

## Children at Risk and those with Disabilities



Evaluation Visits, October 2006 –  
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## Children At Risk and those with Disabilities in South East Europe

- Initial surveys done by nine national teams, and published by OECD in 2006.  
**Participants:** Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tuzla); Bulgaria; Croatia; Kosovo; FYR of Macedonia; Moldova; Montenegro; Romania; and Serbia.
- One “model school” set up in each, with a project administrator, and contacts made with policy decision-makers and donors.

## Main Objectives of OECD Initiative

- ❑ Identification and monitoring of **issues and trends** in Special Needs provision
- ❑ Law and policy review
- ❑ Creating a “**network**” and contact points throughout SEE
- ❑ Conducting **capacity-building** seminars  
(Montenegro, Zagreb, Paris, Jerusalem, Vienna)
- ❑ “Micro-projects” in **data** gathering and statistical systems
- ❑ Awareness-raising and lobbying

## SEN/DDD: Special Educational Needs Disability, Difficulty, Disadvantage

- \***Children At Risk** = broadest category; can include children in severe poverty, without parental care, street children, children in prison, at risk of being trafficked or abused, affected by HIV/AIDS...
- \***Children with Special Educational Needs** = about 10% of school-age population in any country
- \***Children with (intellectual or physical) Disabilities** = a sub-set of SEN, typically representing 2-3% of school-age population.

Definition/categorisation problem is greatest for the 7-8% of non-disabled SEN children

## Education for All – Millennium Development Goals – European Benchmarks



ALL require **full** educational rights for  
**all** children

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\*\*EFA/MDG: No later than 2015: full course of free,  
compulsory primary schooling for all boys and girls

\*\*European Benchmarks: No later than 2010:

\*Percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading literacy in the EU  
reduced by at least 20% (compared to 2000);

\*EU average of max. 10% early school leavers (defined as students  
leaving before the end of compulsory schooling);

\*At least 85% of 22-year-olds in EU have completed upper secondary  
education.

## Main Issues 1



- “Categorisation”. Used to be *defectology-driven and strongly medical in approach*. Now, a shift towards social/educational approaches.
- OECD’s A-B-C scheme is useful; but may not fit with categories in national legislation. Micro-projects help clarify these issues.
- Legal commitments are in place (Convention on Rights of the Child, Salamanca Agreement etc.) but laws and policies are not always child-rights based, and SEN/DDD provision is rarely reflected in budget priorities.

## Main Issues (continued)



Concepts of “integration” and “inclusion” are not well understood.

- \*Integration = placing SEN/DDD children in regular classes/schools without changing the system (“the child adapts to the school”)
- \* Inclusion = making changes in the way the **entire school** works, to include *all* children, by creating educational settings that respect each child’s rights and capabilities (“the school adapts to the child”).

**In SEE, more “integration” than “inclusion”**

## Main Issues (continued)



### Inclusion: Barriers and Facilitators

- Barriers:
- Lack of money at local & school level
  - Lack of data, and lack of data-sharing
  - Overcrowding and multiple shifts in schools
  - Teachers not trained to work in inclusive settings
  - Poor facilities
  - Negative public attitudes

## Main Issues (continued)



### Facilitators:

- Clarity in law and policy
- Adequate financing, incl. teacher salaries
- Teaching assistants in large, inclusive classes
- Teacher training in PRE- as well as IN-service, so that *every* teacher is familiar with inclusive approaches to teaching and learning
- Reform of curricula and assessment methods to remove *unnecessary* obstacles to achievement
- Public advocacy and awareness-raising

“Child-Friendly Schools”

## Findings



1. Priority for SEN provision is declared policy, but is not reflected in **financing**.
2. Provision is *resource-* rather than *need-driven*; poorly targeted; and often lacking in rural and deprived areas.
3. The most vulnerable children are those who are “**invisible**”, e.g. no birth certificate, no registration, isolated communities.....

## Findings (continued)



4. Services to **families**, **early identification**, and **data sharing** among authorities are essential (but often lacking)
5. Contacts and **sharing of expertise** between mainstream and special schools are getting better, but the systems are still not sufficiently “porous” and flexible
5. The position of **Roma children** is particularly difficult, both in general and in SEN education

## Recommendations arising from Evaluation Visits

- Ensure **financing for, and enforcement of**, existing governmental obligations under Conventions/laws/policies
- Ensure **long-term sustainability**. SEN provision is not “a task for NGOs and donors”, but part of the primary **governmental** obligation to every child
- Ensure training in SEN for **all teachers** and school directors – especially **pre-service** training



## Recommendations (cont.)



- Ensure that “**categorisation**” of children is **not in conflict with Child Rights**: better “**gate-keeping**” procedures are needed to prevent unnecessary placements. (The right to regular **review**, for example, is often ignored.)
- Make better use of **expertise** in special schools, e.g. via “mobile teams” of specialists, and **easier movement** of students and teachers between regular and special settings.

## Recommendations (cont.)



- **Inclusive schools need** –
  - good physical access, facilities, equipment
  - teachers trained in inclusive methods
  - smaller class sizes, and *teaching assistants*
  - flexible curricula and time-tables
  - minimal use of “shift” systems
  - careful transition from *class* teaching (one teacher) to *subject* teaching (several teachers) – difficult for SEN children!

## Recommendations (continued)

- **Share good practice** via networking. E.g., “Peer Helpers Clubs”, practice teaching by student teachers in SEN settings, parents’ associations, career guidance for SEN students...
- Use the experience of the micro-projects to stimulate a drive to create **reliable national data bases**, not only of SEN/DDD children *in* the system, but reaching out to find the “invisible” ones -- and ensure that their educational rights are respected.

