



INCLUSION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES IN MAINSTREAM SECONDARY EDUCATION

Research Report



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O M B U D S M A N

**INCLUSION OF
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This document covers activities implemented by the Ombudsman and Open the Windows with the financial assistance of the European Union and UNICEF. The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of UNICEF or the European Union. The European Union is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.



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INTRODUCTION



The research, focusing on inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in the mainstream secondary education in the country, was carried out by the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Macedonia, with financial support of EU IPA program, UNICEF and in close cooperation with the Association for Assistive Technology Open the Windows from Skopje.

The key objective of the research is to provide an insight into the current state of affairs regarding the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in the mainstream secondary education in the country, serving as a baseline for coming up with recommendations to further improve inclusiveness of Macedonian educational system.

The findings and insights obtained are expected to alleviate the continuous lack of statistical data regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the Macedonian educational system in general, and particularly in the mainstream secondary education. It is precisely the lack of appropriate data and the lack of documentation stating positive practices and achievements on one hand, and the challenges and the drawbacks of current solutions and models, on the other, that make planning, implementation and assessment of public educational policies

that much harder. Therefore, the present research report is a genuine contribution to the public debate in respect of the need of system-wide solutions, based on facts and evidences.

The present research builds upon a similar research carried out by the Ombudsman on the inclusion of children with disability in mainstream education published in 2016. This research forms a part of Ombudsman's constant efforts of monitoring and encouraging the overall inclusion of children with disabilities in the society.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Subject and Objectives of the Research

The subject of the present research is to look at the level of inclusion of children and youth with disabilities into the mainstream secondary education in the country.

The specific **objectives** of the present research focus on:

- 1) Providing insights into the rate of inclusion of children and youth with disabilities into mainstream secondary schools,
- 2) Preparing mainstream secondary schools to ensure active participation and equal educational opportunities to students with disabilities, and
- 3) Identifying the needs and the possibilities for further improvement of inclusiveness of mainstream secondary education in the country.

Definition of Terms Used

For the needs of the present research, the term **“students with disabilities”** will refer to students with any of these types of disabilities:

- Physical disabilities (students with legs, arms and whole body mobility impairments, students with cerebral palsy, students using aids, such as wheelchair, crutches etc.),
- Intellectual disabilities (impediments to the intellectual development),
- Visual impairment (severe impairments making it difficult to students to attend mainstream classes),

- Visual and/or hearing impairment (severe impairment making it difficult to students to attend mainstream classes),
- Combined impairment (combination of several disabilities),
- Autism (autistic spectrum disorders), and
- Conditions that cause learning disabilities (hyperactivity, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia etc.)

It should be emphasized that in the area of education, the term “students with special educational needs” is used as a synonym to the term “students with disabilities”. However, the term “students with special educational needs (students with SEN)” has a broader sense and it also includes different categories of students with special needs in the educational process: for example, students who do not speak the medium of instruction or even highly talented students. Hence, the term “students with disabilities” is used in the present research to emphasize that the focus of this research is placed on the special educational needs arising from specific disabilities in students.

“Assistive Information Technology” (shortly: Assistive Technology (AT)) refers to hardware devices, resources and software adjustments made to computer equipment making the use of computers by persons with disabilities possible and convenient. Some of the examples of assistive computer devices include:

- Big button keyboards,
- trackballs,
- joysticks,
- switches,
- screen readers etc.

“Secondary school” is a term used to refer to the mainstream secondary education schools in the country, including music, ballet, art, sports and physical education schools, but excluding the special education secondary schools attended by students with disabilities.

These specific definitions used in the research have been shared with and properly explained to all respondents taking part in the research.

Research Methods

The following methods were used in this research: desk research, survey, interviews and focus groups.

The desk research focused on reviewing the legal framework and public policies referring to the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream secondary education. The analysis of the provisions and the standards proscribed with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education and the level of harmonization of the national legal framework with these two documents have all served as a starting point. Moreover, the research also took into consideration the relevant secondary sources of information, such as research reports, studies etc. The list of documents reviewed with the desk research is presented in the Appendix 1 to the present document.

A **survey** was carried out among mainstream secondary schools to find out more on their understanding, experiences (practices) and positions (as institutions) regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. The survey consisted of a questionnaire which contained a combination of close-ended, semi-open and open-ended questions, annexed in the Appendix 2 to this document.

Semi-structured interviews were organized with responsible persons coming from the same number of mainstream secondary schools. The interviews took place in the schools and were designed to collect additional information and clarifications regarding schools’ understanding, experiences and official positions regarding inclusion. The questions from the interviews are annexed in the Appendix 3 to the present document.

The **focus groups** organized within this research included three respective categories of respondents: Teachers and members of school expert teams, parents of students with disabilities and students with disabilities personally. The objective of the research was to identify respondents’ experiences and challenges they face, the needs and the potential ways of further strengthening inclusiveness of secondary education. The questions addressed in the focus groups are annexed in the Appendix 4 to the present document.

Sample Specifics

The three methods employed in the fieldwork- survey, interview and focus groups, included **representative samples** with the following specifics in terms of the scope and the structure:

The survey included 86% of all mainstream secondary schools in the country, which have filled in the questionnaire, signed by their principal or other autho-

rized person. In absolute figures, out of 107 reached schools (including music, ballet, art, sports and physical education schools), 92 filled in the questionnaire.

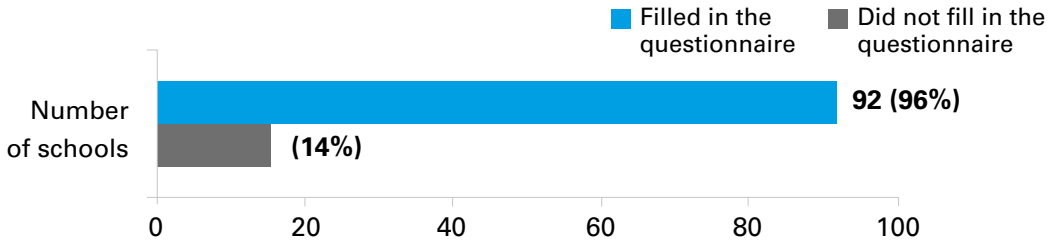


FIG. 1: Number and percentage of mainstream secondary schools included in the survey-based research

In the school year of 2016/17, a total of 64,298 students have been enrolled in the schools having filled in the questionnaire. According to the data made available by the State Statistical Office, the total number of students in mainstream secondary schools in that respective year was 76,394. According to that, the schools included in the survey are attended by 84.2% of the total number of students en-

rolled in mainstream secondary schools in the country¹. In the school year of 2017/18, the total number of enrolled students at the start of the year was 62,251 (this information is still not supported by an official information published on the webpage of the State Statistical Office, having in mind that the Office publishes such data at the end of the school year).

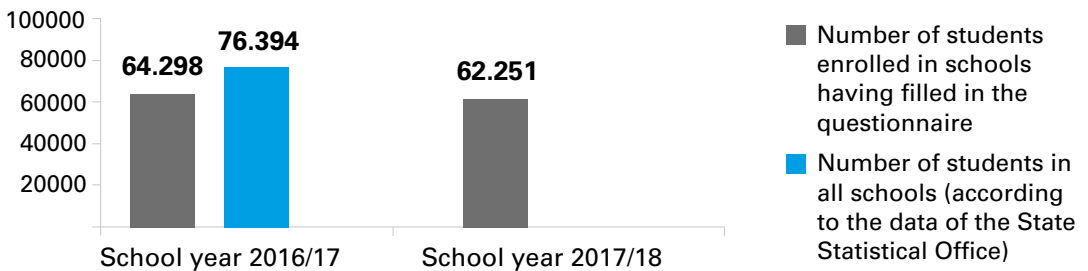


FIG. 2: Total number of students attending the schools having filled in the questionnaire

1 Source: The State Statistical Office, statistical data by areas: education and science, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto.aspx?id=5>, webpage visited on 28.11.2017.

The schools which have filled in the questionnaire (92) are located in eight planning regions in the country: the majority of the schools are located in the Skopje Region (25), while the rest of the respondents come from the South-Eastern and

the North-Eastern Planning Regions (seven schools from each region). This difference in favor of the schools located in the Skopje Region is due to the fact that the largest number of schools in the country are located there.

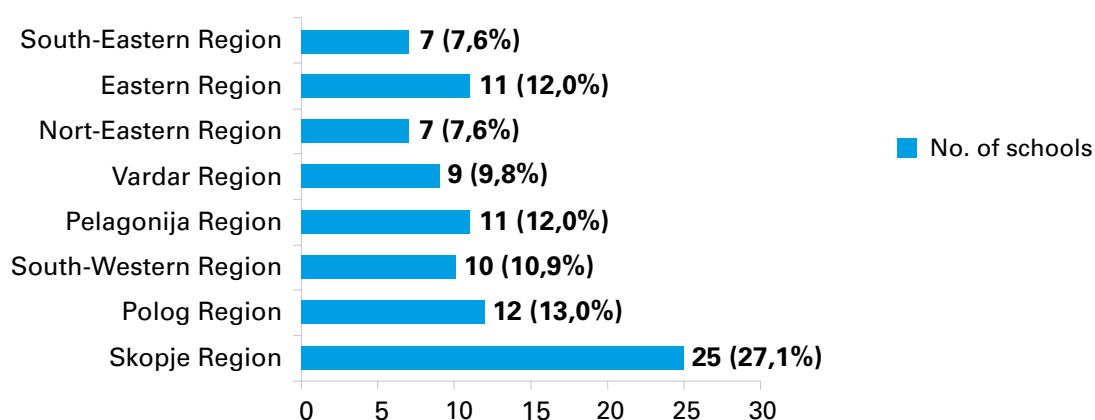


FIG. 3:

Distribution by planning regions of secondary schools having filled in the questionnaire

The medium of instruction of the majority of the schools having filled in the questionnaire (92) is Macedonian (54 or 58.7%

of the schools), and only four of them or 4.3% are schools teaching in two media of instruction, Macedonian and Turkish.

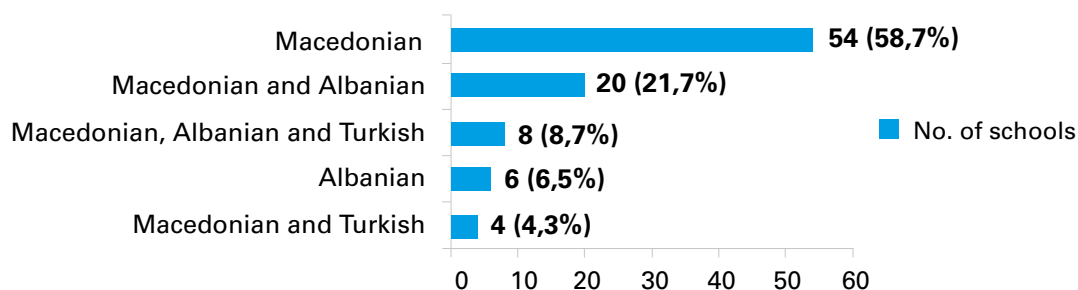


FIG. 4:

Structure of the schools having filled in the questionnaire distributed by medium of instruction

According to the type of education, the majority of schools having filled in the questionnaire (92) provide secondary vocational education (39 schools, or 42.4%); four schools (4.3%) provide art or physical education secondary education.

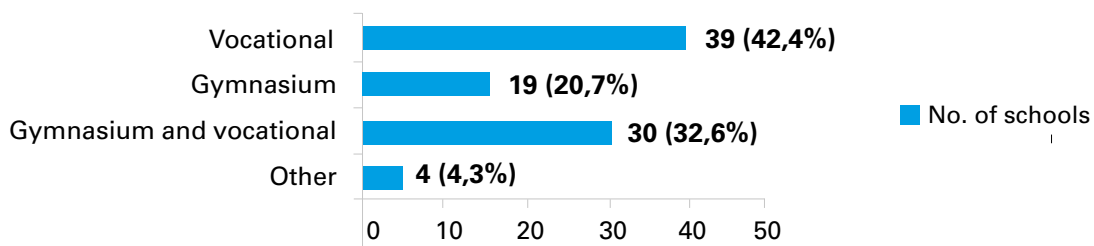


FIG. 5:

Structure of the schools having filled in the questionnaire distributed by type of secondary education

The **interviews** were organized in 16 schools selected by the research team, in consultation with the Ombudsman and UNICEF. The selection was based on the answers to the questionnaire, considering several factors:

- the planning region of schools;
- the type of education they provide;
- the medium of instruction, and
- the representation of students with disabilities in the respective schools.

Secondary education schools from all planning regions in the country were included in the survey.

| Planning region | Skopje | Eastern | North -Eastern | Vardar | Pelagonija | Polog | South -Western | South-Eastern | Total |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------|----------------|--------|------------|-------|----------------|---------------|-------|
| Number of interviewed schools | 7 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 16 |

FIG. 6:

Number of interviewed secondary schools by planning regions²

Schools providing different types of education were included.

| Type of education | Gymnasium | Vocational | Gymnasium + vocational | Arts | Total |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------------|------|-------|
| Number of interviewed schools | 3 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 16 |

FIG. 7:

Number of interviewed schools by type of education offered³

- 2 SK-Skopje Region; E-Eastern Region; NE-North-Eastern; VR-Vardar Region; PE-Pelagonia Region; PO-Polog Region; SW-South-Western; SE-South-Eastern Region
- 3 G-gymnasium; V-vocational; G&V-gymnasium and vocational; A-art school

The respondents represented different schools delivering education in different media of instruction, as well as bilingual and trilingual schools.

| Media of instruction | MK | AL | MK, AL | MK, TR | MK, AL, TR | Total |
|-------------------------------|----|----|--------|--------|------------|-------|
| Number of interviewed schools | 10 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 16 |

FIG. 8:

Number of interviewed secondary schools by media of instruction ⁴

In terms of representation of students with disabilities, based on the answers provided in the questionnaires, out of the 16 schools interviewed:

- 11 have students with disabilities, and
- 5 don't have students with disabilities.

A total of 28 persons were included in the three **focus groups**: Students with disabilities, parents of students with disabilities and teachers and members of school expert teams. The selection of participants in focus groups was made by the research team, in close consultation with the Ombudsman and UNICEF, and efforts were made to ensure appropriate representation based on several different characteristics.

The focus group consisting of students with disabilities had nine respondents aged 15 to 18, with the following structure:

Five of them were female and four were male.

Based on the type of disabilities, four of the respondents had physical disabilities, two of them were with autism and autism spectrum disorder, two with intellectual disabilities and one with hearing impairment.

In terms of the level of inclusion in secondary education, four respondents were enrolled in first year, two in second year and one in third year of secondary education; two of the respondents had already graduated from secondary school in the previous school year.

Four of the respondents came from the Skopje Planning Region, the other five came from the Eastern, South-Eastern and Vardar Planning Region.

⁴ MK – Macedonian media of instruction; AL – Albanian media of instruction; MK, AL – Macedonian and Albanian media of instruction; MK, TR – Macedonian and Turkish media of instruction; MK, AL, TR – Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish media of instruction

| NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY: | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------------------|----|-----|----|-----------|--------------------|---|----|----|
| Gender | | Inclusion in secondary education | | | | | Type of disability | | | |
| F | M | I | II | III | IV | Graduated | PD | A | ID | HI |
| 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 |

FIG. 9:

Structure of students with disabilities- participants in the focus group ⁵

The focus group consisting of parents of students with disabilities had nine respondents with the following structure:

Seven of the respondents were female and two male.

Four of the respondents were parents of students with autism and autism spectrum disorders. Two of them were parents of students with physical disability and two of students with intellectual disability. One participant was parent of a student with hearing impairment.

Regarding the inclusion in secondary education, five of the respondents were parents of students enrolled in first year and two respondents were parents of students enrolled in second year of secondary education. The children of two parents who participated in the focus group had graduated from secondary education in the previous school year.

Six of the respondents came from the Skopje Planning Region, the other three came from the Vardar and the South-Eastern Planning Regions.

| NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY: | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------------------|----|-----|----|-----------|--------------------|---|----|----|
| Gender | | Inclusion in secondary education | | | | | Type of disability | | | |
| F | M | I | II | III | IV | Graduated | PD | A | ID | HI |
| 7 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 |

FIG. 10:

Structure of the parents of students with disabilities- participants in the focus group ⁶

The focus group of teachers and representatives of expert school teams included ten female respondents, with the following structure:

Six of them were professional school associates - special educators in mainstream secondary schools, two teachers, one school pedagogist and one school psychologist.

Five of the respondents came from the Skopje Planning Region, three from the

Vardar Planning Region, one from the Eastern and one from the North-Eastern Planning Regions.

⁵ Grad.-graduated from mainstream secondary school; PD-physical disability; A-autism and autism spectrum disorder; ID-intellectual disability; HI-hearing impairment

⁶ Grad.-graduated from mainstream secondary school; PD-physical disability; A-autism and autism spectrum disorder; ID-intellectual disability; HI-hearing impairment

| NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY: | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---------|------------|--------------|
| Gender | | Type of professional training | | | |
| F | M | Special Educator | Teacher | Pedagogist | Psychologist |
| 10 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

FIG. 11:

Structure of teachers and members of school expert teams- participants in the focus group

Timeframe

The research took place in the period August-November 2017 and it was organized in the following stages:

- Desk research: October-November;
- Survey: August-September;

- School visits and interviews with representatives from the schools: October; and
- Focus groups: October.

After the processing of the data collected, the research report was finalized at the beginning of January 2018.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

International Framework and Standards

The international legal framework and the standards in the area of inclusive education are governed by the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁷ (CRPD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)⁸ and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (hereinafter: the Salamanca Statement⁹). These Conventions have been ratified by the country, making their provisions part of the legal order of the country.

These documents rest on the view that each child has their own individual needs. Therefore, only the application of individual educational approach allows for maximal development of potential and ensures equal educational opportunities for all children. Individualized approach actually suggests that the educational system needs to adjust the entire process of teaching and learning to meet the individual needs and capacities of each child separately. To be able to participate in the educational process on equal terms, children with disabilities are entitled to individual support.

In the Article 7, the CRPD bounds states to all take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights on “an equal basis with other children”. Decision making needs to be based on “the best interests of the child”. The Article 9 envisages that persons with disabilities are entitled to access, inter alia, schools, information, the internet and the latest communications technologies “on an equal basis with others”. The Article 24 of the CRPD tackles education specifically, bounding States Parties “not to exclude on the basis of disability” children and youth with disabilities from “the education system at all levels”. States are bound to ensure that “reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements is provided” and to provide “effective individualized support” of children with disabilities “within the education system at all levels.” Teaching needs to take place in the “most appropriate languages, manners and communication means for the individual”, namely, referring, inter alia, Braille and sign language. The same article bounds States Parties to take appropriate measures to train teachers to provide individualized support to students with disabilities, including “teachers with disabilities”. The equal approach of persons with disabilities needs to be ensured across all levels of education, including “general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning.” The Article 31 also needs to be mentioned, as it calls upon the State Parties “to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention.”

7 Please refer to: Ibid1

8 Please refer to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, available at https://www.unicef.org/magic/media/documents/CRC_macedonian_language_version.pdf.

9 Please refer to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (the Salamanca Statement) available at https://www.unesco.de/fileadmin/medien/Dokumente/Bildung/Salamanca_Declaration.pdf

The Salamanca Statement envisages that children with disabilities “need to be provided with an access to mainstream schools that need to accommodate their needs by applying child-oriented pedagogical approach.” The Statement emphasizes that inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in mainstream education should be a rule, rather than an exception: “The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have.” Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities.”

Article 23 of the CRC tackles specifically children with disabilities, envisaging that “a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community.” The same Article recognizes the “right” of children with disabilities “to special care” and to, inter alia, “effective access to education.”

National Legal Framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia guarantees the right to education of all, stating that: “Everybody shall be entitled to access education. Education shall be accessible to all under equal conditions”.¹⁰

The key act in the area of secondary education is the Law on Secondary Education:¹¹

This Law does not list any disability as a potential ground for discrimination (Article 3, paragraph 3).

The Article 32 envisages that secondary education shall be organized based on plans and curricula designed to, inter alia, “ensure access to secondary education to students with special education needs” (line 4).

The Article 33, paragraph 1, prescribes that “all mainstream students having completed primary education” shall be entitled to enroll into secondary gymnasium education; while Article 34, paragraph 1 prescribes that “all mainstream and extramural students having completed their primary education” shall be entitled to enroll in secondary vocational schools. Students with special needs are

¹⁰ Article 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

¹¹ Law on Secondary Education (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” no. 44/1995, 24/1996, 34/1996, 35/1997, 82/1999, 29/2002, 40/2003, 42/2003, 67/2004, 55/2005, 113/2005, 35/2006, 30/2007, 49/2007, 81/2008, 92/2008, 33/2010, 116/2010, 156/2010, 18/2011, 42/2011, 51/2011, 6/2012, 100/2012, 24/2013, 41/2014, 116/2014, 135/2014, 10/2015, 98/2015, 145/2015, 30/2016, 127/2016 and 67/2017)

not mentioned at all in any of the provisions governing enrollment of students in mainstream secondary schools.

The Article 39, paragraph 1 envisages that “secondary education for students with special education needs is designed to provide education for these students based on curricula which is appropriately adjusted for acquiring skills for different occupations, that is, educational profiles or for vocational training.”

Additionally, Article 40, paragraph 1 states that “students who have been registered and categorized based on the type and the level of development disabilities shall be included in the secondary education for students with special education needs.”

Looking at these two provisions, it seems that children and youth with disabilities who have the required documents to support the respective type of disability are referred to special secondary schools. If we were to take into consideration the fact that special secondary education only trains students for a limited number of professions, it can be said that these solutions in fact encourage segregation of students with special educational needs, thus limiting employability opportunities of such students on the labor market in the future. Hence, improvements are required mainly in two directions - children with disabilities need to enroll in mainstream education on a higher scale which also implies a need for a more differentiated education program, and secondly, there is need of modernizing teaching plans and curricula used in special education schools.

Article 9-c, paragraph 1 defines the for-

mat of the collection of data secondary schools should keep on their students, and among other data, it defines an obligation of registering students’ “special educational need”. This article only determines the obligation of the schools to collect data on students’ disabilities, but does not provide details on how schools approach this issue.

Article 40, paragraphs 2 and 3 envisage obligation of forming inclusive team and to drafting individual educational plan; however, this obligation only applies to students attending secondary education schools for students with special needs (that is, “for the students referred to in paragraph 1”). This is a rather serious omission in the text of the law, as Article 40, paragraph 1, as stated above, refers to “secondary education for students with special needs”. The same article stipulates that “the enrolling procedure of students with special educational needs in secondary schools is determined by the Minister, on the proposal of the Bureau for Development of Education”, but there is no explanation that fully determines the procedure.

Such segregating solution is also envisaged in terms of transportation. Namely, according to Article 41, paragraph 5 of the Law on Secondary Education “students with disabilities and persons accompanying them shall be entitled to free transportation irrespective of the distance of their place of residence to the location of the secondary schools they attend.” Article 2, paragraph 3 of the same Law limits this right only to students included in secondary schools for students with special educational needs, according to

which state secondary schools are established for “certain categories of students of special interest of the state, or more specifically: “state secondary schools are established exclusively for the purpose of realizing plans and curricula for secondary education of certain categories of students of special interest of the state.” Additionally, Article 111 specifically lists special schools into the category of state secondary schools.

Article 59, paragraph 1 states that a special educator may be part of the “professional associates” in secondary schools dealing with “educational and pedagogical activities”. Detailed guidelines regarding the required competencies for the post of the special educators in secondary education are provided in the Rulebook on the Basic Professional Competencies in the Area of Professional Associates in Primary and Secondary Schools (which are identical to those applying to special educators in the primary education). The Rulebook actually governs the competencies required and indirectly points out to the role of special educators in the process of education. In addition to the non-obligatory aspect, where instead of “must”, the Law states that a special educator “can” be included in the team of professional school associates, meaning that there is a lack of an act stating clear guidelines on the role and the competencies of the special educator.

Article 2 of the Law on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education¹² states that a textbook is the basic teaching re-

¹² Law on Textbook for Primary and Secondary Education (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” no. 98/2008, 99/2009, 83/2010, 36/2011, 135/2011, 46/2012, 24/2013, 120/2013, 29/2014, 146/2015, 217/2015 and 30/2016)

source and a source of knowledge designed for the purpose of realizing the pedagogical and educational objectives stated on the teaching plan and curricula for the primary and secondary education. None of the articles of this Law states that textbooks need to be in a format which would be accessible to all students, including e-textbooks in accessible format, Braille textbooks, easily readable textbooks or other.

None of the articles of the Law on Vocational Education and Training¹³ states that students with disabilities are entitled to vocational education and training and that adjustments in terms of the physical accessibility of vocational education and training facilities, individual educational plans for vocational education and training, availability of learning materials or specially customized occupational health and safety equipment need to be taken into consideration.

For example, the Article 13 of the Law on Vocational Education and Training governing the verification of employers organizing practical training, or more precisely, the paragraph 1 thereof fails to state that in order to meet the required spatial requirements and the requirements in terms of the equipment and the staff, potential employers need to take into consideration the needs of students with disabilities as well.

Article 13 does not envisage the physical accessibility of vocational education facilities needs to be considered as a con-

¹³ Law on Vocational Education and Training (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” no. 71/2006, 117/2008, 148/2009, 17/2011, 24/2013, 137/2013, 41/2014, 145/2015 and 55/2016).

dition for verification. Article 18 provides description of the types of vocational education, the duration and the levels of vocational qualifications, but it actually fails to state that students with disabilities are entitled to certain type of vocational training, as well as that they are entitled to individual educational plans to help them complete their education.

When it comes to the Law on Student Standard¹⁴, and notably the article pertaining to dormitories, one cannot avoid the impression that the Law makes a reference to dormitories for students with special educational needs and dormitories for other students. There are no clear provisions stating that dormitories need to be accessible, and that they need to house at least one to two rooms accessible to students with disabilities, as well as accessible restrooms.

Article 24 states that the maximal number of students with special educational and pedagogical needs per group is eight, and the maximal number of students with combined disabilities per group is six, which once again points out to segregation of groups, or dormitories only for students with disabilities.

Article 33 pertaining to the staff employed with the dormitories also states a provision that points out to the existence of dormitories exclusively for students with disabilities.

The Law on Teachers¹⁵ in Primary and Secondary Schools does not state any specific provisions based on which teachers are bound to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. For example, Article 13 listing the duties of teachers fails to list drafting of individual educational plans as being part of teachers' duties.

In the section referring to basic professional competencies of teachers, Article 18 says the social and educational inclusion is one of the areas in which teachers need to have appropriate professional values, professional knowledge and understanding, as well as professional capacities and skills.

14 Law on Student Standard ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" no. 52/2005, 117/2008, 17/2011, 135/2011, 15/2013, 41/2014, 146/2015 and 30/2016)

15 Law on Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" no. 10/2015, 145/2015, 30/2016, 127/2016 and 67/2017)

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD RESEARCH

Representation of students with disabilities in the mainstream secondary education

During the previous and the current school year, out of 92 schools having filled in the questionnaire, 52 (or 56.5%) have reported that they have students with special educational needs attending their schools. A total of 246 students with special educational needs (SEN) attend these schools.

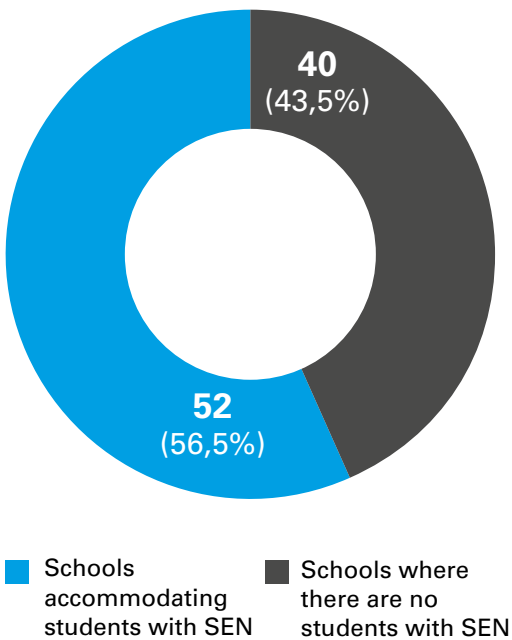


FIG. 12: Schools with and without SEN students

In the last two school years, the average per school is 2.79 SEN students or 0.4%. If we take into consideration only the schools having reported SEN students, the average per school is 4.94 SEN students per school or 0.65%.

The cross analysis of data shows that there is a significant difference between the percentage of students with disabilities in Skopje Region compared to other regions: in Skopje Region, the percentage of students with disabilities is 0.22%, while in all other regions combined it is at 0.50%. The research was not designed so as to discover the reason for such difference, but one of the possible assumptions is that in the regions outside Skopje alternatives are rather limited.

During the previous and the current school year, the percentage of representation of students with special educational needs in Skopje and other planning regions is identical.

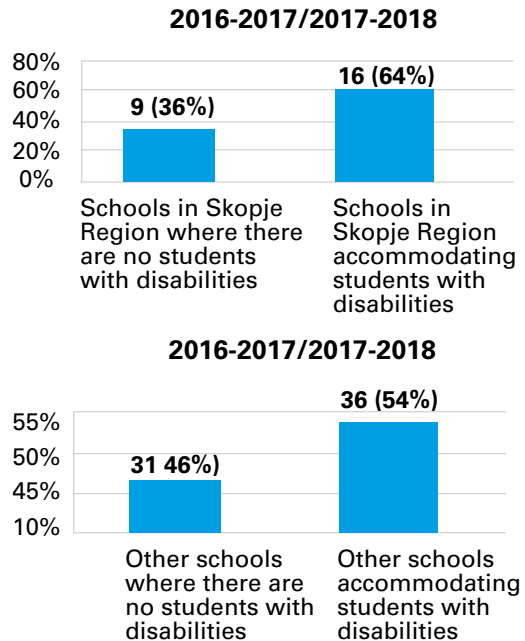


FIG. 13: Representation of SEN students in the Skopje versus other planning regions in the country

The analysis has shown that the majority, or 85% of the schools having filled in the questionnaire, have not been in a situation in the past three years of “having to reject the admittance” of student(s) with disabilities:

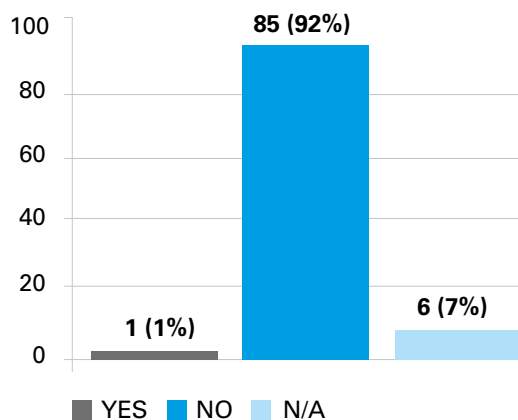


FIG. 14:

Responses to the question “In the past three years, has there been a case when your school could not accept a student with disabilities?”

The school which has been in such situation illustrates the fact that schools do not dispose of clearly defined and well established guidelines on how to deal with this issue. There is a lack of system-wide solution on the procedure to be followed in case of admittance or rejection of a student with special educational needs. The solutions are individual and they are generally improvised. The next statement clearly illustrates what has been said previously: *“Due to the severity of her disability, the student had been admitted to a special class in her primary school. Her parents were advised to talk to the Head of the Education Department within the Municipality of Kochani and an education inspector who then referred the parents to the SSU Iskra- Shtip.”*

Although 85 schools (92%) have stated that they have not rejected admittance to any student with disability in the past three years, there are individual differences in terms of understanding the concept of inclusion, which has been confirmed during the field visits and the focus group stage.

During the field visits, we have talked to some individuals and we have also witnessed some school policies according to which students with disabilities should be educated in special classes or special schools. One of the teachers said: *“Thank God we don’t have any such students, because they don’t belong in our school, which is a school with excellent reputation... My wife works with those “retards” in the special school and I know how challenging they can be and what they can achieve.”* Clearly, this statement is utterly dismissive towards students with disabilities. The use of the term “retards” itself clearly shows a lack of respect of one’s dignity and it is indicative of a mindset that should not appear in any layer of society, let alone in an environment where students are educated.

Schools claim that in some areas, there is even collective rejection, or more precisely, shame and a widespread opinion that students with disabilities do not belong in mainstream schools. *“Where I live and work, parents themselves think that their children with disabilities would be better off in special schools. Here, the majority of parents keep their children at home, they are even ashamed to get them out of the house and prefer to sweep their problems under the carpet”*, pointed out one secondary education teacher from coming from a smaller town. The presence of collective attitude of non-acceptance of students with disabilities is deeply rooted in our society and it is a reflection of

a mindset and fear associated to a certain location or area. It does not only represent the position of stakeholders involved in the educational process, but it is a much wider phenomenon, affecting parents, local population, students with disabilities and all other students from the earliest age. Raising new generations in this spirit will cause further segregation.

The questions about how students with disabilities make the choice about their secondary education and how the entry process takes place were addressed by the focus groups composed of students with disabilities and parents of students with disabilities enrolled in mainstream secondary schools. Based on the answers we got, it seems that students with disabilities make the choice of where to continue their secondary education with the assistance of their parents, or they are simply put in a situation of choosing the single option being available to them. One of the students said: *“I come from a village near Valandovo. Where I live, there is only one secondary school. Having in mind my specific state and the position I’m in, I need to stay close to my home and to my parents. I actually had no choice*

of choosing among several secondary schools and I had to go to the one school available in my place.” Some of the students have not even been present at the day of enrollment. It is their parents who file the required documents. Parents claim that making the final decision is a difficult task for them and that they usually rely on the support from professionals who have been working with their children in the past. According to them, what gives them sense of relief is the vicinity of the school, as they can assist their children whenever necessary.

Often, students with disabilities are left with no choice when it comes to choosing which secondary school to enroll to. This is especially true for students living in smaller towns, as well as for students having attended special primary schools. The choice available is not always in their best interest, or their possibilities and capacities. In this way, students with disabilities are denied the opportunity of getting appropriate training and exercising a profession of their choice after the completion of their education, and finally, they see their employment opportunities being seriously compromised.

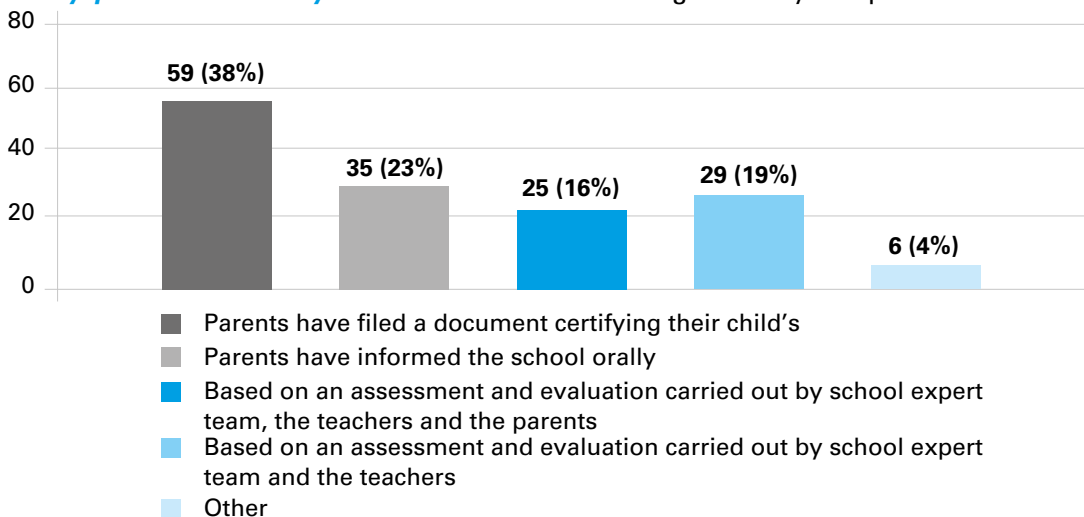


FIG. 15:

Answers to the question “in which way does your school identify students with disabilities?”

The process of detecting, identifying and registering students with special educational needs is rendered difficult because of the incompleteness of some school expert teams and the lack of familiarization of teachers. Moreover, some parents do not want to accept the fact that their child faces a specific difficulty and they are reluctant to address the issue appropriately. This information is supported by the field visits and the focus groups. Schools state that several models are usually employed when identifying special educational need in students: Some parents file medical finding and professional opinion on their child's disability when applying. Other parents prefer to inform the school about the state and the needs of their child through conversation with school representatives. In some cases, class teachers or teachers teaching individual subjects inform the school's expert team, or more precisely, the special educator in case there is a special educator in the school, on the presence of any children facing difficulties. The special educator or other member of school expert team is tasked to interview the child, he/she is being monitored and then, along with the class teacher, the parents are invited for a discussion. During the field visits, only one school, out of the 16 schools which were visited, has presented its internal procedures put in place to identify and detect special educational need(s) in students. The assessment carried out by school expert team in close cooperation with the teachers is based on evaluating the functional capacities of students and provide detailed and comprehensive information on the capacities and challenges faced by a particular student. Field visits support this information. Schools

point out that one of the challenges they face in the process of inclusion into secondary education is identifying and recording students' special needs. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, schools are also confused by the lack of a clearly established manner of identifying and recording students with special educational needs. Namely, according to the education inspectors who visit schools, only students who have medical certificate or assessment and evaluation issued by a relevant institution can be recorded as students with special educational needs. Schools find it difficult to make parents get and submit such document, as the law does not required parents to do so. Hence, there are also differences in how schools identify and keep records of the number of students with special educational needs.

Different manners and approaches to identifying students with disabilities create differences and deviations in the records annexed to the questionnaire. Such deviations are due to two significant reasons: in the questionnaire, schools reported only students for which they have relevant documents to support the specific educational need and they have decided to state a number of students for which, within the timeframe for which the research has been carried out, the specific special educational need was properly supported. During our field visits, in six schools out of 16, we have noticed differences in the number of students reported. Such differences usually appear because new documentation is being submitted and is still not processed or because school expert team is currently in the process of identifying and detecting such students, which is most

often the case with first year students. In addition, schools have also reported students for which there is no document to support their special educational need, that is, students that have been evaluated by school expert team and teachers. They have pointed out that the fact that schools are not able to oblige parents to provide a certificate on their child's condition is making their job even more difficult, meaning that in such case they are not able to employ individual educational plan. Challenges faced by students in such situations become even more evident. It gives rise to a very significant finding only confirming that identifying and assessing students is very often left to the "expertise" of teachers and school expert teams, and in most of the cases, they are not well trained to do that. The lack of knowledge and tools to assess students reduces the entire process to a mere improvisation, which also affects any further steps taken, such as spatial adjustment, teaching plans and curricula and complete implementation of the educational process. In fact, there is a lack of knowledge and conditions required to implement the key process serving as a base for planning further activities.

In the survey, 43.5% of the respondents pointed out that they do not have students with special educational needs attending their schools. During the field visits, we have also visited schools which had reported that there are no SEN students attending. They provided the very same information once again. The reasons are different. One of the schools had accepted a student with disabilities in the past year, but other students did not really accept him, so he decided to drop out

just a month later. Near the school, there are special classes and the transportation for the students is organized. The non-acceptance of the student and the option for organized transportation are the reason behind the decision made, versus the assessment of the interests and the capacities of the student for being included in the mainstream education process. The rest of the schools are schools setting much higher entry criteria for students or schools offering pathways which are not quite attractive and adjusted to respond to the capacities of students with disabilities. During the field visits, one of the teachers said: *"In our school, there are no students with disabilities. The entry criteria in our school are much higher and it is rather unexpected for children with disabilities to apply and go through the selection process successfully."* Higher entry criteria are directly linked to higher scores calculated based on students' success in the primary education and the participation in student contests. When discussing with the teacher during our field visit, a very significant point emerged; namely, the statement of the teacher that students with disabilities are not able to meet school's high entry criteria, which clearly reveals that the perception of a student with disability is actually a student with mild level of intellectual capacity. During our conversation, the research team explained that such students have many different abilities unrelated to their disability, but the respond the team got was somewhat of skepticism.

This phenomenon actually illustrates the lack of faith that students with disabilities also have some strengths and it creates an image based on generalisation that all

students with disabilities face significant challenges in their intellectual development and need to be educated in special schools.

There was an attempt made to compare different criteria (type of education, region, medium of instruction) and to correlate data obtained in the survey, but no significant deviations were discovered. The mindset, the expectations, the readiness of schools and their positions are more or less the same in all schools. However, significant differences emerged during our field visits and the focus group stage, based on which qualitative data were collected, which is significant in terms of enriching the entire image of inclusion. Qualitative data, *inter alia*, help put figures into context.

Having in mind the low number of schools visited and focus groups organized, it is clear that the qualitative data collected are not quite representative; however, they can be interpreted as a clear indicator of the need for an in-depth research which would focus, above all, on generating qualitative data. Considering the contrast among the responses collected through the questionnaire and the positions shared during the interviews and the focus groups, it can be concluded that data on attitudes and prejudices are also required so as to get a complete and more realistic picture in respect of these issues.

In the questionnaire, schools have provided similar answers which are related to how open and how inclusive they are. During the field visits, one of the school associates said: "Our teachers are really humane in nature." Humanity is reflected through their desire and will to accommodate students with disabilities in their classes. The act of reducing this issue to the mere presence of will and humanity or the absence thereof, rather than to an entitlement, reflects a medical model of tackling this issue and gives way to new dilemmas. The image of inclusion, based on what was obtained as data in the focus groups and the field visits, is based on statements the students attending the schools. A school in which there are students with disabilities is seen as an inclusive school. One of the potential reasons for why inclusive schools are defined in this way is the lack of inclusion standards, which further leads to creating a misrepresentation and low expectations among schools themselves.

SCHOOL INCLUSIVENESS

Schools do not meet any required conditions for ensuring physical accessibility. Some of the schools have made certain adjustments to respond to the needs of

their students with disabilities, but the lack of accessibility makes inclusion of children and youth with disabilities even harder.

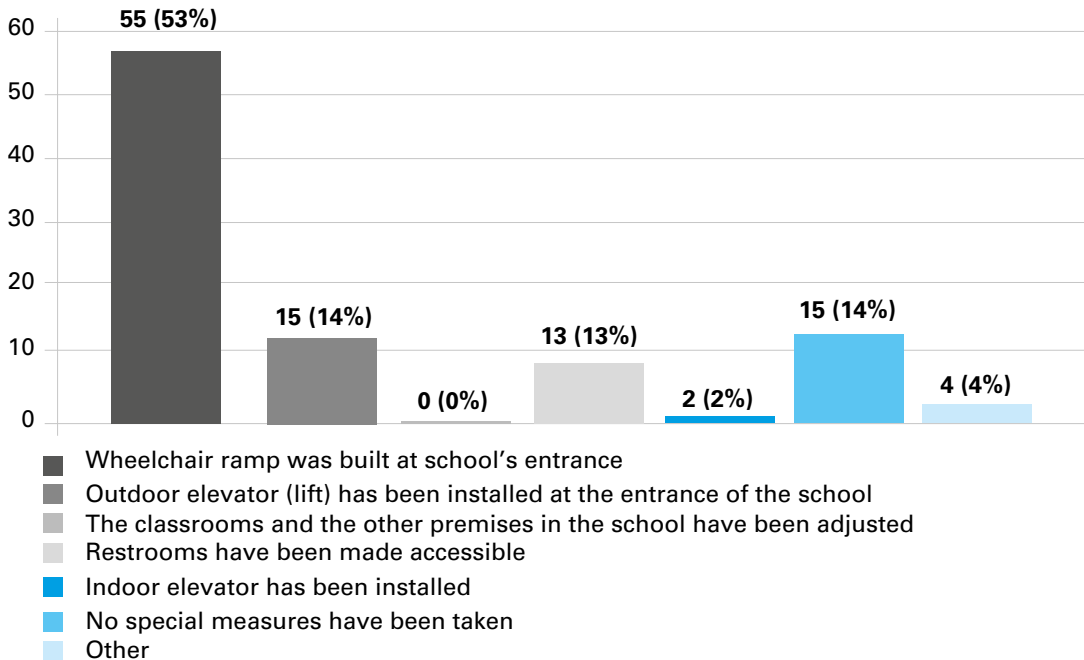


FIG. 16:

Answers to the question “What adjustments has the school made to ensure physical access to the school? You can check more than one option?”

During our field visits, we have noticed that when it comes to accessibility, only the entrance of schools is usually made accessible, which is not the case with school interior. Although there are wheelchair ramps built outside school entrance, in some cases students with disabilities are not able to use them as they fail to meet accessibility standards. Students using wheelchair need assistance, which in most of the cases is provided by their parents. A confirmation of this finding came from the parents and

the students participating in the focus groups: One student using wheelchair said: *“The wheelchair ramp at my school is too steep, so I can’t go up and down on my own.”*

The concept of accessible restrooms is poorly understood by many of the schools. During our field visits, one of the schools pointed out that there is an “accessible” restroom on the ground floor, which has been adjusted for one of the teachers who has difficulties moving around. The adjustment consisted of the

mounting a toilet bowl in this particular restroom, in contrast to other restrooms which are equipped with squat toilets. The absence of accessible restrooms renders students' stay at school difficult and requires constant parents' assistance - pointed out the parents and the students at the focus groups. How difficult this is for the students can be seen from this rather illustrative example that was shared by a female student with physical disability. *"The hardest thing for me in school is not being able to use the restrooms, because they are not accessible. The same thing was happening back in primary school, but we were constantly insisting on getting an accessible restroom and finally, the school decided to build accessible restroom. We are also doing that in this school. I have to wear "prevention", so I can be able to attend all classes without going to the toilet. Sometimes, when the situation is urgent, my mom comes and helps me."*

The most frequent adaptation in terms of physical accessibility that schools provide is teaching all lessons in a classroom located on the ground floor. However, in some instances, students with disabilities are not able to attend some lessons. *"I couldn't attend my informatics lesson"*, said a female student with physical disability at the focus group meeting.

The situation is even less favourable if we were to consider the availability of accessible (adjusted) pedagogical and didactic resources and manipulatives. Namely, large majority, or 74 of the schools have responded that they do not have equipment which is designed to facilitate active inclusion of students with disabilities.

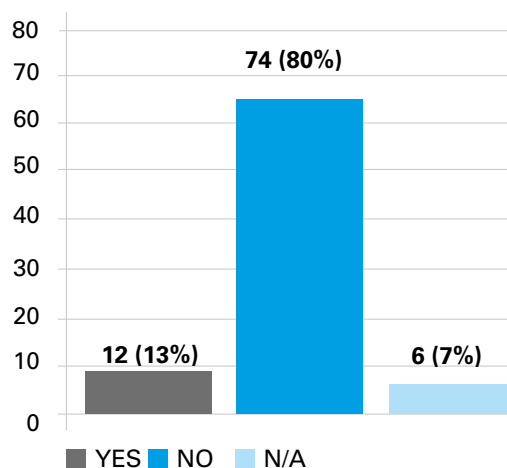


FIG. 17: Answers to the question "Does your school dispose of any pedagogical and didactical resources which have been made accessible (adjusted) to students with disabilities?"

Thirteen percent of the schools have reported that they have adjusted didactic resources available. Most often, these are schools with an on staff school special educator who is tasked to prepare some specially designed materials for individual work with the students, or schools equipped with career centers supplied with assistive information technology.

At the focus groups meetings, the teachers have pointed out as follows: *"We don't have anything, no resources at all. In our school, teaching is organized in dedicated classrooms (special classrooms to teach different subjects) and it's a two-storey building, with no elevator, so for some students, it is really challenging to move around and some of them barely get the chance to use the resources and the manipulatives intended for all students...";* *"In our school, some subjects and pathways (e.g. carpentry) require the use of machines, and some of them are very dangerous. I'm*

not sure if they can be adjusted, because some require speedy and timely reaction, and lots of attention when working, otherwise one can easily get injured. Or maybe even injure someone else. So, there's not much we can do in that regard, that's why we are advising parents to choose some other, more suitable profession for their children. They usually take our advice, because the last thing we want is those children getting injured at school", stated a teacher from one secondary vocational school.

One significant challenge which was brought up at focus groups meetings was the fact that teachers and expert school teams are not familiar what resources out of the ones listed in the question are actually available in the school and if they could be able to procure and use them. This is especially true for the vocational schools. One of the teachers said: *"I've already told you. What we need is training, because we are not even aware of what types of manipulatives are out there and what is applicable in our school... In the lists that that company gives us, I don't remember its name, I mean, in the lists of manipulatives, there's nothing about this. "*

As far as additional didactic resources are concerned, in the questionnaire schools have stated that they have resources which meet the requirements of the Montessori methodology, while vocational schools say that they have made some adaptations to the textile machines and to the tools used. Some of the schools have included smart boards and flip charts into the list of didactic resources.

The situation is somewhat better in terms of the assistive technology available in the schools:

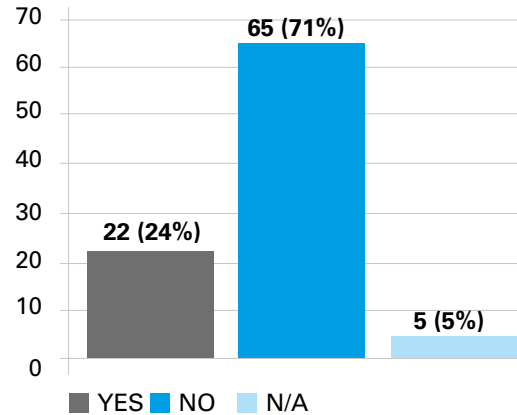


FIG. 18:

Answers to the question "Does your school have assistive computer devices (large-print keyboards, trackballs, joysticks, switches, touch screens etc.)?"

In the survey, 24% of the schools have pointed out that they use assistive technology to support the operations of school career centers. The equipment has been provided through the USAID- YES Network in cooperation with the "Open the Windows" Association of Assistive Technology. In the additional explanation provided by 22 schools, they list a set of assistive technology devices consisting of trackballs, joysticks, switches and large-print keyboards.

During the field visits, the "Open the Windows" team has established that there is assistive technology in the schools; however, no examples of practical use have been observed. Some of the representatives interviewed were familiar with how assistive technology is used and what the benefits of it are. Representatives of secondary schools have attended some training, but information has not been shared with all employees, meaning that no dissemination of the necessary infor-

mation has taken place. Once again, the point that schools take some steps to improve inclusion, but that they fail to implement them completely has been confirmed in practice. The fact that assistive technology is available in schools, but unfortunately it is not used in practice to assist students with disabilities is not in favour of the inclusiveness of the schools and does not facilitate the educational and pedagogical process for students with disabilities.

Based on the answers provided in the questionnaire, in the majority of the schools accommodating students with disabilities or, in 44 of them, there are inclusive teams. However, the field visits and the experiences shared at the focus group meetings point out that in some schools, although inclusive teams are there, they do not necessarily play the role they have been established for. In some cases, there are no individual meetings and inclusive teams do not actually perform the tasks they were formed to do. They only meet when there is certain need and in most of the cases, issues related to the students with special educational needs are discussed at teachers' meetings. The role of such teachers' meetings is confused with the role of the expert school teams. Based on the answers provided by the schools, it is clear that there is some progress in terms of organizing inclusion in schools. However, there is also the fact that there are no inclusive teams in schools, the reason being the lack of expertise in school expert teams. This can be illustrated through the following answers: *"The employees from our school have not attended any training in the area of working with students*

with disabilities."; *"There is no inclusive team in our school, because on one hand, parents do not submit documents, and on the other, the school expert services and the teachers are not sufficiently trained to identify students with disabilities, plus, our school does not employ a special educator."*

The answers collected through the survey have revealed that the main job of these teams is detecting, identifying and placing of students with disabilities, working with parents, working with teachers and providing support to draft individual educational plans (IEPs) and strategies aimed at easier inclusion of students in the educational process, organizing and delivering internal training for the teachers and direct work with students.

There are 8 schools which are yet to establish an inclusive team, although there are students with disabilities enrolled in the school.

Some of the reasons include lack of proper information, lack of training on this topic, as well as lack of required documents that the parents need to provide and which are to prove that there are students with disabilities attending the school, which is a prerequisite for the establishment of a school inclusive team.

These points are illustrated as follows:

"The team is in charge of identifying students facing high degree of marginalisation (physical, psychological, emotional, social, educational). The team is also tasked with drafting strategy for the operation of the inclusive team, providing support to teachers, students and parents, providing continuous analysis of the process of work, and identifying

any changes of psychological, physical, emotional, social and educational states of students. The team operates based on its annual programme.”

“The basic tasks of the team are as follows: identifying students with SEN and their special needs, creating conditions for accommodating such needs, advancing teachers’ competencies in dealing with these students etc. Above all, it is of greatest importance to create positive inclusive environment, by applying different activities of suitable educational character.”

“The task of the inclusive team in our school is to adjust the process of education to meet the developmental, the common and the individual needs of our students, to develop, support and pro-

mote inclusive environment in which every teacher will feel respected, every parent will feel included, and every student will feel welcome.”

Based on the answers provided in the questionnaire, more than 60% of the schools do not have special educator on staff in their school expert teams. In the schools employing special educator, he/she is usually full-time special educator on staff. Two of the schools stated that they employ only (mobile) part-time special educator. This means that a single special educator is working as an expert associate in several schools. In such case, one of the schools acts as a “parent” school. The figure below shows the situation revealed by the questionnaire:

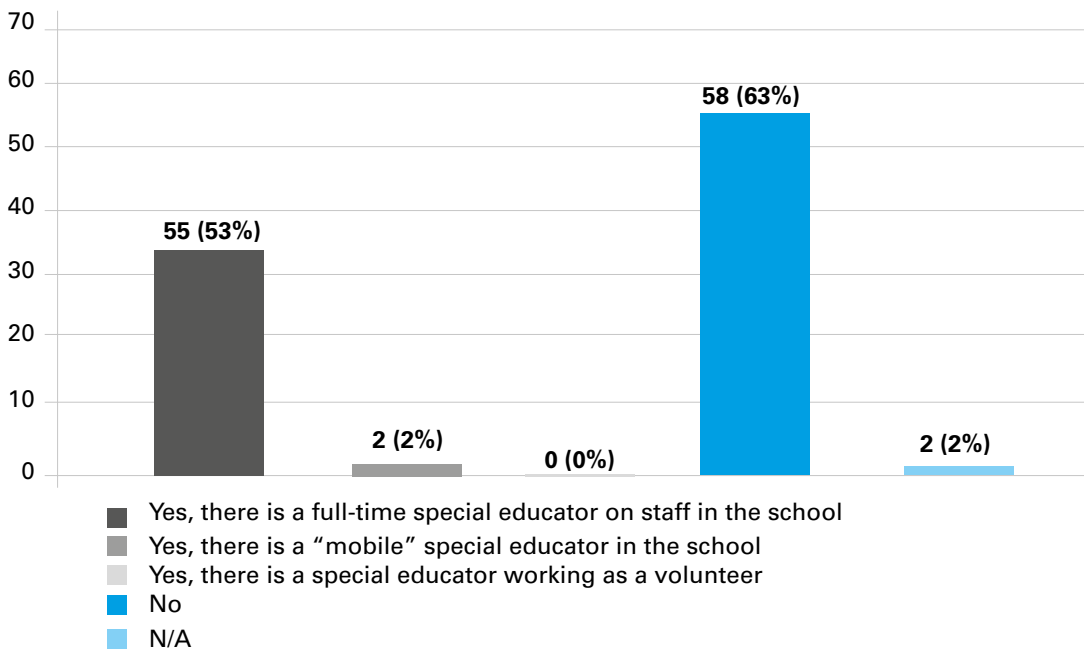


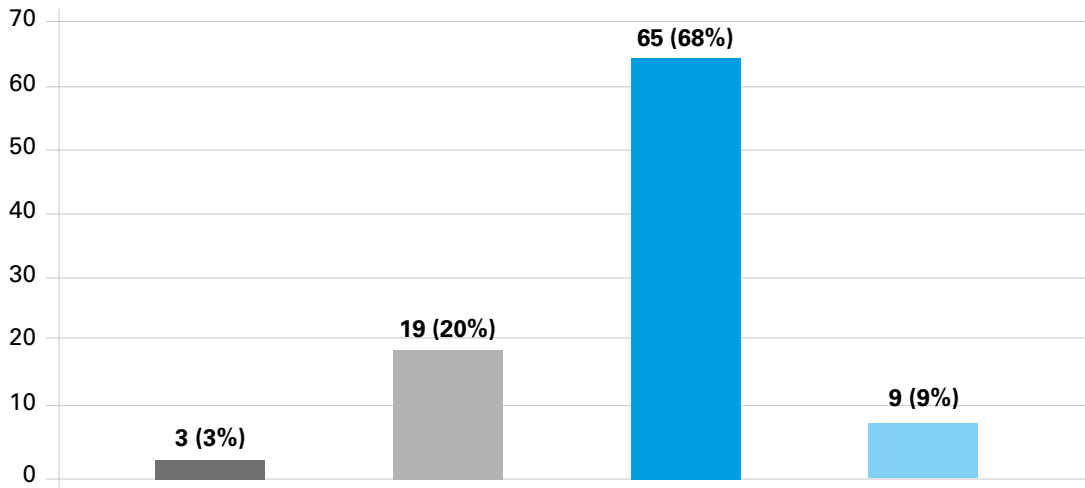
FIG. 19:

Answers to the question “Does your school have a special educator on staff?”

During the field visits and focus groups meetings in schools with special educator on staff, school special educator have stated that they are entirely in charge of working with students with disabilities. According to them, teachers think that special educator have a key role to play when it comes to ensuring inclusion in schools and that they are best trained to work with students with special educational needs. Special educator think that their role should be supporting and advising teachers, assessing students in close cooperation with teachers and building inclusive climate in cooperation with teachers, parents and students. *“I do a lot of individual work with children. Some teachers understand what this support refers to and we are constantly cooperating and consulting in which areas certain student needs most support. This type of support is more suitable for the primary education, but some children really lack even elementary skills and knowledge. On the other hand, there are also teachers who think that the special educator is the one who has to do all the work with such children. But, that is not true, because it is the teacher’s job to teach, and we are there to assist them as much as possible. However, I still feel that some of the teachers do not really understand this”*, said one of the special educator, participant at one of the focus groups. On daily basis, special educator face prejudices and reluctance to working with students with special educational needs among teachers. One defectologist, participant at the focus groups, illustrated this phenomenon as follows: «There is still resistance among teachers, and I hate to say this, but some of them are reluctant to working with students with disabilities.

They even say “what’s up with this inclusion, you have turned the school into Iskra (special education school)”. I myself find challenged in working with such teachers.”

During our field visits, some of the defectologists have stated that the support for teachers is usually provided through in-house training: *“Teachers do not have any other training options outside the school, except for the training that I deliver. Not even for elementary things-training on what is dyslexia, what is learning difficulty... Such training is usually delivered to primary school teachers, but there is almost nothing organized for secondary school teachers. I think that that is a serious problem.”* The lack of expert staff in school expert teams and the absence on on-staff special educator in schools make working with students with special educational needs that much harder and uncertain. A representative from one of the schools has stated at one focus group meeting: *“Our expert services consist of one pedagogist. We have been requesting many years now that a psychologist is also employed, but our efforts have been futile. So, you can imagine that this is too much work for a single person to handle.”* Irrespective whether there are special educator included in school expert teams, in general, there is a need for further strengthening of school expert teams’ capacities in dealing with students with disabilities. Namely, only 3% of the schools have self-assessed them being able to work with students with disabilities independently (without any need of additional training).



- The school expert team is completely capable of working with students with SEN and there is no need for additional training
- The school expert team is continuously upgrading its knowledge and skills in dealing with students with SEN
- The school expert team needs to upgrade its knowledge and skills in dealing with students with SEN
- Upgrading knowledge and skills in dealing with students with disabilities is not a priority

FIG. 20:

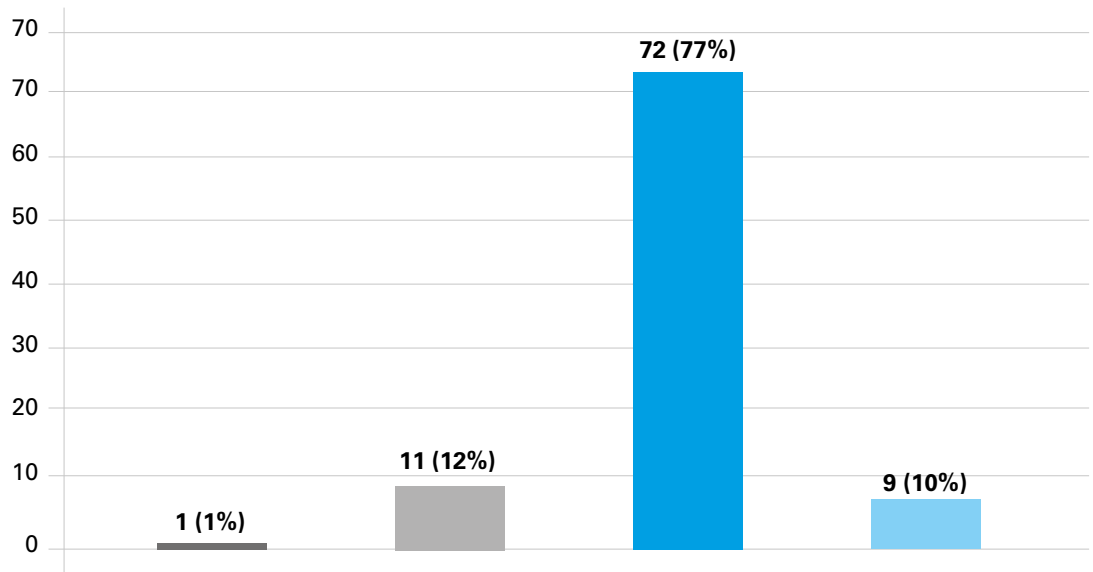
Answers to the question “In terms of the capacities of the school expert team in working with students with disabilities, please mark the statement that best reflects the state in your school.”

Teachers have emphasized that they need additional training in working with students with disabilities. Only 1% of the schools have stated that their teachers are completely capable and trained in inclusive education. The need for training of the expert staff and teachers was also brought up during the field visits and at the focus group meetings. Even the special educator themselves feel that they need additional and advanced training in terms of supporting teachers in working with students with special educational needs. School expert teams lacking defectologist also think that they need additional training in various areas, such as

identifying children with disabilities, options and manners of working with children with different types of disabilities, supporting parents and teachers etc. The most frequently mentioned topics were as follows: drafting and employing individual educational plans (IEPs), assessing students following IEPs, communicating and cooperating with parents, as well as what is the role of school inclusive teams and how they work. Teachers say that they need to be familiarized with some basic terms, such as disability, types of disability, inclusion, individual approach etc.

It was emphasized that training needs to be practical and applicable. The participants at the teachers' focus group have pointed out as follows: *"Teachers and school expert teams lack training. Yes, we also need training- we cannot support teachers if we ourselves are not quite sure what we need to do. Here, for example in my school, there is no defec-tologist on staff, and my colleague and I have not been trained in this area, nor we have any previous experience... So, how can we tell teachers what to do? We don't know how to draft an IEP, neither do they. Or, how to protect children from*

sexual harassment? We are dealing with adolescents, there are all kind of things out there, and imagine, who would be responsible if something was to happen to a child with disabilities. We need training about that too."; *"All teachers working with children with disabilities need to be trained. Actually, all teachers should be trained, as it should be expected to have more children with disabilities in our schools in the future. If a teacher has never worked with a student with disabilities, this does not mean that there he or she won't do it in the future. "*



- Teachers are completely capable of working with students with SEN and there is no need for additional training
- Teachers are continuously upgrading their knowledge and skills in dealing with students with SEN
- Teachers need to upgrade their knowledge and skills in dealing with students with SEN
- Upgrading knowledge and skills in dealing with students with SEN is not a priority of the teachers

FIG. 21:

Answers to the question "In terms of the capacities of the teachers in working with students with disabilities, please mark the statement that best reflects the state in your school."



In terms of the resources available in schools, only one percent (or, one school) has been allocated additional funds aimed at improving inclusion of students with disabilities.

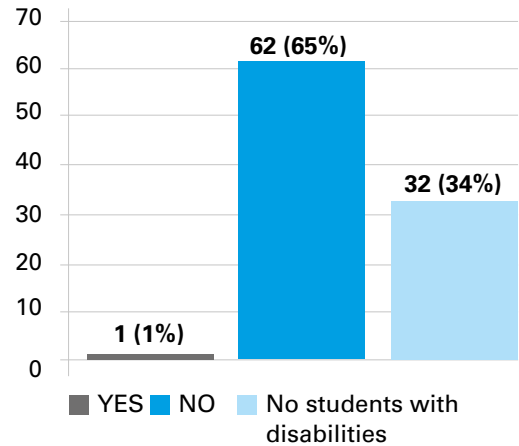


FIG. 22:

Answers to the question “Has your school been allocated additional financial means by national and local authorities to improve inclusion of students with disabilities in the last school year (2016/17)?”

In the questionnaire, the school stated that they have used the funds to procure fitness equipment and to equip restrooms.

Experiences and Practices

In terms of drafting and employing individual educational plans, the situation is as follows:

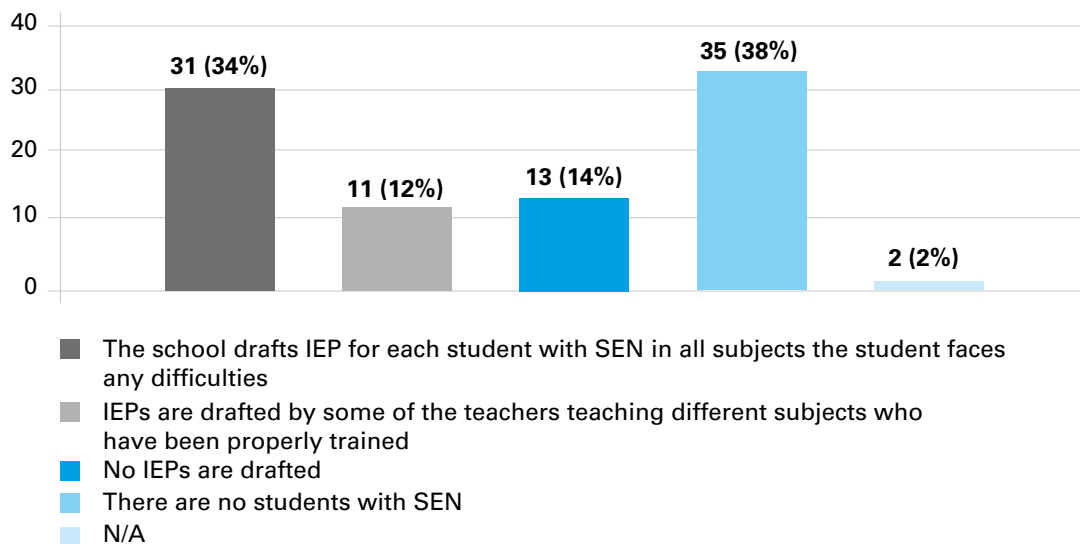


FIG. 23:

Answers to the question “Does your school draft and employ individual educational plans for students with disabilities?”

According to the answers collected through the survey, 34 schools have stated that they draft IEPs for their SEN students. The IEPs are based on individual educational needs, strengths and potentials for adjustment of the teaching/learning process in line with students’ individual specifics and capacities. When it comes to this tool, although being very useful and indispensable, teachers face challenges coming from the lack of knowledge of how to draft IEPs, or more specifically, they lack a unified format and model of application. Drafting IEPs is most frequently associated with requesting special educator’s support and with the need of asking parents’ consent in employing IEPs in practice. In none of the cases, students have been asked to participate in drafting IEPs.

This issue was also tackled at focus group meetings. One participant at the focus group said: *“On a scale from 1 to*

5, I would give teachers 2 for skills and knowledge. They need support in terms of individual approach, drafting and employing IEPs, creating pleasant and welcoming environment in class, supporting students with disabilities and making them feel like a part of the group.”

Teachers draft IEPs, following a preset format. They sometimes lack motivation in working with students with disabilities and often, IEPs turn into documents that are drafted because they are required, but they are not drafted and employed as they really should be. This was confirmed by one special educator during our field visits: *“We don’t face any specific challenges related to the IEPs. There are some teachers who are full of understanding, but there are others who are reluctant towards drafting IEPs. They all have issues with assessing and grading students. I had a case when the teach-*

er said "I think she deserves a 3, but she will have to study a bit harder, is that OK? Then, I worked with that student, and she was really happy to have mastered the lessons, she managed to answer all questions in the test and she finally to get a good grade. But, we make all these adjustment ourselves, in consultation with some of the teachers and we are not quite sure how to proceed in such situations."

According to the data collected through the questionnaire and the field visits, schools employ IEPs for those students for which they have an assessment and evaluation issued by a relevant institution. Those were the instructions provided by the education inspectors- that IEPs are only drafted for children for which the school has received "finding and opinion, medical certificate or other documents." During the field visit, one of the schools stated: *"Almost all schools face challenges in drafting and monitoring IEPs, especially in terms of assessment and grading."* This was also confirmed by a participant at the teachers' focus group. *"We are drafting IEPs, simply because we have to. We are trying to do the best we can, we consult our colleagues, but, to be honest, I sometimes feel that we only prepare IEPs just to meet the requirements of the Education Inspectorate, because that's what education inspectors want to see: is there an IEP, along with a finding and opinion. When it comes to the content of the IEPs- inspectors are not even bothered to go through it."*

One of the schools, employing only an on staff psychologist, resort to using the capacities of the personal assistants of their

students to support the drafting of IEPs and the realization of the education process. Two special educator are hired by the families of students with disabilities as personal assistants of their children. This information was provided during one of our field visits.

The focus group composed of students with special educational needs has confirmed that most of the students are not familiar with the term "individual educational plan". This points out to the fact that although they need to be present and they need to be part of the team drafting the IEP, they are still not consulted and not explained what IEPs are all about. Additionally, the understanding of the role of the IEPs as being important document still depends on the type and the severity of student's disability. *"I use an IEP for my art lessons, because it is very difficult for me to draw and paint using my arm"*, said a student with physical disability.

Most often, students attach the support they get to real, practical solutions, rather to plans. *"I'm not very good at English and that is why I need assistance from the special educator"; "Math was the hardest subject for me, so I did a multiple choice math test. The same was with physics, so I prepared some presentations"*- said some of the students participating at the focus groups.

Another major problem faced by the schools is the assessment and grading of students with special educational needs following an individual educational plan at school:

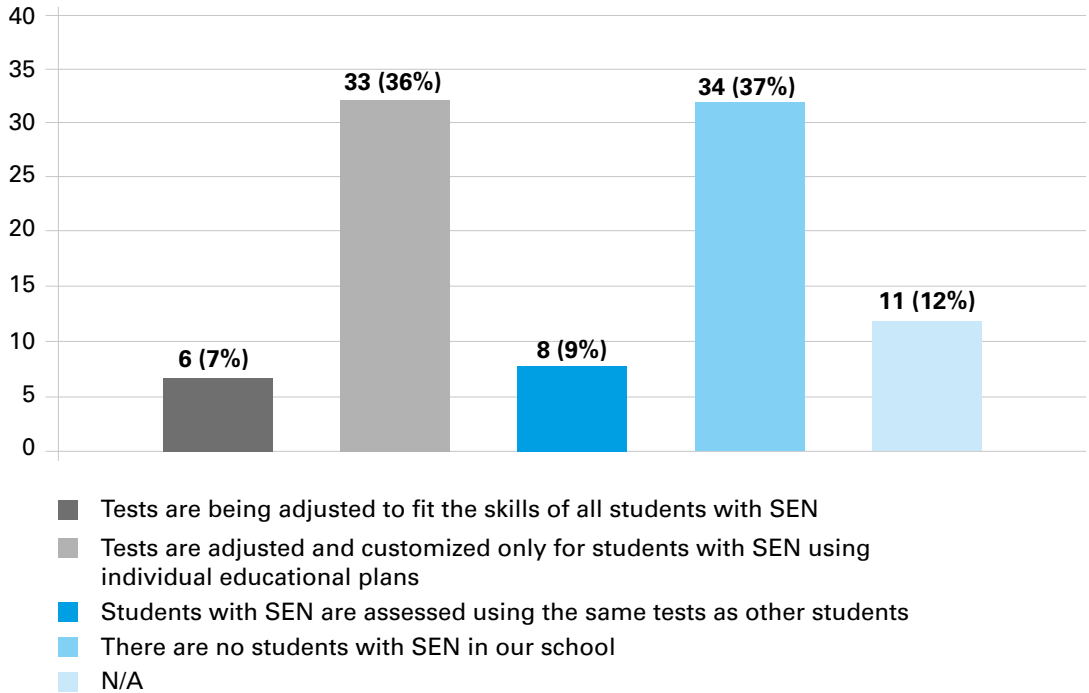


FIG. 24:

Please answer the following question: "In terms of applying customized tests as an assessment tool, please choose the statement that best reflects the state in your school?"

The use of customized tests is one way of assessing and grading students against IEPs. According to the information collected based on the survey, 34 schools employ this option. Adjustments are made in terms of the time given to students to complete tests, the speed, the quality and the contents of information expected from students, as well as in terms of the quantity of answers obtained. These adjustments are done based on the individual capacities of students and they usually depend on teacher's will and readiness to make any adjustments and customizations for the benefit of their students. They are not defined as being compulsory. During our field visits, we have been informed that very often, teachers do not as-

sess and grade students with disabilities based on their IEPs for the sake of avoiding reactions from the rest of the students. This issue often raises a sense of injustice among students in one class. Teachers say that they are also lowering the bar for the rest of the students and that they are always asking themselves: *"Do students with disabilities acquire the skills required to be competitive on the labor market, that is, do the capacities of other students get fully exploited and properly developed"*. This dilemma was raised by one of the associates during the visit of one of the secondary schools, which was also brought up during the field visits and the focus groups meetings. It opens up some additional questions

for teachers and parents alike whether education is able to build and develop skills which would make students with disabilities competitive on the open labor market in the future.

Based on the data collected from the student focus groups, assessment and grading is a topic which is not very important to the students with special educational needs. They say that teachers always value their efforts and that they are assessed and graded just like other students, meaning that they sometimes get higher grades. This points out to the fact that teachers sometimes use grades as a tool to motivate students, but students with disabilities usually accept any grade they are given, which in reality, does not encourage them to reach for higher achievements, because they are aware of the low expectations that teachers and peers have of them. In this way, students with disabilities and their school environment do not reflect the true image of the real potentials and capacities they might have. Students, participants at the focus group say: *"I leave grading to my teachers, I study as hard as I can, they do good job in assessing and grading me."* *"I'm aware that some teachers are lowering the bar especially for us."*

In contrast to them, parents participating at the parent focus groups have stated that in some cases, students with disabilities are neglected to a certain extent. They are only required to learn the basic things, although it is clear that they can do more. In terms of the tests, they feel that teachers are only customizing/adjusting tests only partially, that is, there have been cases in which teachers have consulted them in regards of adjusting tests, and there have also been

cases in which teachers have not adjusted the tests at all, causing students to fail the tests.

In principle, teachers participating at the focus group have stated that they are trying to adjust the tests themselves or they ask for assistance from on-staff special educator and/or the school expert teams.

One of the teachers said: *"Are teachers allowed to adjust and customize tests in the first place? We were told by the education inspector that 'the learning objectives and methods need to be adjusted, but this should not be the case with the tests.'"*

Another teacher participating at the focus group has completely different experience: *"Of course tests may and should be customized. In my school, we prepared special tests for the children following IEPs. But again, it is up to the teachers, they should assess what to put in the test. Some children are only asked to answer some questions orally, in case they have some kind of physical disability; a form of adjustment is also allowing the student to take written test, if they feel more comfortable doing so. Nevertheless, grading is a major problem. We get reactions from both students and teachers. And, we are not quite sure what to do in such case."*

Students with disabilities have only limited access to assistive devices when using computers at school.

Only 8 schools have stated that they offer their students the option of using assistive technology when using a computer.

Inclusion of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities is rather limited:

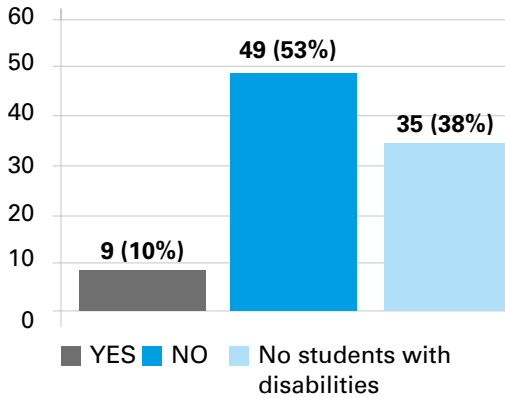


FIG. 25: Answers to the question “Do students with disabilities in your school use any assistive IT devices (large-print keyboards, trackballs, joysticks, switches, touch screens etc.)?” or sophisticated adjustment (adjustment of computer mouse, computer screen etc.) when working on a computer? ”

| | | |
|--|----|-------|
| They are accepted as equal, they are assisted in all curricular and extracurricular activities and other students socialize with them after school | 26 | 29,9% |
| They are treated with respect and other students share school materials with them, but the interaction is mainly limited to school activities | 24 | 27,6% |
| There is a limited communication, because students without disabilities think that students with disabilities are not able to participate in the same games and activities | 5 | 5,7% |
| Students with disabilities are not accepted and do not take part in their peers’ social life | 0 | 0% |
| Students with disabilities are insulted and ridiculed by their classmates | 1 | 1,1% |
| There are no students with disabilities in our school | 33 | 37,9% |
| Other (please state): | 4 | 4,6% |

FIG. 26: Answers to the question “In terms of involvement of students with disabilities in extracurricular and free school activities (clubs, competitions, school trips, celebrations etc.), please check the statement that best reflects the state in your school?”

Descriptive comments have been submitted by 5 schools and they all differ greatly. Some of them say that students are treated as equal, which is also true after school. Others make reference to students “who although do necessarily not belong to the group of students with special educational needs, are introvert, they don’t like communicating, are reserved and shy”, and they also point out that “other students sometimes see them as equal and support them, but other times, there is also mockery and limited communication.”

Similar data have been collected during the field visits and at focus group meetings. Both parents and teachers confirm that the general consensus of acceptance is applying only in class, while outside the classroom, including the schoolyard, students with disabilities are not accepted. This can be illustrated by the fact that students with disabilities are rarely invited to birthday parties, parties, or just to socialize outside the school. There is still widespread stigma and disbelief in the capacities and abilities of students with disabilities. *“To be honest, many of our children are not capable of participating in school plays or school clubs, because this is beyond their capacities”*, stated one of the parents.

Other parent said: *“I don’t think my son is seen as equal with the other students, he is not bullied or anything, but he gets treated as a child with special needs”*.

The students have stated that they are satisfied with how they are treated by their peers at school. They are generally accepted by others and they do not face any major challenges. *“I have friend from*

primary school that I used to go to school with and we still hang out”; *“Sometimes when my mom can’t come and lift me up, then my friends help me, even those from the Albanian classes”*- say two female students with physical disability. One of the students could not go on school trip, because the building in which they were going to be staying was not easily accessible: *“I wanted to go to the school trip which was going to take few days, but the place where we going to be staying was not accessible.”*

Students with disabilities say that being accepted by their peers feels nice and that what they like the most about their school is hanging out with their peers, making new friends and participating in practical lessons.

Based on the data collected at the focus group meetings with the teachers, it can be concluded that classmates accept students with disabilities, help them at school, but they fail to build any deeper relations with them outside the school. *“We are always explaining them that they need to be patient, that they should be ready to support and assist students with disabilities, and to avoid mocking them or bullying them. This is usually the job of class teachers”*; *“There aren’t any major problems among students, but the truth is that they don’t hang out very much”*. *It is really rare to see or to hear that students have asked out one of their peers with disabilities, or that they have gone together to see a movie or to a party... In school, other students help their peers with disabilities, they usually explain them anything which is not clear, they let them copy materials, but it seems that students with disabilities do not really socialize with their peers*

after school" - said the teachers.

Most often, parents of students without disabilities accept students with disabilities and are in favour of including students

with disabilities in mainstream classes. The following table gives an overview of the answers obtained, showing that parents:

| | | |
|--|----|-------|
| support the inclusion of students with disabilities as equal and encourage their children to socialize, to cooperate and to support classmates with disabilities | 17 | 19,1% |
| accept their presence | 26 | 29,2% |
| do not have or they do not share their position in terms of including students with disabilities | 12 | 13,5% |
| do not accept the inclusion of students with disabilities, because they think that it will decrease the quality and the dynamics of the educational process, but they do not raise any initiatives in relation to it | 1 | 1,1% |
| actively raise initiatives before the school and other authorities aimed at excluding students with disabilities from the classes their children are attending | 0 | 0% |
| there are no students with disabilities in our school | 35 | 39,3% |
| other (please state): | 2 | 2,2% |

FIG. 27:

Answers to the question "How are students with disabilities treated by other students (please

check the statement that best reflects the state in your school)?"

Schools have submitted 3 descriptive answers in the questionnaire, and only one of them stated that they have noticed negative reaction. The school has stated as follows: ***"In case students with disabilities are aggressive towards their classmates or the teachers, parents do not support inclusion"***.

These data have been collected during the field visits and at focus group meetings. Based on the answers, schools have not set in place special set of measures to promote acceptance of students with

disabilities by classmates' parents. In practice, there are different experiences. They are mainly positive, although there have also been cases in which parents have not been quite familiar with the concept of disability and inclusion. ***"There's not much we can do. Last year, parents found out that there was going to be a girl with disabilities in one of the classes, and the girl had difficulties moving and talking, she has slow and slurred speech, but no intellectual disability, she was great actually... At first, there was no open reaction, but later, 7 or 8 children asked to be transferred to other classes."***

So, there was nothing else that we could do at that point, we transferred those students, and we were well aware that it was due to the student with disability”

- one of the teachers at the teacher focus group shared his experience.

Descriptive comments have been submitted by 5 schools and they all differ greatly. Some say that students are accepted as equal, even outside the school. Other describe that there are students *“who do not necessarily belong to the group of children with special educational needs, but are introvert, they don’t like to communicate, are reserved and shy.”* They point out that *“other students sometimes treat them as equal and support them, but other times, there is also mockery and limited communication.”*

Additionally, at the student focus group meetings, students have stated that they

are satisfied with how they are treated by their peers at school. They are generally accepted by others and they do not face any major challenges. *“I have friend from primary school that I used to go to school with and we still hang out”; “Sometimes when my mom can’t come and lift me up, then my friends help me, even those from the Albanian classes.”*

Students with disabilities say that being accepted by their peers feels nice and that what they like the most about their school is hanging out with their peers, making new friends and taking part in practical lessons.

Most often, parents of students without disabilities accept students with disabilities and are in favour of including students with disabilities in mainstream classes. The following table gives an overview of the answers obtained, showing that parents:

| | | |
|--|----|-------|
| support the inclusion of students with disabilities as equal and encourage their children to socialize, to cooperate and to support classmates with disabilities | 17 | 19,1% |
| accept their presence | 26 | 29,2% |
| do not have or they do not share their position in terms of including students with disabilities | 12 | 13,5% |
| do not accept the inclusion of students with disabilities, because they think that it will decrease the quality and the dynamics of the educational process, but they do not raise any initiatives in relation to it | 1 | 1,1% |
| actively raise initiatives before the school and other authorities aimed at excluding students with disabilities from the classes their children are attending | 0 | 0% |
| there are no students with disabilities in our school | 35 | 39,3% |
| other (please state): | 2 | 2,2% |

FIG. 28:

Answers to the question “What is the most common reaction of parents of students without disabilities in terms of including students with disabilities in mainstream classes?”

Schools have supplied 3 descriptive answers, and only one of the schools have shared negative reaction of parents: “In case students with disabilities are aggressive towards their classmates or the teachers, parents do not support inclusion”. Similar data were presented during the field visits and the focus groups. Based on the answers, schools have not set in place any special set of measures

to promote acceptance of students with disabilities by classmates’ parents.

When asked which stakeholders in the society the schools have cooperated with, the majority of schools have listed the primary schools that students with special educational needs have attended previously. In addition, schools have also stated cooperating with:

| | | |
|---|----|-------|
| other secondary schools | 25 | 33,8% |
| national educational and other relevant institutions | 9 | 12,2% |
| primary schools which the students with disabilities have attended previously | 41 | 55,4% |
| civil organizations | 15 | 20,3% |
| the municipality | 23 | 31,1% |
| other local institutions | 14 | 18,9% |
| the school has not cooperated with other stakeholders | 17 | 23% |

FIG. 29:

Answers to the question “Which stakeholders in the society have your school cooperated with to improve the situation with the inclusion of students with disabilities (multiple options are available)?”

Forty-eight schools have described the cooperation they have had and the main outcomes. Cooperation with other stakeholders involved civil organizations, daily centers, primary, secondary and special schools, national and local authorities, health professionals etc. According to the schools, the most significant outputs from such cooperation have been as follows: advancement in educational and pedagogical process, improving inclusion, improving quality of knowledge and skills in teachers in identifying and working with students with disabilities.

The general impression from the field visits was that schools find it hard to establish any sort of cooperation with the relevant actors in terms of providing support to including students with disabilities. Cooperation is not continuous and is most often associated with holidays, marking significant days etc.

When asked to share their experience in working with students with disabilities, these are the options chosen by the schools:

| | | |
|---|----|-------|
| The majority of students with disabilities acquire the basic knowledge and skills envisaged and they complete their secondary education | 34 | 48,6% |
| Students with disabilities complete their secondary education, but the majority of them do not acquire the basic knowledge and skills envisaged | 17 | 24,3% |
| Students with disabilities are not able to attend mainstream classes and they drop out from school | 1 | 1,4% |
| Special secondary education schools offer better options and conditions to students with disabilities | 18 | 25,7% |

FIG. 31:

Answers to the question "Which of the statements below best reflects your school's experience in dealing with children with disabilities?"

Based on the data collected through the questionnaire, 48.6% of the schools think that students with special educational needs acquire the basic knowledge and skills envisaged for secondary education. There is another significant information, according to which 25.7% of the schools think that special education schools offer better options and conditions for students with special educational needs.

Field visits and focus groups reaffirm that as follows: Having assessed their capacities and the resources available, schools think that they do not offer equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities. It seems that there is still widespread opinion that some of the students with disabilities would realize their potential in much better manner in special educational schools. Schools notably point out to the fact that some students with disabilities have completed their primary education without mastering even the basic skills (such as reading and writing). *"No. For the time being, all we can do is give space where students with dis-*

abilities can spend their time"; "Teachers are left on their own, employing trial and error system"; "Some of the students have just gone through their primary education, without learning anything. They can't even write and read. What are we supposed to do with them? We are just letting them move a grade up, although we are aware that they can't read, meaning that can't actually learn anything in any of the subjects, they can't learn anything. They should have acquired some basic knowledge and skills back in primary school, but unfortunately, that has not happened. Parents of students with disabilities that have attended mainstream primary school don't even want to consider the option of sending their children to special education secondary school."- said the participants at the focus groups.

This fact is also supported by the selected options that closely reflect schools' positions in terms of inclusive secondary education. The schools think that:

| | | |
|--|----|-------|
| Inclusive secondary education is a necessity and it is in the best interest of all students | 27 | 32,1% |
| Inclusive secondary education is a good opportunity for only a fraction of students with disabilities which are able to attend and participate in mainstream classes | 55 | 65,5% |
| Inclusive secondary education is not in the best interests of students with disabilities, neither of students without disabilities | 3 | 3,6% |

FIG. 32:

Answers to the question “Which of the options listed below best reflects your school’s position in terms of inclusive secondary education?”

Eight schools (9.4%) have responded that amending the legal framework is among the three priorities that would contribute the most to improving inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools. Six of them have provided specific recommendations aimed at facilitating inclusion practices, such as prescribing entry procedures for students with disabilities into the mainstream education (classification and degree of disability, official document clearly describing specific disabilities etc.) and drafting rulebook containing instructions on how to use and how to draft IEPs, what is the format of IEPs, how they should be employed and reported, up to recommendations on modifying the requirements on compulsoriness of secondary school, that is, drafting a proposal to make secondary education optional for students with disabilities. One of the schools even

provides a specific proposal of amending the legal framework and providing support in terms of ensuring employment for students with disabilities after the completion of the secondary education.

Seven of the schools have submitted specific suggestions in the field “other” regarding the three priority needs for supporting inclusive education, which include providing transportation and personal assistants, improving the expertise and the involvement of expert school services, exchange of experience among special educator on staff in mainstream secondary schools and their peers from the country and from abroad, hiring more special educator and drafting a rulebook on how to prepare individual educational plans (IEPs).

| | | |
|---|----|-------|
| Providing training to teachers to be able to work with students with disabilities | 70 | 82,4% |
| Providing training to the school expert team in dealing with students with disabilities and providing support to the teachers | 55 | 64,7% |
| Improving physical access to school building | 21 | 24,7% |
| Providing accessible pedagogical and didactical aids, manipulatives and assistive IT technology (assistive IT devices and assistive educational software) | 43 | 50,6% |
| Providing accessible textbooks and other school materials (in Braille, accessible electronic versions etc.) | 17 | 20% |
| Allocating additional funds to the school aimed at meeting individual needs of students with disabilities | 31 | 36,5% |
| Hiring a special educator | 49 | 57,6% |
| Amending the legal framework | 8 | 9,4% |

FIG. 33:

Answers to the question “Please mark the three priorities which according to you, if dealt with in appropriate manner, would contribute to advance the inclusion of students with disabilities in your school?”



“Are there any additional information or suggestions related to working with students with disabilities you would like to share”

At the end of the questionnaire, schools were asked to share any additional information and suggestions related to working with students with disabilities. More than a third of the schools (38) have shared some of their suggestions to improve inclusiveness of student with disabilities in secondary schools. Here are some of their answers:

- Rising the awareness regarding inclusive education in schools and in the society through training, informative sessions, debates etc.
- The Bureau of Development of Education (BDE) should think about preparing different types of curricula accommodating the needs of students with different types of disabilities;
- Delivering training to teachers and school expert teams to be able to work with students with disabilities;
- Hiring all required expert profiles on staff in school expert teams;
- Drafting legal regulations to define inclusion of students with disabilities;
- Making resources and materials available to teachers and to school expert teams (handbooks, literature etc.);
- Specifying entry procedures for students with disabilities (stating precise requirements on which students may be included in the mainstream education, setting clear criteria on scoring students with disabilities during the enrollment procedure etc.);
- Organizing activities aimed at improving the cooperation with parents of students with disabilities;
- Active cooperation and sharing information among primary and secondary schools;
- Allocating additional funds to schools to ensure school accessibility, and to procure equipment and materials to facilitate inclusive school practices;
- Improving the cooperation of schools with the main institutions in the area of education, such as the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), the State Education Inspectorate (SEI) etc.



CONCLUSIONS

The general conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that inclusion in secondary education, at this point, is reduced to improvised implementation, which is a consequence of the superficial understanding and interpretation of what inclusion really is. The lack of harmonized legal provisions and the inconsistent application of the laws in place, the lack of proper conditions in schools and the lack of expertise in school staff in working with students with disabilities, the lack of trained professionals on staff in school expert teams, the low level of awareness regarding the needs of students with disabilities, have all impact on the potential for creating equal educational opportunities for all. Very often, schools set in place only partial measures and the implementation of such measures is done only “pro forma”, yielding no actual positive effects in practice. The lack of clearly defined inclusion standards results in low expectations and unrealistic picture of the process of inclusion. This general conclusion is drawn based on the following specific conclusions:

- Legal regulations are not fully harmonized with the provisions referred to in the key international documents in this field: CRPD, CRC and the Salamanca Declaration. This also includes the right to enrollment (access) of students with disabilities to mainstream secondary education schools.
- There is a clear absence of system-wide identification, registration and tracking mechanisms for students with disabilities in mainstream secondary education. On one hand, this is greatly decreasing their educational opportunities, and on the other, it makes planning of educational policies much harder.

- Support of inclusion is mainly declarative. There are no sufficient budget funds being allocated to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream secondary education.
- Although accessibility to education is mainly interpreted as physical accessibility, in practice, even that is not ensured to a satisfactory extent. Mainly, schools try to make school buildings accessible by building wheelchair ramp at school entrance, which rarely adhere to any applicable standards. However, not much is done to make school interior and didactical resources accessible to students with disabilities, such as equipping schools to offer inclusive education.
- Despite the positive experiences gained through the pioneer introduction of assistive technology in schools (which was a result of an initiative of the civil sector), the role of the modern IT technology as an important tool for inclusion in education is almost completely neglected.
- No accessible didactic resources and manipulatives are being used, and there are no textbooks and other materials available in Braille, audio format or any other resources meeting any of the web accessibility standards. In this respect, there is no adequate legal framework set in place.
- Teachers are not properly trained and they do not have proper knowledge and skills in the area of working with students with disabilities and individual learning. What they find especially challenging is the drafting and the use of individual educational plans and grading students following their own IEPs. There is no unified approach to this issue.
- Inclusive school teams are not aware of what their precise role and competencies are. They are formed in schools, but only formally. Additionally, the current legal solution (setting forth the obligation for establishing inclusive school teams) indicates that such teams need to be established in special education secondary schools.
- There is a lack of support of inclusion among the general public and the academia in the country. One of the effects is the lack of proper exploitation of special education schools and their capacities as resource centres supporting inclusion in mainstream education.
- There are no mechanisms for exchange of experiences and good practices among schools, school expert teams and teachers set in place. There are also no mechanisms for exchange of information and coordination among the different levels of education (e.g. between the primary and the secondary education).
- In schools and in general, there is a lack of awareness regarding the needs, the capacities and the abilities of students with disabilities.
- Students with special educational needs and their families are very rarely included in processes which otherwise require their inclusion as partners, such as the processes of assessment of capacities, potentials and needs, drafting individual educational plan and adjusting/customizing school environment and resources.
- The involvement of students with special educational needs in extracurricular activities is only minimal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn above, the research team has formulated several recommendations which have been grouped based on the area of amendments required:

1. Recommendations to improve the legal framework pertaining to secondary education:

- Amendments of the legal framework are required to achieve complete harmonization of the national legislation with the relevant international documents in this area: CRPD, CRC and the Salamanca Declaration. Legal amendments need to be drafted based on participative process of consultations with persons with disabilities and their families, the civil sector, teachers and representatives of secondary schools expert teams, experts, professionals etc.
- The Law on Secondary Education needs to be amended so as to include provisions entitling children with disabilities to enrollment in mainstream secondary education, in line with all international standards. Mainstream education needs to be defined as the first option for children with disabilities, rather than an exception.
- To introduce system-wide identification, recording and tracking mechanisms for students with disabilities in mainstream secondary education (and in education in general).
- Competent authorities in the area of education need to monitor and engage into the current reform of the process of identifying the type and extent of disability to match the International Classification of Functioning, Disability

and Health. The support provided in the mainstream secondary education (and in education in general) needs to be adjusted to meet the individual abilities and needs of children and youth.

- Sufficient budget funds need to be allocated to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream secondary education. Transparent and accountable system of allocation of funds to secondary schools needs to be put in place, enabling effective, efficient and targeted use of funds.
- ### 2. Recommendations aimed at improving conditions and capacities for inclusion in education and creating equal opportunities for all:
- Ensuring complete physical accessibility of school buildings, in line with all applicable international standards, including accessibility to premises in school interior and equipping with didactical and other resources and materials to make inclusive teaching and learning possible. To that end, special standards need to be introduced defining the accessibility of school building, school equipment and the educational process in general.
 - Creating conditions for use of modern IC technology as a tool for inclusion in education, including developing web accessible educational apps in all media of instruction used in the country to allow for easier learning.
 - Textbooks and other learning materials need to be available in Braille, audio format and/or the standards for web accessibility. There should be law and bylaws set in place prescribing that authors need to supply all materials to the MoES in electronic form,

pursuant to the international standards of web accessibility.

- Teachers need to go through continuous training on inclusive education and individual teaching/learning. In that context, Faculties of Pedagogy need to consider the possibility of amending curricula and introduction of different teaching and learning methodologies to strengthen inclusive education and teaching. Moreover, teachers involved in education need to be trained, especially in respect of drafting and employing Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and grading students following IEPs.
- Introducing clear concept and model regarding the role of special educators within secondary school expert teams. At the same time, activities aimed at professional strengthening and training on staff special educator in secondary education need to be designed and implemented in practice.
- Designing a system-wide solution defining the role and the competencies of inclusive school teams and providing training and funds, so they can play their role. At the same time, parents of children with disabilities need to be included mandatorily in inclusive school teams in secondary schools and it should be pointed out clearly that inclusive teams need to be established in mainstream secondary schools.
- Identifying and promoting successful inclusive practices and models of mainstream secondary schools, as well as introducing mechanism for exchange of experiences and good practices among schools, expert teams and teachers.

3. Recommendations for stronger involvement of students with special educational needs and their families in curricular, extracurricular and mainstream social activities:

- Sensitization schools and wider society regarding the needs, the potentials and the capacities of students with special educational needs through workshops, public debates and inclusive events.
- Ensuring higher degree of inclusion, in the role of partners, of students with special educational needs and their families in the processes aimed at assessing capacities, creating IEP and suggesting adjustments/customization and solutions to meet individual capacities and abilities.
- Offering options and stimulating the involvement of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities, school contests and school trips.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

The analysis within the framework of the desk research will focus on these documents as follows:

- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Law ratifying the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities),
- The UNESCO Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education,
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- The Law on Secondary Education,
- The Law on Vocational Education and Training,
- The Law on the Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools,
- The Law on Pedagogical Service,
- The Law on Primary and Secondary Education Textbooks,
- The Law on Student Standard, and
- The National Strategy for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities (revised) 2010-2018.

4. Please state the total number of **students with disabilities** in your school and their structure **per year of education** in this and the previous school year.

| Number of students with disabilities:: | Year | | | | Total |
|--|------|----|-----|----|-------|
| | I | II | III | IV | |
| In the current school year 2017/18: | | | | | |
| In the previous school year 2016/17: | | | | | |

5. How many of your students with disabilities enrolled in the current school year of 2017/18 are affected by the following types of disabilities (please state a number)?

| | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with intellectual disability: (impediments to the psychic development) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student with physical disability: (students with difficulties in legs, arms and whole body mobility, students with cerebral palsy, students using aids, such as wheelchair, crutches etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with visual impairment: (severe impairment making it difficult to students to attend mainstream classes) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with visual and/or hearing impairment (severe impairment making it difficult to students to attend mainstream classes) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with combined impairment: (combination of several types of disabilities) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with autism: (autistic spectrum disorders) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with learning disabilities: (hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state): | |

6. How many of your students with disabilities enrolled in the previous school year of 2016/17 have been affected by the following types of disabilities (please state a number)?

| | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with intellectual disability: (impediments to the intellectual development) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student with physical disability: (students with difficulties in legs, arms and whole body mobility, students with cerebral palsy, students using aids, such as wheelchair, crutches etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with visual impairment: (severe impairment making it difficult to students to attend mainstream classes) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with visual and/or hearing impairment (severe impairment making it difficult to students to attend mainstream classes) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with combined impairment: (combination of several types of disabilities) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with autism: (autistic spectrum disorders) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students with learning disabilities: (hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state): | |

7. Ethnical structure of students with disabilities in the current 2017/18 (please state correct number):

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Macedonians: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Albanians: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Turks: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roma: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Serbs: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Vlachs: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bosniaks: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

8. In the past three years, has there been a case when your school **could not accept a student with disabilities?**

yes

no

If yes, could you please **elaborate**:

9. In which way does your school **identify students with disabilities?**

You can check more than one option:

- The parents have submitted a document (that is, a medical certificate on the type and the severity of their child's disability) issued by a competent institution regarding the type of severity the student is affected by.
- The parents have informed orally school authorities on the disability their child is affected by.
- Based on an assessment made by the school expert team, the teachers and the parents.
- Based on an assessment of school's expert team and the teachers.
- Other (please state): _____

10. What adjustments has the school made to ensure physical access to the school?

You can check more than one option:

- Access wheelchair has been installed at school's entrance.
- Outdoor elevator (lift) has been installed at the entrance of the school.
- The classrooms and the other premises in the school have been adjusted (for example, there is a dedicated classroom for individual work with students with disabilities, the school gym has been made accessible etc.).
- Adjusted (accessible) restrooms have been built.
- Indoor elevator has been installed to make movement up and down school floors possible.
- No special measures to facilitate the access of students with disabilities have been taken.
- Other (please state): _____

11. Does your school dispose of any pedagogical and didactical resources which have been made accessible (adjusted) to students with disabilities?

yes

no

If yes, please state which: _____

12. Does your school dispose of any assistive IT devices (large-print keyboards, trackballs, joysticks, switches, screen readers etc.)?

yes

no

If yes, please state which: _____

13. Does your school have a special education teacher on staff?

- Yes, there is a full-time special education teacher on staff in the school.
- Yes, there is a "mobile" special education teacher in the school (a teacher that works in several schools)
- Yes, there is a special education teacher working as a volunteer
- No

14. Please select the appropriate professional profiles of the members of school's expert team:

- pedagogist
- psychologist
- Social worker
- Special education teacher
- Speech therapist

Other (please state): _____

15. In terms of the **professional capacities of the school expert team in dealing with students with disabilities**, please choose a statement that best reflects the state in your school:

- The school expert team is completely capable of working with students with disabilities and there is no need for additional training
- The school expert team is continuously upgrading its knowledge and skills in dealing with students with disabilities by attending trainings and seminars, and there are plenty of training opportunities
- The school expert team needs to upgrade its knowledge and skills in dealing with students with disabilities, but there are no opportunities for attending training and seminars in this particular area
- Upgrading knowledge and skills in dealing with students with disabilities is not a priority of school's expert team.

16. In terms of the **professional capacities of the teachers in dealing with students with disabilities**, please choose a statement that best reflects the state in your school:

- The school teachers are completely capable of working with students with disabilities and there is no need for additional training
- The school teachers are continuously upgrading their knowledge and skills in dealing with students with disabilities by attending trainings and seminars, and there are plenty of training opportunities
- School teachers need to upgrade their knowledge and skills in dealing with students with disabilities, but there are no opportunities for attending training and seminars in this particular area
- Upgrading knowledge and skills in dealing with students with disabilities is not a priority of the teachers.

17. In terms of the school **inclusion team** charged with dealing with students with disabilities, please choose a statement that best reflects the state in your school:

- Special inclusion team is formed for each student with disabilities, which also includes student's parents which takes care of student's special educational needs
- There is an inclusion team operating in the school which consists of representative(s) of students with disabilities which takes care of their special needs
- There is an operational inclusion team in the school which is composed exclusively by school employees which takes care of the educational needs of students with disabilities
- There is no inclusion team in the school
- There are no students with disabilities in our school

Please elaborate:

What are team's key assignments and responsibilities provided there is an inclusion team in the school?

Why an inclusion team has not been formed (although there are students with disabilities in the school)?

18. Has your school been **allocated additional financial means** by national and local authorities to improve inclusion of students with disabilities in the last school year (2016/17)?

- yes no There are no students with disabilities in our school

If yes, please state how the school has used those funds: _____

19. Does the school apply any **individualized educational plans** for students with disabilities?

- The school prepares individualized educational plan for each student with disabilities in all subjects the student faces any difficulties
- An individualized educational plan for students with disabilities is prepared and implemented by teachers who teach different subjects who have been properly trained
- No individualized educational plans for students with disabilities are prepared and used in the school
- There are no students with disabilities in our school

Please elaborate:

What are the key achievements and challenges in terms of preparing and applying individualized educational plans?

Why individualized educational plans are not prepared (although there are students with disabilities in the school)?

20. In terms of applying **customized tests** as an assessment tool, please check the statement that best reflects the state in your school:

- Tests are being adjusted to fit the skills of students with disabilities
- Tests are adjusted and customized only for students with disabilities using individualized educational plan
- Students with disabilities are assessed using the same tests as other students
- There are no students with disabilities in our school

Please state how are tests customized:

- 21.** Do students with disabilities in your school use any **assistive IT devices** (large-print keyboards, trackballs, joysticks, switches, screen readers etc.) or sophisticated adjustment (adjustment of computer mouse, computer screen etc.) **when working on a computer?**

yes no There are no students with disabilities in our school

If yes, please state what type of devices or software adjustment you use:

- 22.** In terms of **involvement of students with disabilities in extracurricular and free school activities** (clubs, competitions, school trips, celebrations etc.), please check the statement that best reflects the state in your school?

- The school plans and adjusts extracurricular and free school activities so all students can participate equally, in line with their personal interests and preferences.
- Students with disabilities are involved in some of the extracurricular and free school activities in which they are able to participate, depending on their disability
- Students with disabilities are not involved in extracurricular and free school activities
- There are no students with disabilities in our school

- 23.** How are students with disabilities **treated by other students** (please check the statement that best reflects the state in your school)?

- They accept them as equal, help them in all curricular and extracurricular activities and they socialize after school.
- They treat them with respect and share school materials, but the interaction between them is mainly limited to school activities.
- There is a limited communication, because students without disabilities think that students with disabilities are not able to participate in the same games and activities
- Students with disabilities are not accepted and do not take part in their peers' social life

- Students with disabilities are insulted and ridiculed by their classmates
- There are no students with disabilities in our school
- Other (please state): _____

24. What is the **most common reaction of parents** of students without disabilities in terms of including students with disabilities in mainstream classes?

- They support the inclusion of students with disabilities as equal and encourage their children to socialize, cooperate and support classmates with disabilities.
- They accept their presence
- They do not have or they do not share their position in terms of including students with disabilities
- They do not accept the inclusion of students with disabilities, because they think that it will decrease the quality and the dynamics of the educational process, but they do not raise any initiatives in relation to it
- They actively raise initiatives before the school and other authorities aimed at excluding students with disabilities from the classes their children are attending
- There are no students with disabilities in our school
- Other (please state): _____

25. Which **stakeholders in the society has your school cooperated with** to improve the situation with the inclusion of students with disabilities (multiple options are available)?

- With other secondary schools
- With the primary schools which the students with disabilities have attended previously
- With the municipality
- With other local institutions
- With the national educational and other relevant institutions
- With civil organizations
- So far, the school has not cooperated with other stakeholders

Please briefly describe the cooperation and the main outcomes:

26. Which of the statements below best reflects **your school's experience** in dealing with children with disabilities?

- The majority of students with disabilities acquire the basic knowledge and skills envisaged and they complete their secondary education
- Students with disabilities complete their secondary education, but the majority of them do not acquire the basic knowledge and skills envisaged
- Students with disabilities are not able to attend mainstream classes and they drop out from school
- Special secondary education schools offer better options and conditions to students with disabilities

27. Which of the options listed below best reflects **your school's position** in terms of inclusive secondary education?

- Inclusive secondary education is a necessity and it is in the best interest of all students
- Inclusive secondary education is a good opportunity for only a fraction of students with disabilities which are able to attend and participate in mainstream classes
- Inclusive secondary education is not in the best interests of students with disabilities, neither of students without disabilities.

28. Please mark the **three priorities** which according to you, if dealt with in appropriate manner, would contribute to advance the inclusion of students with disabilities in your school?

- Hiring a special education teacher
- Providing training to teachers to be able to work with students with disabilities
- Providing support to the school expert team in dealing with students with disabilities and providing support to the teachers
- Improving physical access to school building
- Providing accessible pedagogical and didactical aids, manipulatives and assistive IT devices (assistive IT devices and assistive educational software)
- Providing accessible textbooks and other school materials (in Braille, accessible electronic versions etc.)
- Allocating additional funds to the school aimed at meeting individualized needs of students with disabilities

Amending the legal framework- please specify: _____

Other, please state: _____

29. Are there any **additional information or suggestions** related to working with students with disabilities you would like to share?

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Name and last name of the person filling out the questionnaire: | Position in the school: |
| _____ | _____ |
| Contact information of the person filling out the form: | |
| Tel.: _____ Mobile phone: _____ e-mail: _____ | |
| Date: | Signature and seal: |
| _____ | _____ |

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

APPENDIX 3

REPORT

on school visit and interview

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee(s):

1. (name and last name, position, contact information)
- 2.
- 3.

| INFORMATION ON THE SCHOOL | |
|---|--|
| Full title of the secondary school | |
| Place, municipality | |
| Region | |
| Type of school | <input type="checkbox"/> Gymnasium <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational school <input type="checkbox"/> Gymnasium and vocational school <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state): |
| Medium/media of instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> Macedonian <input type="checkbox"/> Albanian <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish <input type="checkbox"/> Serbian |

1. How many students are enrolled in your school in the school year of 2017/18?

| No. of students | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------|------|--------|-------|
| | | | |

2. How many students with disabilities in total are enrolled in your school in the school year of 2017/18?

| No. of students with disabilities | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| | | | |

3. How many students with disabilities are enrolled in your school in the school year of 2017/18 per year?

| No. of students with disabilities in: | Year | | | | Total |
|---------------------------------------|------|----|-----|----|-------|
| | I | II | III | IV | |
| | | | | | |

4. How many students with disabilities are enrolled in your school in the school year of 2017/18 per type of disability?

| Type of disability | No. of students |
|--|-----------------|
| Intellectual disability | |
| Physical disability | |
| Visual impairment | |
| Hearing and/or speech impairment | |
| Combined impairment | |
| Autism (autistic spectrum disorders) | |
| Learning disabilities (hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia etc.) | |
| Other (if any, please state) | |
| Total: | |

5. What is the ethnical structure of students with disabilities enrolled in your school in the school year of 2017/18?

| Ethnical background | No. of students |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Macedonians | |
| Albanians | |
| Turks | |
| Roma | |
| Serbs | |
| Vlachs | |
| Bosniaks | |
| Other (if any, please state) | |
| Total: | |

6. What do you think is the reason for the discrepancy appearing in the currently provided data and the answers the school provided in the questionnaire? Is it related to a change of the number of students with disabilities or a revision of school's assessment?

7. How does school staff identify students with disabilities? What sources of information do they use? How do they establish and record students' "special educational needs"?

- 8. Please describe, if you have ever had such experience, a situation in which the school could not accept a student with disabilities? What were the reasons? Was it communicated to the student and his/her parents?**

- 9. What adjustments has the school made to ensure physical access for such students? What pedagogical and didactical resources which have been made accessible (adjusted) to students with disabilities are available in the school? Are there any assistive technology devices available in your school?**

Observation findings and remarks:

- 10. What is the composition of school's expert team? What its role is in working with students with disabilities? Is school's expert team trained for the role it is supposed to play? What type of training has school's expert team has to play their role?**

- 11. Are teachers motivated to work with students with disabilities and what challenges do they face in their day-to-day work? What type of training have the teachers had so far in working with students with disabilities and how many of the teachers have attended such trainings?**

12. Does the school apply any individualized educational plans for students with disabilities? If yes: What achievements have been made? What are the challenges faced? How are students following an individualized educational plan assessed? If not, why such individualized educational plans have not been put in place?

13. What is the composition of school’s inclusiveness team formed to improve work with students with disabilities? How many parents of students with disabilities are included? How were parents selected? What is the role of parents? What has the inclusiveness team achieved so far? What are the challenges faced? If not, why is so?

14. In what way does the school cooperate with parents of students with disabilities? In what way does the school communicates mainstreamly and exchanges information with them? In which way does the school include them in improving their children’s educational opportunities? What are the challenges and opportunities for advancing the cooperation with parents of students with disabilities?

15. In which way does the school report to the competent local authorities (the municipality) and the national institutions (the Ministry of Education and Science) regarding students with disabilities identified? Is the school allocated additional funds to improve inclusion of students with disabilities?

16. In which way does the school encourage students with disabilities to take part in extracurricular and free school activities (clubs, competition, school trips, school celebrations etc.)? If students with disabilities do not take part in these activities, please state why is so?

17. What is the relation between students without disabilities and their peers with disabilities? What are the challenges faced? How does the school encourage students without disabilities to accept and support their peers with disabilities?

18. What is the position of parents of students without disabilities in terms of including students with disabilities in mainstream classes? What are the challenges faced, have you ever witnessed any reactions or complaints regarding including persons with disabilities in mainstream educational process? In which way does the school encourage parents of students without disabilities to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in the mainstream secondary education?

19. Does the school cooperate with any other stakeholders in society (local and international institutions, civil organizations, business sector, media etc.) to improve the inclusion of students with disabilities? If yes: Which stakeholders has it cooperated with so far? What has the cooperation involved? What achievements have been made? If not, have there been any attempts to establish some kind of cooperation? With whom? Why the attempt has failed? If no attempts for cooperation have been made, please state what were the reasons.

20. What are the most burning needs of your school in terms of improving inclusion of students with disabilities? What needs to improve to advance school's capacity in offering equal educational opportunities to students with disabilities?

21. Are there any additional information related to working with students with disabilities you would like to share?

COMMENTS AND REMARKS:

APPENDIX 4

QUESTIONS

for the focus group consisting of parents of students with disabilities

1. Which secondary school is your child attending? What year is your child in? Why has your child opted for that particular school? Was that school your child's first choice?
2. Has your child faced any difficulties in enrolling the secondary school of his/her choice? If so, what difficulties?
3. How do you rate the accessibility of your child's school? Is your child able to move around the school without assistance? If not, who assists him/her at school?
4. Is your child following an individualized educational plan? If so, has the teacher/teachers drafting the plan consulted you about anything? What do you think about the individualized education plan your child is using? If there is not such plan in place, do you think that your child would benefit from such individualized educational plan?
5. How satisfied are you from how your child is performing at school? Do you think that teachers' assessment is objective and duly reflecting your child's efforts?
6. What do you think about the support provided by school's expert team? Does your child get all the support he/she needs?
7. What do you think about the support your child gets from teachers? Does your child get all the support he/she needs?
8. What do you think about the cooperation and the communication with the school in general?
9. Does school's expert team consult you about your child's educational needs and opportunities? Do they provide advices and counseling on how to help your child master the curriculum?
10. Does your child participate in any extracurricular and free school activities (school trips, celebrations, competitions, clubs etc.)? In which, how? Are there any extracurricular or free school activities in which your child wanted to participate, but he/she was not able to?
11. How do other classmates treat your child? Is your child accepted by his/her classmates? Do they help him/her in everyday school tasks? Does your child socialize with his/her classmates outside school?

12. What is the attitude of classmates' parents in terms of including students with disabilities in mainstream secondary education? Are they in favour of inclusion?
13. What do you think is the best thing for your child in his/her school?
14. What do you think is the biggest challenge that your child faces at school?
15. Is your child thinking about continuing his/her education at the university? If so, what would he/she like to study? Do you think that there are opportunities for your child to continue his/her education? What are the reasons/obstacles on your child's way to continuing his/her education?
16. How do you think can the inclusion of students with disabilities be improved in mainstream secondary education?

QUESTIONS

for the focus group consisting of teachers and representatives of school expert teams

1. Have you ever worked with students with disabilities? What type of disabilities have your students faced?
2. How do you identify a student with disabilities? How do you decide what special educational needs students with disabilities have?
3. How ready and how trained you are to work with students with disabilities? What trainings have you attended, on what topics? When and who were they delivered by? How have such trainings helped you in your day-to-day work with students with disabilities? On what topics do you need additional training? If you have not attended any training, what type of training do you need?
4. For how many of your students with disabilities do you prepare an individualized educational plan? Are there any students with disabilities for whom you do not prepare an individualized educational plan? What are the reasons? How do you prepare the plan? In which way do you track the success of the implementation of the plan and how well your students are performing?
5. Do you use specially adjusted tests to assess the knowledge of your students with disabilities (primarily of those using individualized educational plan)? If so, can you please describe the adjustments made? Are you supported by somebody in adjusting the tests?

6. Do you have the resources you need (didactical and pedagogical resources, manipulatives, assistive technology etc.) assisting you in working with students with disabilities? How effective are you in using them? If not, what is missing?
7. What is the role of expert school teams in providing assistance to teachers working with students with disabilities? Please share your experience.
8. How do you assess the cooperation with the parents of students with disabilities in terms of improving their education? How often do you communicate with them? What type of information do you most often exchange? Which communication channel do you use?
9. How do you ensure that your students with disabilities are included in extracurricular and free school activities (celebrations, competitions, clubs, school trips etc.)? Please share some examples.
10. How do you encourage classmates to accept their peers with disabilities? In what way?
11. How do you encourage classmates' parents to accept students with disabilities?
12. Do you think that the mainstream secondary education provides equal opportunities to students with disabilities? Please explain.
13. What do you see as being your biggest success in working with students with disabilities so far? What is that success due to?
14. What do you see as being your biggest challenge in working with students with disabilities? How can you overcome that challenge?
15. Have any of your students with disabilities continued their education at the university? To which? What is their success and achievements? Do any of your students with disabilities wish to continue their education at the university? What chances do they have in continuing their education?
16. What are your thoughts about the potential ways in which inclusiveness in mainstream secondary education could be improved?

QUESTIONS

for the focus group consisting of students with disabilities in the mainstream secondary education

1. What secondary school do you go to? What year are you in? Why have you opted for that particular school? Was this school your first choice?
2. Have you faced any difficulties in enrolling the secondary school of your choice? If so, what difficulties?
3. Are you able to move around the school on your own? Can you enter all rooms? Is there classroom or premise you can't access? Why, please state your reasons and obstacles briefly.
4. Have you ever heard about an individualized educational plan? Have you seen one? Do your teachers make one for you? Were you included in drafting such plan? Were you consulted about what do you think you can achieve out of all that has been included in the plan? Is it easier for you to learn according to this plan?
5. How satisfied are you with your performance at school? What do you think about how your teachers assess you? Do you think that they are able to recognize what you can and cannot do? Do you think that your grades really reflect your knowledge and skills?
6. How satisfied are you of how teachers treat you? Do they provide the support you need to master the curriculum?
7. What do you think about the support provided by school's expert team? Do you get the support you need whenever you need it? How important such support is for you? Please describe briefly what type of support you get.
8. Do you participate in any extracurricular and free school activities (school trips, celebrations, competitions, clubs etc.)? In which, how? Are there any extracurricular or free school activities in which you wanted to participate, but was not able to?
9. How do other classmates treat you? Please share an example or an event through which you can demonstrate how they treat you. Please remember an event when you felt happy, and another one when you did not feel so good. Do they accept you? Do they help you in your everyday school tasks? Do you socialize with them outside school?
10. What is the attitude of your classmates' parents in terms of including students with disabilities in mainstream secondary education? Do they accept you?
11. What is the best thing at school?
12. What is the biggest challenge at school?
13. What are your plans after finishing secondary school? Do you wish to continue your education at the university? What faculty would you choose?
14. How do you think can the inclusion of students with disabilities be improved in mainstream secondary education?

