where teachers are equipped to meet the learners' diverse expectations and needs).

The IBE Council visualizes the conference as an opportunity for promoting dialogue among Ministers of Education, highlighting some universal and complex issues, and engaging the audience. The ICE should play a pivotal role in orientating and clarifying the debate on inclusive education.

The IBE Council also proposes that the ICE should be based on evidence and involve the Ministers of Education in enriching discussions on evidence-informed policies.

In Eastern and South Eastern Europe, inclusive education as a concept is still in a development process. The purpose of this report is to shed light on the concept of inclusive education from the standpoint of the International Bureau of Education (IBE) and examine how inclusive educational practices are developed in the Eastern and South Eastern European region.

The first section of the report provides a background on inclusive education based on the United Nations normative framework. The second section discusses the concept of inclusive education and its evolution. Traditionally, inclusive education has been circumscribed to students with special needs. However, recently it has gradually become recognized as a way of democratizing learning environments and opportunities for all students, therefore promoting social justice. The third section details the current status of inclusive education in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. This section draws directly from the country reports, presentations and discussions on inclusive education from the Regional

Workshop. The fourth section focuses on good practices that various countries within the region are employing with regard to inclusive education. The Finland case is also exposed and discussed because it provides a good model for countries on effective inclusive educational policy. The fifth section draws from a regional roadmap that participating countries helped develop at the workshop, which reveals various actions workshop attendees felt need to be taken with respect to inclusive education in the region. The final section puts forth a strategic vision for the region by incorporating the four sub-themes the IBE has developed in order to facilitate discussions about inclusive education at regional workshops in preparation for the 48th ICE.

II. Inclusive Education: United Nations Normative Framework

Building a truly inclusive society, where all people learn together and participate equally hinges on providing a quality education for all. The United Nations Education for All (EFA) program is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, clearly lays down the foundation for the Education for All movement. It states:

> Everyone has the right to education and education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom[2].

Inclusive education seeks to address the diverse learning needs of all children. This is further supported by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, which states that all children have the right to receive an education that does not discriminate on the basis of disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, capabilities, and so on.

The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the 1994 World Conference on "Special Needs Education: Access and Quality" in Salamanca, Spain. It was restated at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The idea of inclusion is further supported by the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, proclaiming participation and equality for all.

Essentially, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education call upon member states to guarantee the implementation of inclusive education in order to bring back excluded children into the mainstream educational system. According to the Salamanca Statement, inclusive education means that:

> Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions. They should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote and nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.[3]

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[2] United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (2007). In the *United Nations Website*. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights website: http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

[3] The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. (1994). In the *United Nations Educational,*

The Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All further supports previous initiatives by calling upon nations to address the needs of learners who are victims of marginalization. It states:

> Education for All (…) must take account of the need of the poor and most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflict, HIV/AIDS, hunger and poor health, those with special learning needs.[4]

The Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities[5] (2006) specifically addresses the right of all persons with disabilites to education (article 24). In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that (a) persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of their disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability, (b) persons with disabilities can access an inclusive and free quality primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live, (c) reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided, (d) persons with disabilities receive the support required to facilitate their effective education within the general education system, and (e) effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

Providing quality education for all remains one of the biggest development challenges of our time but with effective legislation and policies it is possible to contribute to a world of inclusion, not only for people with disabilities, but also for all those who are unable to exercise their basic human right to education.

Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the UNESCO website: http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF

[4] Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All. (2000). In the *United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website.* Retrieved July 2, 2007 from the UNESCO website: http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/framework.shtml

[5] www.un.org/disabilities/convention/

III. Conceptual Dimensions of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a growing universal concern that informs and challenges the processes of educational reform in both developing and developed regions. Inclusive education is an evolving concept that can be useful to guide strategies of educational change to address the sources and consequences of exclusion within the holistic framework of EFA goals and the understanding of education as a human right.

Special Needs Education

Traditionally and even today in various world regions (for example, in Eastern and South Eastern Europe[6] as well as in the Commonwealth of Independent States[7] (CIS) and most parts of Asia[8]) the concept and practices of inclusive education have been mainly circumscribed to students categorized as having special needs, meaning predominantly those with physical and/or mental disabilities, as well as refugees. Under this perspective, the approaches and responses given to students' needs have been remedial and corrective, by setting up and increasing the number of special schools, curricula tracks and special education teachers.

One significant consequence of differentiated curricular and institutional structures for students categorized as having special needs has been their segregation and isolation within the education system. The assumption that there are "special needs children" is questionable as stated by Sue Stubbs[9]: "any child can experience difficulty in learning (..) many disabled children have no problem with learning" and "children with intellectual impairment can often learn very well in certain areas".

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[6] OECD. 2006. *Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.* Paris: OECD Publications

[7] See International Bureau of Education (IBE) Report on the *Commonwealth of Independent Sates, Third Workshop on Curriculum Development: "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future"* Minsk, Belarus, October 29-31, 2007.

[8] See International Bureau of Education Report (IBE) Report on the *East Asia Workshop on Inclusive Education, Hangzhou, China, November 2-5, 2007.*

[9] Stubbs S. 2002. *Inclusive Education. Where there are few resources.* Oslo: The Atlas Alliance. Pp. 23; 3

Integration

The concept of integration came forward in the 1980s as an alternative to special needs curricula and school models, with the objective of placing students defined as having special needs in mainstream schools. The restructuring and improvement of physical facilities, the increase in numbers of special classrooms and specially trained teachers in the mainstream buildings and the provision of learning materials were, and still are, some of the main components for the application of integration models. Mainly focused on students with mild impairments, integration can risk becoming a rhetorical device rather than a reality in practice; it can become more about a spatial change of school classrooms than a change of curricular content and pedagogy relevant to children's learning needs.

After the 1990s, the scope, objectives, contents and implications of inclusive education in relation to integration were considerably changed. This was principally due to the recognition that integration models solely based on closing special schools and "adding" students to mainstream schools and curricula do not respond to the diversities of learners' expectations and needs. Such an understanding prompts revision of education policies dealing with integration issues by questioning the relevance of curriculum and school models that are the same for all students regardless of their differences. In such models, students must *adapt* to the norms, styles, routines and practices of the education system instead of the education system changing according to the learner. Moreover, dropout rates may increase among students with special needs when integrated into mainstream schools that have not undertaken a comprehensive set of institutional, curricular and pedagogical changes.

Inclusion

Inclusive education can be understood both as a guiding principle and a strategy to attain reasonable levels of school integration for all students. In the context of a broader vision of integration, inclusive education implies the conception and the implementation of a vast repertoire of learning strategies to precisely respond to learners' diversities. In this

sense, education systems have the obligation to respond to the expectations and needs of children and youth considering that the capacity to provide effective learning opportunities based on a rigid scheme of integration (placing "special needs" students in mainstream schools) is very limited. This is what Susan Peters[10] refers to as the placement paradigm; that is, when inclusive education is conceptualized as a place and not as a service delivered within the general education classroom as the continuum.

The debate on inclusive education and integration is not on a dichotomy between integration and inclusion policies and models (as if we could integrate without including, or include without integrating), but rather on identifying to which extent there is a progress in the understanding that each school has the moral responsibility to include everyone. Such an obligation is challenged at the same time when education systems have to effectively address other core universal education problems of non-school attendance, repetition, over-age and dropouts as well as low learning outcomes that undermine the goals and functioning of education worldwide. Empirical evidence indicates that a student who repeats the first school years has a strong probability of dropping out from school[11]. Each one and also the combination of the above problems generating exclusion are exacerbated by persistent institutional and pedagogical practices that presuppose that all children have the same learning conditions and capabilities. Moreover, as noted during the 2004 International Conference on Education[12], a child's exclusion from education represents his/her lack of professional and social competencies needed in order to access essential knowledge and to exert an autonomous and responsible citizenship.

Therefore, approximately in the last fifteen years, the concept of inclusive education has evolved towards the idea that all children and young people, despite different cultural,

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[10] Peters S. World Bank. 2004. *Inclusive Education: an EFA strategy for all children. Washington:* World Bank.

[11] See UNESCO, 1998. *Wasted Opportunities: when schools fail; repetition and drop-out in primary schools, Education For All, Status and Trends*, Paris, EFA Forum Secretariat. UNESCO, 1996. *La Repetición Escolar en la Enseñanza Primaria Una Perspectiva Global.* Ginebra, Oficina Internacional de Educación; UNESCO, 1984. *The drop-out problem in primary education: some case studies.* Bangkok, Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific.

[12] UNESCO. 2004. *International Conference of Education. 47th meeting. Workshops 2A y 2B Quality education and social inclusion.* Geneva: IBE/UNESCO. Annex XVI, pp. 8–14.

social and learning backgrounds, should all have equivalent learning opportunities in all kinds of schools. The focus is on generating inclusive settings, which implies: (i) respecting, understanding and taking care of cultural, social and individual diversity (education systems, schools and teachers' response to the expectations and needs of students); (ii) providing an equal access to quality education; (iii) having close coordination with other social policies. This should involve the expectations and demands of stakeholders and social actors.

A broad conception of inclusive education also addresses the learning needs of students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages, as conceptualized by OECD[13]. Although there are different categories to consider, the nature of the concept of inclusive education is non-categorical, and aimed at providing effective learning opportunities to every child, in particular tailored learning contexts.

Precisely UNESCO[14] defines inclusion "as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children". Furthermore, as stated by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow[15] in their proposal of an index for inclusion, "inclusion is about making schools supportive and stimulating places for staff as well as students (…) It is about building communities which encourage and celebrate their achievements".

Indeed, the design and the development of policies on inclusive education should not be understood as the sum of initiatives and efforts towards specific groups (an endless although possibly incomplete list). Quite to the contrary, the focus is not on which

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[13] OECD. 2006. *Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.* Paris: OECD Publications
[14] UNESCO. 2005. *Guidelines for inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All.* Paris: UNESCO.
[15] Booth T. and M. Ainscow. 2002. *Index for inclusion, developing learning and participation in schools.* CSIE: Bristol, p. 4.

categories to include but on the provision of friendly learning environments and diverse learning opportunities for all. According to Rona Tutt[16], the main challenge is to provide inclusive settings in all schools through the provision of a diverse continuum of services that are part of a school network in articulation with other social policies.

Thus, the challenge of an inclusive education implies the articulation of a coherent and articulated set of policies aiming for (i) a pertinent and relevant curriculum with a vision that facilitates dialogue among different levels of the educational system; (ii) a vast repertoire of diverse and complementary pedagogical strategies (formal and non-formal schooling) that can respond to the specificities of each student by personalizing the educational provision; (iii) available physical facilities and equipment aligned with the designed curriculum and its implementation; (iv) strong teacher support in the classroom, seeing him/her as a co-developer of the curriculum and (v) engaging in dialogue with families and communities in order to understand their expectations and needs as well as to promote their active participation in the schools.

An inclusive educational strategy implies the careful and detailed consideration of the specificity and uniqueness of each child and adolescent so as to provide them with effective educational opportunities throughout their lives. In these terms, inclusive education is about the ways and the modalities under which teachers and students interact and generate mutual empathy and nearness; how they understand and respect their diversities and jointly create suitable and attainable conditions for achieving relevant and pertinent learning opportunities for all.

Cognitive education plays a key role in achieving an inclusive education as it tends to make children aware of their own cognitive functions, which can help them to understand and learn better. It is an effective way for educators to address the needs of diverse populations by better understanding how students learn, think, and reflect, critically and

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[16] Tutt. R. 2007. *Every Child Included.* London: Paul Chapman Publishing / The Association for all School Leaders (NAHT).

creatively, and how to use this understanding in the co-construction of a meaningful curriculum and of associated activities.

As a contribution to the discussion of pedagogical approaches of inclusive education, David Skidmore[17] draws attention to the difference between a pedagogy of deviance and one of inclusion by noting the following five aspects:

a) student's learning – while the deviance discourse establishes a hierarchy of cognitive skills to measure the abilities of each student, the inclusion discourse highlights the open learning potential of each student that can be progressively discovered and stimulated;

b) explanation of school failure – while the deviance discourse points out that the main learning difficulties are related to the deficiencies of the students' capacities, the inclusion discourse argues that the main difficulty lies instead on the insufficient responses generated by the curriculum;

c) school response – while the deviance discourse states that the support of the learning process should be focused on the students' deficiencies, the inclusion discourse emphasizes the need of reforming the curriculum and of implementing a crosscutting pedagogy in the school;

d) theory of teachers' expertise – while the deviance discourse emphasizes the importance of specialized discipline knowledge as key to teachers' expertise, the inclusion discourse highlights the active participation of the students in the learning process; and

e) curriculum model – while the deviance discourse argues that an alternative curriculum should be designed for those students categorized as low achievers, the inclusion discourse emphasizes the need of a common curriculum for all students.

In overall terms, inclusive education implies four key elements:

a. it is essentially a process of looking for the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity as well as of trying to learn how to learn from differences;

b. it is linked to the motivation and development, through multiple strategies, of students' creativity and capacity to address and resolve problems;

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[17] Skidmore. D. 2004. Inclusion, the dynamic of school development. London: Open University Press. Pp. 112-127

c. it comprises the right of the child to attend school, express his/her opinion, have quality learning experiences and attain valuable learning outcomes; and

d. it implies the moral responsibility of prioritizing those students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from the school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes.

Inclusive Education and Social Inequalities/ Social Inclusion

The urgent need to advance in the democratization of opportunities for all children accessing and profiting from a high-quality equitable education can be based on the conception of inclusion as a central strategy to foster educational and social change. Inclusion from an educational perspective can help address the traditional and structural problems of poverty; the challenges of modernization and social and cultural integration; and the growing diversity of national societies. Social inclusion and inclusive education are mutually implicated in a feedback relationship. Inclusive education opens the way to increasingly addressing forms and contents of exclusion. For example, inclusive education can aim to address the social gaps in access to ICT; the marginalization of disaffected young people (those who do not study, do not work and do not look for work); the lack of educational opportunities and low learning outcomes among migrant populations; the cultural homogeneity of educational proposals that do not know, understand and value multiculturalism; and the stigmatization of cultural and social diversity as an obstacle to integration.

Therefore, inclusive education can be considered as a pathway to attain social inclusion. From a societal perspective, inclusive education is clearly and substantially linked to the discussion around the type of society to be attained; the kind of well-being desired for all citizens; and the quality of democracy and social participation we wish to pursue. On a long-term basis, basic education in relation to social inclusion implies an understanding of the former as key to citizenship and as an essential component of social policy.

Along those lines, the relationship between social inclusion and education highlights central issues of inclusive education related to (i) the struggles against poverty, marginality, cultural and social segregation, exclusion and HIV-AIDS, (ii) the consideration of cultural diversity and multiculturalism as both a right and a learning context within an universal framework of shared universal values, and (iii) the protection of the rights of aboriginal, migrant, displaced populations and populations in a minority.

In the context of an ongoing discussion, the following points seem to be critical in understanding and advancing on the conception and practice of inclusive education:

a. Identifying the significance and priority given to inclusive education, in governmental and state policies. Inclusive education, as a key social policy, is a powerful instrument to mitigate the negative effects of social inequalities and cultural disintegration as well as residential segregation. Inclusive education is useful to address the changing cultural, ethnic, migrant and social composition of schools, a major challenge to the development of efficacious and efficient government social policies.

b. Fostering high quality equitable learning opportunities for all by considering the articulation, diversification and flexibility between the different ladders and pathways of the education system, its structures and contents, within a global and unified vision of basic and youth education.

c. Developing a tailored approach towards providing a real opportunity of educational success to each child by focusing on the learning needs of both potential and current students (those who have never attended school, those who are currently attending and those who dropped out), taking into account their cultural, social and cognitive diversities as well as their ethnic origin, philosophical and religious beliefs and migrant status. Diversity in learning contexts should be considered as a challenge and an asset to education and not as an obstacle.

d. Guiding, articulating and undertaking efforts and initiatives aimed at generating suitable conditions for achieving useful and relevant learning by conceiving the school as the main force of educational change, and also as an integrated institutional and pedagogical unit within a solid educational policy and shared curriculum framework, from early childhood to youth education.

e. Renovating and recreating teachers' professional role taking into account their ethical, societal mission and responsibility. Teacher training should strengthen the ways in which teachers understand, approach and respond to students' differences; teaching styles should be revised and adjusted in

order to be aligned with cultural and social contexts that are increasingly complex and uncertain; teachers should be considered as co-designers and co-developers of inclusive education policies at the school and classroom levels, and not as mere implementers of curriculum change.

In overall terms, the transformation of education into inclusive education[18] implies collective thinking and action on the concept of social justice and social inclusion; on the beliefs around the learning potentials of each student; on the conceptual frameworks that sustain good practices of teaching and learning; and on endorsing a comprehensive political and technical vision of curriculum encompassing processes and outcomes.

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[18] British Educational Research Journal. 2005. *Thematic Review. Inclusive education: discourse and action.* Vol. 31, No. 2, April 2005, pp. 269–275.

IV. Country Situations/Challenges/Lessons Learnt[19]

While there is no unified concept of inclusive education among the countries in Eastern and South Eastern Europe there is a common tendency of seeking to broaden the idea beyond just serving children with special needs. Each country in this region faces numerous challenges towards designing and implementing more inclusive educational practices.

A. Albania[20]

In recent years the issue of people with special needs has been more present in the political agendas and administrative reforms in Albania. The progress until now consists mainly in formulating policies, legislations and documents which aim to reflect international documents and standards. The first attempts towards inclusive education in Albania date back to the 1990s. In 1996, for the first time, the Normative Provisions of Public Education outlined the idea that the integration of children with special needs in mainstream schools should be considered an indispensable process, for the best of all children and schools. Through the assistance of various international organizations, different projects supporting inclusive education were applied at both school and pre-school levels. While the initial achievements were promising, they lacked governmental financial support and as a result their impact decreased and they were eventually stopped altogether.

In the 1990s the government's efforts were mainly focused on setting up special needs institutions. Albanian parents whose children are severely disabled prefer them to be educated in special needs institutions instead of in the communities they live in. In fact, a

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[19] The information in this section is adapted from the country reports and discussion presented at the 2007 Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education in Eastern and South Eastern Europe in preparation for the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education held from June 14-16 in Sinaia, Romania. Participating countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine.
[20] The information in this section was adapted from Dr. Virxhill Nano's (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana) presentation and discussion on the Albanian situation.

small percentage of families have moved to larger cities in an attempt to find a better solution for their disabled children. In less severe cases, parents continually press mainstream schools to accept and educate their children. In many cases, the attendance of these special needs children is very low and a large number drop out before completing the fourth grade. Various studies show that the attitude of teachers and other students towards special needs children has become more positive, and the real problem is not about whether or not these students are accepted by their peers, but rather about the quality of the work that teachers offer these students according to their needs. Most Albanian schools are characterized by uniformity: the same programs and the same textbooks for all, and very little adaptation according to the needs of students. Teachers also feel unmotivated, unappreciated and overloaded. Many teachers perceive their work with children with special needs as an act of charity, an additional workload, and not as their responsibility.

Currently the main sources of exclusion in Albania are: overcrowded classrooms, inappropriate infrastructure in schools, lack of a qualitative inclusive curriculum, uninformed and untrained teachers, lack of resource teachers and resource rooms in schools, lack of appropriate knowledge about school legislation and inclusive education in general, and lack of motivation and support for teachers.

Experts and staff in the field of education believe that one of the important factors that impede the implementation of inclusive education in Albanian schools has to do with the way curriculum is designed. In elementary school, teachers find it easy to adapt or modify curricula with the respective categories of students in need, but this is not the case in higher levels of education.

For the Albanian government the definition of students with special needs should be revised in the light of the concept of inclusive education. Students with special needs should be defined as those "who learn differently". Emphasizing this broader definition is crucial in changing the techniques and teaching methods for marginalized students. In most cases, teachers act according to their personal experiences and with the methods

they themselves have used most frequently in the past and which, to a certain extent, have proven to be successful. Given the distinct nature of each student's difficulties, it is necessary for the teacher to become familiar with the most important elements of the difficulties encountered by students. The definition of students as those who "learn differently" means that the techniques and methods should be modified according to both the problem at hand and the individuality of the student. What many teachers may not have considered is that they need to differentiate not because of different abilities of the students, but because students learn in different ways. In this context it may be more appropriate to provide students with more choices on how to do the task in order for students to learn in their preferred way. Having students with special needs collaborate and work in small groups of mixed ability is also helpful. Innovative strategies must be incorporated for a variety of learning styles for students with special needs. Some successful instructional strategies which have been applied to students with special needs in the inclusion process are: multi-level instruction, cooperative learning and activity-based learning. Educators must be trained systematically for the problems/difficulties they may encounter in the classroom. The Ministry of Education and Science, in collaboration with the National Training Center, needs to plan and organize a step by step action plan on a national level for gradual training of all mainstream school teachers.

According to data from the Observation Report made by the Albanian Disability Rights Foundation in 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) does not have any administrative units responsible for the implementation of inclusive education for students with special needs. There are no resource teachers to support the inclusion process and the MES has no statistics on either the number of students with special needs that have been included or the number of teachers who are working with students having special needs in mainstream schools. The MES has yet to approve and formulate the necessary laws to regulate working with Individual Education Plans (IEP). Mainstream schools do not have any multi-disciplinary teams to assess students with special needs. Moreover, the necessary units in both the city and regional levels for the coordination and monitoring of the process of inclusion have yet to be created.

There is a need to raise the awareness of teachers and principals of mainstream schools about the importance of inclusive education. Mainstream school principals and teachers should undergo theoretical and practical training on the Normative Provisions which guarantee the right of special needs children to study in mainstream schools applying the principles of inclusive education for all. Psychological specialists in mainstream schools should be provided with trainings in the field of inclusive education. MES must ensure that the mechanisms and structures responsible for the implementation of the legislation providing inclusive education for all are working efficiently. The progression of inclusive education in Albania hinges on the cooperation and engagement of the Ministry of Education and Science, NGOs in the educational field, parent associations and all other relevant stakeholders.

B. Bosnia-Herzegovina[21]

There is no common legal or professional definition of inclusive education in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The concept of inclusive education is relatively new, and it is seen as a component of social inclusion. Bosnia-Herzegovina's basic goal concerning inclusive education is based on the premise that every child should have an equal right and opportunity in the field of education. It covers various marginalized groups, including the poor, minorities, and children with special needs.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is still setting the stage for an inclusive education reform. The government has adopted a common core curriculum in August 2003 and an action plan for students with special needs in April 2006. At present there is not enough reliable educational data and institutional support to allow a progress on inclusive education policies. Moreover, there is no capacity for policy implementation or evaluation. Governance in Bosnia-Herzegovina is over-politicized, controlled and fragmented, yet centralized in comparison to the EU trend of a liberalized and decentralized system.

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[21] The information in this section was adapted from Daria Duilovic's (Senior Education Advisor, Office of the High Representative in BIH) presentation and discussion on the Bosnia and Herzegovina situation.

An important issue is the fact that teaching is not a very desirable profession and therefore the best students are usually not willing to become teachers. There is a lack of quality teacher pre-service training and there are almost no normal universities for teacher training. Teachers come from academic universities. In places where there are teacher training programs, education for special needs is presented as a very complex and mysterious subject placed within the field of defectology.

C. Croatia[22]

In Croatia there is no educational policy that elaborates on inclusion in a direct way. The term 'inclusion' has gradually replaced the term 'integration' and the expression 'students with developmental difficulties' is being replaced with the expression 'students with special educational needs'. In the Croatian educational system, students with special educational needs include gifted students, students with developmental disabilities, students with health impairments, behavior disorders, "at risk" behaviors, learning difficulties, cultural disadvantages, and socio-economic disadvantages.

According to the Croatian Constitution, all citizens are equal before the law and "enjoy all rights and freedoms regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth education, social status, or other characteristics". The government does not have a specific department responsible for the implementation of inclusive policies and practices in the Croatian educational system. While the education of students with special educational needs is not regulated by special acts, it is built in the Act on Preschool Education, the Act on Primary Education, the Act on Secondary Education, and the Act on the Scientific Activity and Higher Education. According to the Constitution all students have the right to be educated and trained, and preschool, secondary and higher education are not compulsory but available to all under equal conditions. Primary education is compulsory and free for all students.

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[22] The information in this section was adapted from Jasna Kudek Mirosevic's (Executive Staff Consultant Specialist for Children with Special Needs Primary School Dragutin Tadijanović) presentation and discussion on the Croatian situation.

The Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES) includes guidelines for curricular adjustments and support for students with special educational needs. In Croatia, the future development of inclusive educational practices will be directed towards teaching processes whose goals are to provide basic knowledge, problem-solving skills, preparation for future challenges and development of students' general abilities. With respect to curriculum, a Council for National Curriculum has been established and is working on curriculum design and implementation. Teacher in-service training incorporates inclusive education drawing from the expertise of the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation at the University of Zagreb.

There is a desire to focus on transitions through the educational system by developing measures for improving the monitoring of education. The transition from education to employment is supported by the Act on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons and cooperation between the educational system and employment offices.

D. Georgia[23]

In Georgia, inclusion embodies different categories: children with disabilities and handicapped students, children from ethnic minorities, street children, children with social problems, with emotional disorders, speech problems and behavioral problems, and any pupils at risk of disaffection and exclusion. The general principle behind inclusive education is to educate all children together in general educational institutions and the strategic objective is to change attitudes towards children by forming the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society which encourages people to live and learn together. Legislations supporting inclusive education are: the Law of Georgia concerning the Social Protection of Disabled People, the Law of Georgia on General Education, and the

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[23] The information in this section was adapted from Ms. Tatia Pachkoria's (Inclusive Education Coordinator National Curriculum and Assessment Centre, Ministry of Education and Science) presentation and discussion on the Georgian situation.

state policy guidelines for protection of disabled children's rights in Georgia. Inclusive education is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The nation's medium term goals for education include the establishment of an appropriate legislative and structural setting for the introduction of inclusive education at all levels.

E. Moldova[24]

The Republic of Moldova is attempting to broaden the approach of inclusive education and shift the focus from creating various educational opportunities for children with special needs to the creation of one school for all pupils. In the past few years there has been a separation between the integration and inclusion process, terms that used to be given the same meaning. Causes of exclusion are various, the most obvious ones being: inadequate perception of children with disabilities by society, lack of tolerance for differences, encouragement of the exclusion phenomenon by the Orthodox Church, the present structure of the educational system, and inefficient methods of funding. This is exacerbated by a lack of policy implementation mechanisms, an absence of educational and social services for children with disabilities and their families, and no preparation of mainstream schools for accepting and supporting children with special educational needs. Additionally, "residential institutions" for special needs serve as a source of "life-long exclusion."

The issue of equal access to quality education for all people without exception rests upon the principle of equity and the right of choice, which is part of the process that is currently ongoing in Moldova of aiming for a democratic society. Moldova's National Strategy for Education and National Plan of Action draw heavily from the UN Education for All initiative. The key purpose of the national plan is to assure access to quality education for all children, especially for children in extremely difficult situations: orphans, children deprived of parental care, children with disabilities, homeless children,

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[24] The information in this section was adapted from Valentina Chicu's (Superior Lector State University of Moldova) presentation and discussion on the Moldavian situation.

children from socially vulnerable families, refugee children, abused children and all others who might be marginalized.

There have been a number of challenges concerning the implementation of inclusive educational policies. The lack of a specific department in the Ministry of Education that deals specifically with inclusive education hinders the process of policy implementation. Currently there is a branch in the Ministry of Education called "Special Education and Child Protection", but this only serves for special needs and residential institutions and does not incorporate the wider concept of inclusive education that seeks to promote social justice. Also, the absence of alternative models of inclusive education leads to the segregation of children with special education needs. In this context there is a danger that the deinstitutionalization that is being considered a positive movement in the Moldovan field of education can acquire a negative tint through the isolation of children with special needs at home. Teachers are also unable to provide qualitative educational services for all the categories of children including those with special needs. Additionally, a lack of collaboration between state and nongovernmental organizations in addressing social and educational problems impedes the possibilities for advancing inclusive educational practices. Government funds must be redirected to sustain the education of children with special education needs for inclusive mainstream schools.

Inclusive education practices include: differentiated classes for children with learning difficulties, interschool logopedic centers, community inclusion centers, district inclusion centers, inclusive practices in common schools for students who do not require a modified and tailored curriculum. The hope for successful implementation of inclusive education in Moldova comes from partnerships established between state institutions, NGOs and the community.

F. Montenegro[25]

Montenegro's educational system does not specifically mention an inclusive education policy, but it does provide both primary and secondary education for children with special educational needs. In the view of the government of Montenegro, "children with special needs" refers to both children with developmental difficulties and gifted children. Some of the main institutions that work with these children include: Education and Professional Rehabilitation of Disabled Children and Youth and the Centre for Education and Vocational Training. In the future, Montenegro seeks to address the following areas: increasing capacities of pedagogical-psychological services in schools, especially with respect to informing about types of disorders; assisting teachers working with children with special needs (especially when it comes to subject teaching); improving architectural conditions in schools in order for these to enable easy access; and strengthening of capacities with the Bureau for Education Services to work in the field of education of children with special needs.

An education reform towards the integration of students with special needs in Montenegro began in 1992 in preschools with the partial integration of students with mild psycho-physical disorders. In 1998, children began to be integrated in regular kindergarten groups, while the inclusion of students with special needs in regular classes in elementary schools started in 2000. So far there have been new legislations and teacher trainings for staff working in preschools, elementary schools and special schools. "Mobile teams" have been established, and "institutional settings" have changed. In 2004 a new law on the education of children with special needs was adapted, resulting in a new regulation on how to direct children with special needs. Montenegro's inclusive educational practices are being supported by UNICEF, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Save the Children (UK), and the Coordinating Committee for Voluntary Service (COSV).

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[25] The information in this section was adapted from Ms. Tamara Milic's (Coordinator for Special Needs Education, Ministry of Education and Science) presentation and discussion on the Montenegro situation.

Some of the problems and obstacles encountered in the promotion of inclusive educational policies include: a traditional culture inclined to hide disabilities, late school enrollment, insufficiently developed capacities of "professional services" in some schools, and the fact that training is mainly focused on preschool institutions and elementary schools. It is necessary to increase the coverage of children with special needs, strengthen the awareness about the importance of education in general and for children with special needs, support the development of professional competencies at the school and implement additional training for teachers (especially in secondary schools). Other essential measures are: amendment of regulations on criteria for determining forms and levels of disorders; impairments of children and youth with special needs and ways of inclusion in curriculum; support for mobile teams; permanent cooperation with NGOs and an overall strengthening of capacities of the Bureau for Education Services in the area of education of children with special needs.

G. Romania[26]

The transition from integrated to inclusive education in Romania has been a long and complex road involving a wide variety of players, from pilot-projects, NGOs, universities, and educational policy groups. The concept of inclusive education has evolved from focusing on children with special needs to a host of disadvantaged groups. Inclusive education has been integrated into the curriculum and the ongoing process of curriculum change fosters learning environments that can facilitate inclusion at both the school and classroom level within a decentralized curriculum proposal.

In Romania there has been an ongoing process of shifting from integrated to inclusive education. After the Salamanca conference inclusive educational practices were launched in Romania in 1995 using UNESCO materials and various training activities. Some legislative aspects of this include a Common Memorandum of Inclusion in 2004 and an

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[26] The information in this section was adapted from Ecaterina Vrasmas (President, Association RENINCO Romania Professor University of Bucharest) and Traian Vrasmas (Associate Professor, Universitaty OVIDIUS of Constanta, National Projects Coordinator, Association RENINCO Romania) presentation and discussion on the Romanian situation.

official definition of inclusion in 1999 and 2005. In 2000 an international workshop, "Human Resource Development in Support of Inclusive Education" was organized by UNESCO and UNICEF in Romania. In 2001 UNESCO put together a case study entitled "Including the excluded: meeting diversity in education" where Romania was used as an example. Inclusive education was embedded in Romania's 1998 curriculum reform and disabilities were to be mainstreamed and education for those with complex needs ensured. Yet there is still a need for a coherent transition from primary to secondary education. From 1998 to 2002 there was an ongoing in-service teacher training program for teachers in primary regular schools on integrated education for children with disabilities in seven counties. In 2000 a teaching guide for children with special educational needs was disseminated. A Romanian version of the UNESCO guide for understanding and responding to children needs in inclusive classrooms was distributed and a guide to support teachers was also provided in 2005. Still, the greatest challenges lie in poor relationships between teachers and students combined with negative attitudes towards some learners. This ultimately hinders inclusive practices.

H. Serbia[27]

In Serbia there is no legal framework for inclusive education fostering the development of policies and programs towards the training of teaching staff, nor are there strategies for inclusive education that can provide this framework. Moreover there is no consensus about who makes up the marginalized groups. The concept of special needs is often understood as identical to the term "handicapped." More support for teachers to undergo trainings on inclusive education is needed. Partly due to the change of government, the nation recently moved from an innovative design of inclusive curriculum back to the traditional subject-based curriculum. This illustrates how political power is critical in educational policy.

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[27] The information in this section was adapted from Representatives from the presentation by the Fund for an Open Society Team for Inclusive Education (Darinka Radivojevic, Milena Jerotijevic, Tatjana Stojic) on the Serbian situation

Discussions on the concept, role, and specificities of inclusive education are still going on in Serbia, combined with changes in a European integration process. The country struggles between a defectological versus an inclusive approach to education and as a result there needs to be a more comprehensive understanding of "special needs." Specifically, it implies a lack of development occurring as a result of extremely unfavorable social, cultural and economic living conditions. The needs of marginalized children must be understood in order to provide appropriate social and educational support.

In Serbia the curriculum tends to be rigid regardless of differences among students, and parents are not treated as partners in the educational process. In mainstream schools there is no preparation for the staff and teachers to work with marginal children and youth. Education in Serbia still displays many signs of high selectivity and exclusion.

While the Government of the Republic of Serbia is committed to the further promotion of children's rights and the right to a quality and accessible education, there is no clear conception and legal obligation to organize educational work and support in order to address those needs. In 2007, the Agency for the Development of Education, in a process of adoption from the National Educational Council, hopes to change certain dimensions of the current education system, creating equal conditions for all, enabling inclusion of marginalized groups and developing different forms of support to the process of learning for every child.

Even amidst these initiatives there is still no legal obligation for schools to implement inclusion and there are no financial instruments to support mainstream schools in which children with disabilities are already placed. The schools which show interest and readiness to develop in accordance with inclusive criteria include pupils with disabilities. The reform of the system of education began in 2001, and inclusive education was integrated into the curriculum structure. Thirty percent of the compulsory primary school curriculum adjusted to local/specific needs of their pupils and there was a focus on educational outcomes. Nevertheless, this reform was halted in 2004 because of a change

in political power and the implementation of a uniform, previously decreed curriculum which was reinstituted as a legal obligation. As a result, educational outcomes were no longer declared as an instrument of adjusting education to specificities of various pupils. Inclusive education is not understood as an integral part of general education and mainstream curriculum. Individualized approaches and individual educational plans are extremely rare and sporadically implemented. The implementation of these plans depends exclusively on the good will of the individual teacher. Since there is no legal framework for mainstreaming, they are mostly implemented through developmental programs and projects of international organizations on the level of compulsory primary school.

Workshop presenters from Serbia felt that if the process of reform of education does gather speed then the education system as a whole will change and return to the previously broached curricular reform providing a more flexible curriculum conducive to inclusive practices. Possibilities of local developmental planning of educational institutions continue to open the further development of inclusive education. It is certain that experiences of the nongovernmental sector and international organizations will provide considerable contribution to implement a more flexible curriculum. Some outcomes already achieved in the NGO sector are: developed models of inclusive education; sensitive and trained teachers for inclusive education; developed criteria and indicators of inclusive educational practice; and a sensitive and involved local community linked with concrete plans of advancement at the local level.

I. Ukraine[28]

Ukraine does not have a distinct terminology concerning inclusive education, and inclusive education is not a priority in its educational policy. As of now, terminology concerning inclusive education refers to children who need correction of mental and/or physical development, youth with disabilities, children with severe impairments, children

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[28] The information in this section was adapted from Ms. Iryna Ivaniuk's (Consultant of Monitoring and Evaluation Education Programs Development Directorate Ministry of Education and Science) presentation and discussion of the Ukranian situation.

with limited abilities, children with special educational needs. In fact, policy makers do not make a distinction between "inclusion" and "integration" and there is no statistical data concerning the number of children with special educational needs. In Ukraine, inclusive education was initiated by nongovernmental organizations and these groups primarily focus on children with special education needs (disabled children) and homeless children. The concept of inclusive education has not been integrated into the curriculum structure of basic education. Concerning the education of children with special needs, there needs to be early childhood intervention and this implies cooperation between the ministries of education and health.

Some obstacles to inclusive educational practices include the dual system of regular and special education; prejudice of parents, teachers and classmates towards those with special needs; architectural barriers; traditional ways of teaching in schools; unprepared teachers; limited resources of support for teachers and no specialized support; large class sizes; lack of early intervention; and inflexible funding guidelines. In order to make some progress towards inclusive educational practices the content of education has to be geared towards inclusion and there must be support from families and special services. Most importantly, educational staff must be appropriately trained and legislation must be changed in order to specify a commitment to inclusive educational practices.

J. Common Challenges for the Region

Although there have been positive advances in terms of visions, strategies and practices, inclusive education is still not a high-level priority in the agendas of Eastern and South Eastern European countries. Discrimination towards certain ethnic groups still exists. For example, the Roma[29] people have historically faced widespread discrimination in Southern and Eastern European nations. They are primary victims of exclusionary visions and practices in Southern and Eastern European educational systems and the practice of placing members of the Roma population in separate schools and classes remains widespread. These children are put in all-Roma schools that offer a low quality education

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[29] Sometimes they are referred to with the use of the pejorative term, "Gypsies."

and the schools themselves suffer from inferior conditions. At times these students are even sent to classes for students with learning disabilities regardless of whether they have any sort of special learning issues. Combating these practices of exclusion is only possible if the mindset of educators and educational institutions seeks to advance inclusive education as a policy of promoting social justice and of democratizing learning opportunities within an inclusive curriculum. A common challenge the region faces is that it is in their culture to evaluate individuals, not groups. The entire concept of inclusive education hinges on including all individuals and therefore requires a new way of looking at things. There needs to be a common, accepted definition of inclusive education for each nation and this concept can be supported by UNESCO's conceptual framework on Inclusive Education[30]. It is imperative that this concept extends beyond just special needs education and reflects the idea of social justice.

The lack of reliable data on inclusive education is often mentioned as a big problem which can distort realistic analysis and sustainable reform. However before data can be collected, the term of inclusive education has to be discussed, conceptualized and defined. It is not only a problem of improving the quality of the data collection. Also, many countries are in transition and this will undoubtedly impede large scale system change and education reform.

Common barriers of exclusion include a lack of resources and data; insufficient curricular integration and articulation between Primary and Secondary Education; overcrowded classes; untrained teachers and staff; lack of official effective policy design and implementation, and an absence of public awareness about inclusive education.

A general perception reflects that this group of countries can look at the Nordic experiences regarding inclusive education as a guide, as for example the movement to integrate special education students into normal school classes started to develop in Finland in the 1960s.

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[30] UNESCO. 2005. *Guidelines for inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All.* Paris: UNESCO.

V. Good Practices

Finland is considered one of the pioneers in inclusive educational practices. As a result, it was used as a reference at the Eastern and South Eastern European Regional Workshop in order to animate the discussion and to provide inputs to the set up of a regional agenda. Nations in Eastern and South Eastern Europe can look at the Nordic experiences as a guide, but first inclusive education must be defined and articulated as an official policy at the national level. Once it is an official policy then country specific strategies must be devised and implemented.

This section will detail some aspects of the Finnish experience and its successes in order to understand what is essential for effective inclusive educational policy before discussing good practices in the Eastern and South Eastern European region.

A. Finland: An Effective Model

Data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) study shows that Finland has been able to achieve both equality and quality concerning educational outcomes. The successful performance of Finnish students can be attributed to a wide variety of factors. In Finland, the nation holding the best performance results according to PISA, comprehensive schooling is a pedagogical philosophy and practice. It entails that the school is to include every child without exception, and to adjust to each child's needs.

The Finnish National Board of Education[31] asserts that the vision of inclusive education is one that is organized so that every pupil gets adequate and well-timed support to his/her learning and growth. In order to execute an effective inclusive educational policy, school culture and pedagogical methods must be developed in order to promote the success of all pupils in their studies. In Finland the dialogue between national decision-making bodies, administration, municipalities and other educational institutions is open

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[31] This information is adapted from the presentation given by Ritva Jarvinen of the Finnish National Board of Education on "Current Trends on Inclusive Education" (keynote speech).

and flexible. The key objective of Finnish educational policy is to provide all citizens with an equal access to education regardless of age, place of residence, economic status, gender, or mother tongue. Education is considered to be a fundamental right of all citizens and basic education helps to increase both regional equality and equality among all individuals. Inclusive education in Finland however still requires systemic changes, and in order to fulfill goals of equity and equality there needs to be focus on individual support in learning. The Finnish National Board of Education believes that growing up and studying in heterogeneous groups is good both for individuals and the nation as a whole and they are committed to support the versatile growth and development of a unique personality of a child.

According to some scholars the success of the Finnish comprehensive school is due to the cultural homogeneity of the nation[32]. "Grave political conflicts and sudden changes in educational thinking have been relatively rare"[33] and this undoubtedly aids in having both a stable yet progressive educational system.

Special education is closely integrated into classroom teaching and is inclusive by nature. From grades one through nine, every school has a part-time support teacher for special needs who works closely with other teachers. Finland also has the smallest class sizes, a common and flexible curriculum for a nine-year basic education and a student-centered instruction.

Most importantly, in the Finnish culture, the teaching profession is viewed as one of the most important professions in society and they are compensated accordingly. In fact, only 10% of those who apply for the teaching track in universities are accepted. Teachers are also highly valued as experts holding a master's degree either in their subject area or in educational science. The government invests many resources into teacher training resulting in both teachers and schools experiencing a great sense of autonomy. Students

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[32] According to the PISA data non-native students in Finland account for a mere 1 percent. See Linnakyala, P. and Valijarvi, J.(2003). *Finnish Students Performance in PISA: Why such a success?* From the Finnish PISA team, Institute for Educational Research University of Jyvaskyala Retrieved on July 11, 2007 from http://www.oph.fi/info/finlandinpisastudies/conference2005/jounivalijarvi.doc.
[33] Ibid

are assessed according to their individual achievements and driven by motivations other than exams such as the expectation of a better and enriching life.

If Eastern and South Eastern European nations can strengthen the recognition of teachers in society, implement a more integrated and flexible curriculum, deliver effective training on inclusive practices to all their teachers to ensure high educator qualification, and in overall terms invest more in their educational systems, it is possible that in the future they can reap benefits similar to those of Finland. Clearly these are lofty goals and can only be achieved gradually, but education must be given a top priority.

B. Good Practices in the Region

B.1. <u>Introducing Inclusive Education for General Education (Georgia)</u>

While the region as a whole has a long way to go, some Eastern and South Eastern European nations have already taken important steps towards inclusive education. In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research of Norway, the Georgian Ministry of Education has launched a project for introducing inclusive education for general education in Ten Tbilisi Schools. This project is a pilot initiative which, upon successful implementation, will serve as the basis for the development of a national policy for inclusive education and for introducing similar initiatives throughout the country. A comprehensive state policy towards inclusive education can be articulated once this project has been implemented and evaluated, eventually resulting in inclusive teaching in schools and an increase in public awareness.

B.2. <u>Mobile Teams (Georgia, Moldova, and Montenegro)</u>

Mobile multidisciplinary teams work along with support teachers and parents in Georgia, Montenegro and Moldova. In Montenegro many initiatives are taking place including a one year practice in the teacher pre-service training program to develop skills and abilities in pedagogy and the psychology of coping with differences. Members of the

support staff are also becoming involved in teacher in-service teacher training in order to ensure and maximize support.

B.3. <u>Tailoring UNESCO Resources (Romania)</u>

Romania has created national versions of various UNESCO guides including one geared towards understanding and responding to the needs of children in inclusive classrooms. This was distributed throughout the country to teachers between 1995 and 2005 as a way of supporting educators and promoting inclusive educational practices.

B.4. <u>The Gymnasium Pro Success (Moldova)</u>

Gymnasium Pro Success is a governmental educational institution founded in September of 2002 in Moldova. It is a partnership based on collaborative conventions signed among organizations and institutions involved in the implementation of a model of inclusive education. Their vision of inclusive education involves an educational environment without risks and spaces adjusted for every child, opportunities for each child to express him/herself, and promotion of an interpersonal dialogue. In Gymnasium there are 115 children and since 2003 two to three children with disabilities have been enrolled each year. Their disabilities vary from mild to moderate and to severe and generally fall into the following broad categories: mental retardation, learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, speech and language disorders, sensory and physical disabilities. Architectural adaptations to ramps, bathrooms, lavatories and recreational rooms have been made. Tolerance for difference is taught through special activities so parents and children can welcome special needs children through integration. The teaching-learning process is guided by the support groups which are formed by principals, teachers, school psychologists, the parents of the child and other parents. For each child a support group devises an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) which decides what subject matter have to be excluded (physical education, fine arts, technological education etc.), permits partial attendance of some subject matters (music education, language classes etc.), decides

individual teaching of some subjects (mathematics, chemistry), determines to what extent curriculum should be modified or adapted for each subject matter.

B.5. <u>National Strategy (Albania)</u>

In Albania, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has developed a National Strategy for Students with Special Needs for 2005-2015. This plan has the necessary governmental financial support and is considered to be one of the most important undertakings in the field of education in Albania so far. The crux of the plan includes increasing accessibility, capacity building elements, and the development of school models like 90 inclusive kindergartens and 100 inclusive schools. In order to aid these schools, the Ministry of Education's strategy plans on supporting psycho-pedagogical and psycho-social structures to be set up in schools without excluding other auxiliary services for students with special needs. Additionally, the Institute of Curriculum and Standards has made several improvements in the National Curriculum. The new curriculum is now more flexible, provides teachers with several ideas and suggestions on how to work with children in accordance with their needs and difficulties, and allows teachers of compulsory education to use 15-20% of their total annual working hours to address various needs and problems that might be faced during the education process. Substantial improvements have been made in relation to the transition from primary to secondary education. The Institute of Curriculum and Standards is also preparing supporting learning materials of various levels of difficulty which can be used as modules to assist teachers. Moreover, the Institute of Curriculum and Standards has also put together various practical documents to assist teachers in the process of selection and adjustment of the curriculum in regards to the specificities of students with special needs.

C. Common Elements of Good Practices

Each nation in the region could advance on broadening the concept of inclusive education, commit to an official policy and look to successful initiatives on an inter-

regional basis in order to articulate and implement inclusive educational policy. Mobile support units, individual educational plans, tolerance initiatives, and increased teacher training are just a few actions that countries can implement to begin making progress in the realm of inclusive education. In summary, the key elements of good practices incorporate ideas of awareness, flexibility and diversity both in terms of the offer and demand of education and a coherent transition between the different levels of the educational system. They also seek to bolster adapted teacher training, cross-sectoral cooperation (political, social, and economic) and involvement of students, parents and community at the international, national and local levels.

VI. The Way Forward

Inclusive education must become a significant priority within government policies. There must be integration between the different ladders and pathways of the education system in each nation. The individualization of the learning needs of both potential and current students must take into account their cultural, social and cognitive diversities. Teachers must receive adequate training and support and schools must help advance inclusive practices.

Workshop attendees discussed a number of questions with respect to inclusive education and actions that need to be taken. The main points of the discussion centered around the questions in the following diagram, which is to be completed and improved according to the outcomes of future Regional Workshops on inclusive education (See schedule of upcoming Regional Workshops in Appendix):

Inclusive Education Roadmap: *What needs to be done?*

- What actions need to be taken concerning the **concept** of IE?
- What **legislative** actions need to occur?
- What actions need to take place in **curriculum design**?
- How can we move ahead with respect to **teacher development and training**?
- What actions can occur on the **institutional** level?
- With respect to **finances** what needs to happen?
- What **policy** actions need to be taken?
- How can more **awareness** surrounding inclusive education be cultivated?
- How can we **support** each other? How can the IBE support us?

Workshop attendees came up with some crucial steps to be taken with respect to inclusive education. Actions the region intends to enact include:

Concept:

- Relevant UN conventions need to be disseminated and a general philosophy/policy statement on inclusive education must be made on the national level within each country.

Policy/Legislation

- National governments should become more responsible to orient and monitor changes in light of inclusive education and promote a more flexible curriculum in order to support the diverse needs of their students.

- Minimum standards should be devised for each level of education.

- Attention should be given to places where deep segregation occurs.

- While utilizing international consensus each country should adapt its policies according to its specific situation.

- In countries where the whole education system needs to be improved, nations can benefit from the moment of reconstruction to incorporate the idea of inclusive education from the very beginning of the processes of educational reform.

Awareness

- An advocacy campaign should be conducted in order to raise awareness about inclusive education on both the global and national level. By doing this international and national funding can be raised and inclusive education will be promoted in national planning. Non-governmental organizations have an important role to play in this process.

- The public must also understand that inclusive education is more than education for special needs students.

Support

- Theories must be translated into action, and international organizations including NGOs can help develop strategies and capacities.

- Interactions and partnerships between the international community, civil society and communities of parents, learners and educators must be improved.

- Grassroots initiatives must be promoted in order to meet concrete needs. These initiatives can lead to major activities and tools.

Curriculum Design

- Student must be involved in the curriculum process otherwise their needs cannot be met.

- Curriculum designers should be aware that the current curriculum is designed by an older generation and cannot translate students' expectations.

- There should be a strong political will to conceive, but especially to implement a student-centred inclusive curriculum.

- Teachers should be actively involved as co-developers of an inclusive curriculum at the school level.

Finances

- Tools must be provided to enable the monitoring of inclusive education within the national budgets and the implementation of long-terms policies of economic and social development.

- Financial management must be clarified with a sustainable strategy of how resources should be used.

Institutions

- Regional and national networks must cooperate, collaborate and share good practices.

- Education professionals, ministers, inspectors, school principals and teachers should be trained in terms of vision and management with regard to inclusive education.

Teacher Training and Development

- Countries must invest in in-service teacher training and explore alternatives such as distance training, and inclusive education must be incorporated as part of the whole pre-service training program instead of being addressed separately.

- In teacher training programs must be more focused on the learners' specific differences, and needs and standards must be diversified along with exams.

Clearly, there is great value in sharing national perspectives in a regional context because collective learning is very enriching and stimulating. The workshop participants are now aware of the ICE 2088, its objectives, scope and modalities, and will become agents for dissemination of this knowledge within their sphere of action. Since each workshop participant is already a member of several other networks they can disseminate the

workshops outcomes, with a multiplier effect, using existing websites and planned events. Additional professional exchanges among participants and with IBE have been generated as a result of this workshop. In fact, the IBE will sponsor a pilot program for Montenegro whose principal objective is to foster capacity development for pedagogues an psychologists working in secondary schools in Montenegro with respect to education of children with special needs. Furthermore, participants will rely on each other for provisions of technical expertise and professional peer support. Strong cooperative relations were established with potential partners for the ICE, like OECD and the Open Society Institute, who are interested in working with the IBE, focused on the implementation of inclusive policies and practices within a broader conceptualization.

VII. Relevant issues for a regional agenda

We outline some core issues according to the suggested four themes of the 48th ICE.

- Inclusive Education: Approaches, Scope and Content:

  (a) Inclusive education is a key definition and concept of the education system as it provides foundations, strategies and contents for exerting an active citizenship based on a conceptualization of social justice and collective well-being (a human rights-based approach well embedded in the holistic framework of EFA goals);

  (b) The goal of inclusive education should be to include all children in education, but also to include all citizens in the society, thus reflecting a recreated relationship between people: the ideal of social justice;

  (c) Inclusive education can be visualized with a generational approach: learners today will be parents tomorrow. If they can benefit from inclusive education, our societies will be more likely to progress towards equity, equality and democracy.

- Inclusive Education: Public Policies:

  (a) The role of the government in developing policies for inclusive education, visualized as necessary and irreplaceable, should imply advocacy, coherent and sustainable policy design, attainment of financial sustainability, capacity-building for institutions and actors from the different ladders of the education system, profound involvement of multiple stakeholders, and an accountability open to society;

  (b) The design and the development of policies on inclusive education should not be understood as the sum of initiatives and efforts towards specific groups (an endless although possibly incomplete list). Quite to the contrary, the focus has to be on facilitating friendly environments and on providing effective learning opportunities to every child in a mainstream school by recognizing, respecting and taking care of their diversities (change the focus from debates and frictions about which categories to include to the provision of a vast repertoire of learning opportunities for all);

  (c) Policies and programs for inclusive education should foster a cross-sectoral approach, which can be a strong tool for developing an interdependent framework of economic and social policy. They should also be aware of cultural resistances, from outside and from inside the education system, to respect and accept student with special needs in mainstream schools (strong tradition of isolation and segregation).

- Inclusive Education: Systems, Links and Transitions:

(a) A broad definition of curriculum with a clear focus on school and classroom institutional and pedagogical practices can provide conditions and opportunities for every child to perform by understanding the way he/she learns (individualized learning plans and tutorial support based on early learning interventions).

(b) The organization and functioning of the education system should reflect flexibility and diversity (in terms of attendance, learning opportunities, learning content, learning environments, teaching practices, use of technologies, among other aspects) to meet learners' differences and needs.

(c) The transition and coherence among the different levels of the education system should be improved (for example, from early childhood to primary, especially for the case of special needs education, and also to avoid dropout from primary to secondary, from secondary to higher education); a common curricular framework and guidelines should be worked out mainly in relation to compulsory schooling. Strong early intervention is a key factor.

- Inclusive Education: Learners and Teachers:

(a) Inclusive education should be learner-centered and synonymous of a good quality education. High expectations should be conveyed to each child.

(b) Involve students in the curriculum development process: otherwise their diverse needs can not be met in a curriculum designed by an older generation and many times full of prejudices towards the learning potentialities and capacities of certain students (the need of a cultural change in the teacher's profile and role as well as the acceptance of inclusive education as a core strategy of the education system).

(c) Incorporate, advocate in favour of and invest into inclusive education as a critical component of the teacher's strongly school-based professional development. In particular, address inclusive education as a cross-cutting issue instead of a separate one in the teachers' education curricula (not a "special and isolated curriculum"). Teachers should be able to co-develop the curriculum from the school level by forging tailored approaches towards the learning expectation and needs of their students.

VIII. Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Regional Preparatory Workshops on Inclusive Education

The workshops are planned over the period June 2007 – March 2008 in different geographical regions according to the following calendar:

1. Eastern and South Eastern Europe: Sinaia, Romania (13-16 June 2007), completed;
2. Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa: Nairobi, Kenya (25-27 July 2007) completed;
3. Arab Gulf States: Dubai, United (27-28 United Arab Emirates (UAE), August 2007)
4. Latin America: Victoria, Argentina (12-14 September 2007)
5. Africa: Kigali, Rwanda (25-28 September 2007).
6. Europe and West Asia: Minsk, Belarus (29-31 October 2007)
7. Asia: Beijing, China (22-23 November 2007)
8. The Caribbean: Kingston, Jamaica (5-7 December 2007)
9. Eastern Europe: Riga, Latvia (24-26 February 2008)
10. Northern Europe: Finland (7-8 March 2008)

Appendix 2: List of Participants

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