SUPPORTING THE IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN POLAND

Key Messages from Stakeholders

This short document aims to provide a summary of the key messages from discussions held during the Kick-Off meeting 11-13th July 2018 in Warsaw. Meetings were held with representatives from four Stakeholder groups - parent' and students; special needs organisations; support services and teachers from mainstream and special education – as well as with representatives of national level organisations and the Ministry of National Education (MEN).

Across the stakeholder groups, the main points were quite strongly aligned and a number of priority issues for all stakeholders can be identified. These key messages from across all of the discussions held have been collated, summarised and organised under five main headings that were recurring themes across all the discussions.

These shared issues will be used to guide the structuring of subsequent discussions with all system stakeholders during all subsequent activities in the work conducted by the Agency.

1. Developing positive attitudes and values

This includes:

- *Awareness raising* across the education system and wider society regarding the potential benefits of inclusive education for everyone - learners, parents, professionals, society in general;

- *Ensuring that the rights of all learners* to learn in mainstream schools is clearly understood by all stakeholders;

- *Changing the thinking* and attitudes of all school stakeholders so that learner diversity is seen as something positive for all schools;

- *Listening to the voices of learners* and ensuring that their rights, opinions and decisions are respected;

- *Supporting all parents* to effectively contribute to their child's education, as well as the work of the school;

- *Improving communication* between and ways of working more co-operatively with all learners, parents and all members of the school's wider community including other schools and services;

- *Recognising the added value of schools' work* in working with different groups of learners;

- *Developing an understanding of accessibility* as an issue that affects all system stakeholders, and covers all aspects of education and life in wider society.

2. Ensuring an understanding among all stakeholders that inclusive education is understood as being about quality education for all learners

This includes:

- *Having a clear policy vision for inclusive education* that articulates the challenges that exist and how they can be overcome, what changes are aimed at and what standards need to be met;

- *Increasing the willingness of all system stakeholders* in relation to accepting the responsibility for all meeting learners' needs;

- *Increasing the ability of all system stakeholders* in relation to adapting the system, the school environment, learning opportunities and materials to meet the needs of all learners;

- *Ensuring that stakeholders take an holistic view of every learner* is taken so that they receive the learning support they need, when they need it, so that no learners get 'lost in the system';

- *Broadening the understanding* of all system stakeholders in relation to who might need different forms of learning support;

- *Re-defining the understanding* of individual Special Educational Needs (SEN) in relation to wider thinking about 'additional' learning needs of all learners;

- *Re-thinking needs identification* and 'labelling' procedures in relation to a move towards a bio-psycho-social model;

- *Simplifying systems and procedures* for supporting individual learners with recognised SENs, as well as involving and working with their parents and families;

- *Reconsidering the forms of perceived 'exclusion'* in the system and in mainstream schools.

3. Providing different forms of support in mainstream schools

This includes:

- *Ensuring the availability of flexible learning opportunities* in all mainstream schools so that they can ensure early intervention and provide early support when learning needs are identified;

- *Ensuring the availability of support within mainstream schools* that can be used flexibly with groups of learners in different ways, determined by the school teams' judgement and decision making, supporting a move away from a reliance on 'official decisions' or certification as a means of confirming that learning needs require support;

- *Providing a wide range of support resources* (professionals including specialist support staff, teachers, non-educational staff psychologists, therapists etc.) and tools (materials, technological support etc.) in the mainstream sector;

- *Supporting mainstream schools to co-operate* with a wider range of professionals and to create broader professional teams that are responsible for all learners;

- *Re-focussing the role* of specialist support services and centres in relation to supporting mainstream schools;

- *Re-focusing the work* of separate special schools, integration classes and separate special classes in mainstream schools so they have a clear role in supporting and fostering inclusive education;

- *Increasing the opportunities* for sharing specialist knowledge, resources and provision between professionals and across different schools, institutions and sectors more effectively;

- *Supporting the work of headteachers* so they are able to welcome all learners from their local area, enact a vision and develop a culture for inclusive education and provide the support they feel that learners need in their schools.

4. Preparing teachers and other professionals to work in inclusive classrooms

This includes:

- *Working with all system stakeholders to develop a shared understanding* of the need for all professionals' training opportunities to focus upon the demands of inclusive education and not special education;

- *Ensuring the availability of initial and on-going training opportunities* for all teachers that provide them with the values and attitudes, knowledge and skills to prepare them for inclusive education;

- *Widening the 'brief' of teacher education* so that all teachers (including subject, support and specialist teachers) are prepared to work with learners with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms;

- *Improving co-ordination, joint planning and* implementation between training providers, local level institutions and support providers.

- *Ensuring that higher education/teacher education institutions* who provide initial and continuing teacher education understand that the provision of flexible training opportunities that prepare all teachers for inclusive education is a priority for their work;

- *Engaging with higher education institutions to resolve questions* regarding 'who trains the trainers' and ensure that teacher educators are prepared to support inclusive education;

- *Ensuring the availability of co-ordinated and inter-connected training* for wider group of professionals - headteachers, inspectors, support professionals, local level leaders and teacher educators - to prepare them for inclusive education;

- *Establishing mechanisms for monitoring* the effectiveness of initial and on-going professional development opportunities in relation to meeting the goals for inclusive education.

5. Increasing the capacity of the overall education system to be inclusive

This includes:

- *Ensuring that all system stakeholders clearly understand* the policy goals and objectives for inclusive education and what these mean for their work;

- *Increasing flexibility across the system* so that appropriate support is made available for all learners, parents, schools and teachers, in all areas and geographical locations in an equitable way;

- *Developing effective formal governance, co-operation* and collaborative working across different sectors (i.e. health and education ministries) across different system levels (local and national) based on shared language and understandings;

- *Supporting effective co-operation* between different sectors within the system (mainstream and special), between schools and support services and between individual schools;

- *Examining the roles and responsibilities of local authorities* in relation to needs identification, the provision of mainstream school support, inspection and overall policy implementation;

- *Ensuring systematic and effective information flow* across system levels and sectors, between different organisations, services and institutions, and between professionals working individually or in teams;

- *Establishing funding mechanisms that strengthens inclusive education* by providing flexible financial resourcing for a wider range of provision and support in mainstream schools;

- *Examining the monitoring and evaluation* of the availability, quality and effectiveness of learning opportunities, support and provision for all learners, in order to guide future developments and reduce disparities across the system, as well as within and between schools.