

# **MAPPING POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CONTEXTS OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

## **CROATIA COUNTRY REPORT**

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**Authors**

Ivana Batarelo Kokić

Anton Vukelić

Maja Ljubić

**Contributors**

Alison Closs

Vanja Ivošević

Pavel Zgaga

**Editors**

Anthony F. Camilleri

Nataša Pantić

**Layout**

Simona Feletti

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## FOREWORD

This report is the outcome of the ETF regional project promoting inclusive education and training policies and practices in contexts of social and cultural diversity in the Western Balkans and Turkey. In 2009, the European Training Foundation (ETF) commissioned a study resulting in 7 country reports<sup>1</sup> *“Mapping Policies and Practices for the Preparation of Teachers for Inclusive Education in Contexts of Social and Cultural Diversity”* with the overall aim to contribute to the promotion of inclusive education and training policies and practices in Western Balkan countries. The study has been set within a wider framework of other studies, research and policies already carried out by national and international organisations. Furthermore in the diverse social and cultural contexts of the Western Balkan countries the studies link the challenge of inclusive education to the broader challenges of social inclusion and social cohesion, which are high on the EU agenda.

The study was designed to explore various perspectives of the relevant actors, and relies on qualitative data collected through documents analysis, interviews and focus groups, as well as information collected in an on-line survey. It was conceptualised to be carried out in two phases. The first phase finalised by the end of December 2009, mapped policies and practices in teacher preparation in each of the countries under study. The primary focus of the study was teacher education in contexts of social and cultural diversity. While a number of studies have addressed on the one hand social inclusion in education and training where focus is placed on i) access, attainment and progression and ii) teacher preparation, still we can say that so far little research has been conducted in the region to look at teacher preparation for development of transversal competences for social inclusion. Therefore, the completed country reports bring additional value to the already existing research and data on policies and practices for teacher education in the countries under study. Moreover, much of the benefit of this research is through the process of carrying it out with local research teams, who through their research, have opened up the relevant issues in the countries as part of an on-going policy dialogue at all levels of the education system on the topic.

The first phase included the drafting of a common thematic outline used as a basis for country reports that provided relevant qualitative information as well as basic qualitative analyses. These country reports constitute the main preparatory work and stock-taking exercise for regional level analysis. In order to analyse the relevant aspects of the regional context and how to enhance and support the processes at country and regional level, a second phase of the research is agreed for the period 2010. This will lead to a cross country report which will analyse and synthesise the findings of the 7 country reports into a regional map of policies and practices. The cross country report aims to critically analyse and synthesise the policies and practices in teacher preparation for inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity in Western Balkans.

A consortium company, SCIENTER and Centre for Education Policy (CEP) has been contracted to work with the ETF on the country and cross country reports. The ETF selected research team from SCIENTER/CEP have been working very closely with the ETF-supported Balkan Regional Policy Network during the research phase. The draft country reports have been reviewed by the ETF social inclusion team (Dagmar Ouzoun, Elena Pompilio, Evgenia Petkova, Henrik Faudel, Keith Holmes and Lida Kita) and been widely discussed and received feedback from the Western Balkans and Turkey key stakeholders during the 2009 ETF organised regional events.

We thank everybody involved for their contributions, support and commitment to cooperation in preparation of the country report.

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo (defined by UNSCR 1244), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CNES	Croatian National Education Standard
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate General for Employment
EC	European Commission
EFA	Education for All
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EURAC	European Academy Bozen/Bolzano
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IT	Information Technology
MoHSW	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; Republic of Croatia
MoSES	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports; Republic of Croatia
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REF	Roma Education Fund
SEE	South East Europe
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WB	World Bank

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study on social inclusion in Croatia was conducted within the European Training Foundation (ETF) regional project on social inclusion through education and training in Southeast Europe. The objective was to analyse policies and practices regarding teachers' pre-service education and in-service professional development, and to identify issues, challenges and good practices with regard to the development of the competences required for inclusive education practices by teachers from primary and secondary education.

The research was conducted throughout October and November 2009, and included a series of focus groups with parents and teachers and interviews with members of the school expert teams in five elementary schools throughout Croatia. In addition to research conducted in schools, we conducted two focus groups with student teachers, two interviews with pre-service teacher educators, and a series of interviews with pre-service teacher educators, in-service teacher educators (both NGO and Teacher Education and Training Agency representatives), and local and central government education representatives. In addition to the qualitative section of this research study, 11 teachers, 14 teacher educators and 9 student teachers responded to an online survey.

The study findings indicate that relevant legislation, policies, regulations and educational strategies in Croatia are relatively progressive and geared towards inclusion. The national policy and legislative frameworks are particularly focused on the protection of minority rights to education in respective minority languages, with a strong emphasis on increasing the participation of the Roma minority and the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools. Nevertheless, it is apparent that changes in practice are happening at a much slower pace than expected.

Teacher competences – their disposition, skills, knowledge and motivation – to adopt new approaches to educating children from various socioeconomic, cultural and experiential backgrounds are paramount in ensuring actual changes in practice, and hence outcomes of learning. The teachers who were interviewed support the idea of inclusive education, but recognise that they are not adequately prepared for work in inclusive settings. Pre-service teacher-training programmes include basic knowledge of child development and subject-related teaching methods, but offer little or no practical experience. This is particularly the case for interaction between student teachers and pupils with special educational needs. Furthermore, teacher educators pointed out that teacher-training institutions are not inclusive, and candidates with disabilities are commonly discriminated against in university entrance exams.

The upgrading of professional knowledge is an obligation for all teachers. It is achieved through a system of accredited conferences, seminars and workshops organised at national, county or town level by the Teacher Education and Training Agency, teacher-training faculties and colleges, teachers' professional associations, and some NGOs. Most of the training offered is linked to the educational level and subject area, while several of the programmes are interdisciplinary. State budget funds are assured for teachers' participation in in-service development programmes, but the law does not specify a mandatory number of hours of professional training for teachers. Existing standards do not include specific competences that are relevant for inclusive education, and there are no incentives for teachers to participate in the in-service training programmes that are relevant to social inclusion. It is likely that this situation will change with the implementation of licensing procedures.

Additional changes in teacher pre-service and in-service education should ensure the development of teachers' skills in relation to social inclusion. It appears that insufficient teacher training relevant to social inclusion is taking place, at both pre-service and in-service levels.

Furthermore, the existing problems relating to the inclusion of children with special needs are mostly a result of inflexible or unclear legal regulations (e.g. Regulatory Act on the Number of Students in Combined Classes), a lack of money, unsuitable school buildings and weaknesses in teacher training. This is particularly relevant when addressing the inclusion of students with special educational needs; for example, the majority of schools operate in shifts, and most schools have architectural barriers to wheelchair access. Again, the legal regulations dealing with architecture for inclusive education are based on children's rights and are in line with international practice. Finally, a systematic collection of relevant data on social inclusion in education is necessary in order to make the best use of existing good practices and reverse negative trends. There is a lack of research studies focusing on the relationship between legal acts and their implementation in the formal education system.

Based on the evidence obtained during this study, the authors propose a number of measures that could accelerate reform in inclusion policy through action by system-level decision makers, teacher trainers and teachers.



# Mapping Policies and Practices for the Preparation of Teachers for Inclusive Education in Contexts of Social and Cultural Diversity

COUNTRY REPORT FOR CROATIA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Study Objectives and Context

#### 1.1.1 Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of this study on *Mapping Policies and Practices for the Preparation of Teachers for Inclusive Education in Contexts of Social and Cultural Diversity*, commissioned by the European Training Foundation, is to contribute to the promotion of inclusive education and training policies and practices in contexts of social and cultural diversity in the Western Balkans. The study is organised in two phases: a first phase which considers the national situation in each of the countries covered; and a second phase synthesising the reports into a regional map of policies and practices.

This report falls into the first research phase and the specific objectives are: (1) to analyse policies and practices on initial teacher training and in-service professional development schemes at the country level, and (2) to identify issues, challenges and good practices in the seven participant countries<sup>2</sup> with regard to the skills and competences needed for primary and secondary teachers to implement inclusive education practices.

The primary focus of the study is teacher preparation in the context of social and cultural diversity. A number of studies have already addressed social inclusion in education and training where the focus is placed on access, attainment and progression and others have approached the issue of teacher training, but thus far, there has been little research in the region to combine the two themes under the single issue of 'teacher training for development of competences for social inclusion.' Therefore, this study provides added value to existing research and data on social inclusion and teacher education in the countries under study. Moreover, great benefits have come from the local research process, opening up discussion of relevant issues in the countries as part of an on-going policy dialogue at all levels of the education system. This study has been set within a wider framework of studies, research and policies already carried out as described in Chapter 2 of the report. This report has been designed as mapping exercises to collect initial information on relevant issues

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<sup>2</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

in the Western Balkans and to evaluate that data against the most recent international research in the area. Furthermore, the studies link the challenge of inclusive education to the broader challenges of social inclusion and social cohesion in the diverse social and cultural contexts of the Western Balkan countries; an issue high on the European Union (EU) agenda. This report points to potential new fields for more in-depth research on teacher education and social inclusion.

### 1.1.2 Context of the Study

The ETF is an EU Agency<sup>3</sup> and promotes the values and objectives of the EU. The work of the ETF is particularly based on the premise that vocational education and training makes a fundamental contribution to competitiveness, employability and mobility in modern economies. The ETF mission is to help transition and developing countries harness the potential of their human capital through reforms in the education, training and labour market systems in line with EU external relations policy. The ETF provides advice and assistance to the European Commission (EC) and a number of partner countries<sup>4</sup> receiving support from EU external relations programmes for the modernisation of human capital development policies.

In 2007, the EU introduced new external assistance instruments that aimed to establish clearer relationships between the EU and partner countries (EC, 2004). Candidate and potential candidate countries can move progressively towards accession with support from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) (EC, 2006).

ETF efforts to prioritise human resources provide many benefits as they: help provide a better living for individuals and families; reduce illiteracy, poverty and crime in partner countries; and encourage more stable relations between the EU and its neighbours. The outcome is reduced pressure for migration, more opportunities for trade, safer jobs in Europe, and, in short: prosperity and stability for both EU Member States and their neighbours.

Work on human capital development offers a solid foundation for the improvement of living conditions, strengthening of democracy and active citizen participation, encouraging respect for human rights and cultural diversity.

In addition, the ETF emphasises the lifelong learning aspect of education and training, especially bearing in mind the economic and political transition processes in partner countries and the need to expand capacities for learning and facilitate recognition of non-formal learning.

The ETF recast regulation adopted in December 2008<sup>5</sup> stating that it will work through EU foreign policy to improve vocational education and training systems in order to develop human capital, in terms defined as work that contributes to the lifelong development of the skills and competences of individuals. In response to this new mandate, the ETF prepared a new Mid-Term Perspective (MTP) 2010-13 setting the key perspectives for the work programme. The ETF is particularly focused on cooperation for gender equality and equity, lifelong guidance, sustainable development and social inclusion with partner countries. Equitable, inclusive and

<sup>3</sup> The ETF was established by Council Regulation No. 1360 in 1990 (recast No. 1339 in 2008) to contribute to the development of the education and training systems of the EU partner countries.

<sup>4</sup> ETF works with the following partner countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

<sup>5</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1339/2008 of 16 December 2008

sustainable systems and responses to human capital challenges provide positive indicators for human development and also have long-term benefits for society. They promote economic and social development and thus contribute to competitiveness and well-being.

The concept of wider European cooperation in education and training was launched at the 2002 Barcelona Council and the Commission Communication on an updated strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training (European Commission, 2008a) strengthened the process by focusing on four strategic challenges<sup>6</sup> for the 2010-20 period. The Council Conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)<sup>7</sup> state that, 'European cooperation in education and training for the period up to 2020 should be established in the context of a strategic framework spanning education and training systems as a whole in a lifelong learning perspective.' In reaching the objectives set within the strategic framework, particular attention is given to ensuring high quality teaching through adequate initial teacher education and continuous professional development for teachers and trainers.

While fully respecting the responsibility of Member States for their own educational systems, the strategic framework recognised that open coordination should draw on 'evidence and data from all relevant European agencies'. The ETF role in supporting enhanced mutual learning, transfer of innovation and policy development in the field of education and training in third countries is also mentioned.

Thus, ETF work on human capital development is guided by a number of international standard-setting documents, including the *Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* and the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Also, in view of the ongoing European integration process of some of the partner countries and territories (the so-called IPA group<sup>8</sup>), it must be stressed that human rights principles, including respect for and protection of minorities, are an integral part of the Copenhagen criteria for EU accession. This means that the Western Balkan countries are also required to comply with the EU legislative *acquis*<sup>9</sup> in the field of anti-discrimination and equal opportunities.

The Western Balkan countries have already ratified the main international conventions on human and minority rights and are in the process of adopting the *acquis*. The education ministers of the South Eastern Europe region signed a joint statement making a commitment to the area of human capital development in South Eastern Europe as a long-term investment at the Informal Conference of European Ministers of Education in Oslo on 5-6 June 2008. This statement expresses a commitment to promote: quality, diversity and equitable access to education; innovatory capacity within education systems; and intercultural capacities of educational institutions as key prerequisites to the prosperity and sustainable development of the Western Balkan countries and their integration to the EU. The ministers stated their intention to promote intercultural dialogue and cooperation at local, regional, national and international levels to foster environments conducive to creativity and innovation, *inter alia* by encouraging cooperation between the areas of education, higher education and research (Minister of Education from Southern Europe, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Make lifelong learning and learner mobility a reality; improve the quality and efficiency of provision and outcomes; promote equity and active citizenship; enhance innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training.

<sup>7</sup> [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/107622.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/107622.pdf) (page accessed 17th December 2009)

<sup>8</sup> These are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

<sup>9</sup> The Community *acquis* is the body of common rights and obligations which bind all the Member States together within the European Union. It comprises the Community law as well as the common objectives laid down in EU Treaties. Applicant countries have to accept the Community *acquis* before they can join the Union.

However, appropriate legislation alone cannot overcome the obstacles to social inclusion and integration as structural and institutional barriers also need to be addressed. A number of specific poverty reduction strategies have been adopted with support from international donors and intergovernmental organisations in a number of Western Balkan countries and these have started a trend in the right direction. A number of countries have also adopted specific education reform strategies in acknowledgement of the role of education and training in ensuring sustainable growth and social inclusion. These focus on inclusion in education in terms of access, participation, retention, completion and quality of learning outcomes to varying extents.

### 1.1.3 Education Reforms and the Role of Teachers in Inclusive Education

System reform on inclusive education is moving from the system level downwards in the countries covered by this study. Legislation and strategies are in place in most of the countries and in many cases implementation mechanisms such as new curricula are being developed and adopted for pre-school, primary and secondary education. The focus of attention is gradually being shifted onto what actually happens in classroom interaction between pupils and teachers. This places the emphasis firmly upon the disposition, skills, knowledge and motivation of teachers in adopting new approaches to the education of children from various socio-economic, cultural and experiential backgrounds. It is their input that is paramount in ensuring any real changes in practice, and hence impacts on the outcomes of learning. In the Western Balkans, however, research into teacher acquisition of the competences required to deliver inclusive education is at an embryonic stage.

One study of teacher competences (Pantić, 2008) reported teachers in BiH, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia covered in the present research placed greatest importance on competences relating to equality, supporting the learning of all pupils and the promotion cultural diversity in the broadest sense. However, deeper understanding is needed of how the formulation of relevant competences actually translates into daily teaching practices and how present and future teachers can best be helped to develop those competences that best ensure and promote an inclusive society and education.

The ETF has therefore made a commitment to support the Western Balkan countries (2007-2011), placing emphasis on how education and training can reduce social exclusion in culturally heterogeneous societies and facilitating the development and implementation of long-term sustainable strategic policy approaches.

One of the first outcomes of this commitment was the *Social Inclusion of Ethnic Groups through Education and Training: Elements of Good Practices*, document commissioned by the ETF in 2007. Relevant areas for policy development were highlighted and several recommendations on designing and implementing inclusive education and training policies and measures in the Western Balkan countries were provided. The findings of the study were also discussed by national authorities and experts from Western Balkan countries, leading to the identification of challenges and to the drafting of related policy notes in some countries. Furthermore, an expert group was established for the Western Balkans, consisting of stakeholders from the region (a mixed profile of academics, policy makers and practitioners from public institutions or NGOs), representatives of international organisations active in the region and the EC Directorate General for Enlargement, Directorate General for Education and Culture and Directorate General for Employment). The work of this group is supported by the ETF.

Finally, in the concluding statements of the ETF conference in November 2008, participants from IPA countries and territories stressed the need for greater emphasis on intercultural or inclusive education and training in the broader sense, and especially on the role and competences of teachers in this context. This perspective was primarily prompted by the conclusion in both pre-service teacher training and in-service professional

development in the Western Balkan countries that schools are widely assumed to be mono-ethnic institutions with homogeneous class compositions. Teachers are generally ill prepared to work with children and parents from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. There is a need for increased teacher competence in recognising, accommodating and valuing diversity in the classroom and wider society and there must be enhanced teacher competence to overcome discrimination, exclusion and disadvantage in education.

Activities aimed at initial teacher training reform are additionally motivated and marked by the Bologna Process. This serves as an overarching framework for re-thinking the duration, content and organisation of teacher education study programmes for pre-primary, lower primary, upper primary and secondary education levels. In a number of countries, discussion of the university 3+2 or 4+1 dilemma<sup>10</sup> has inspired heated debate on the objectives and learning outcomes of particular teacher education programmes. Debate has also been provoked on the amount, type and delivery of didactic, methodological and pedagogical input for teachers, especially those training to teach specific subjects. However, there is currently no appropriate research evidence available to inform such change and provide insight on exactly how the new competences required by the teaching profession could best be developed in the current context.

Studies on existing teacher training in the region (Pantić, 2008; Rajković and Radunović, 2007; Zgaga 2006) invariably show present provision concentrates on theoretical and subject related knowledge and skills with little hands-on experience of teaching in real-life classrooms. In fact, some courses involve no classroom experience at all and provide no opportunities for the teacher to increase their capacity to deal with a number of out-of-school factors relevant to inclusive education such as parental and community involvement. This factor alone represents one of the major challenges to teacher preparation for inclusive education and training practices. One of the main objectives of this study is therefore how best to improve existing teacher training policies and practices in order to foster the development of teacher competences relevant to inclusive education and training practices.

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<sup>10</sup> Within the Bologna Process the study programmes are to be restructured into a two-tier structure in which Bachelor and Master programmes are to be of either 3+2 or 4+1 years in length.

## 2. WIDER CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The countries in the Western Balkans have undertaken initiatives to adapt their education and training systems to national employment, social inclusion and competitiveness goals. However, implementation often lags behind declared policy goals. Persistent challenges include: the widening of choice and improvement of quality in vocational education, training and adult learning; the active engagement of social partners; the furthering of key competences; and, in particular, encouragement of the human sense of innovation and entrepreneurship so central to social and economic success. There is room for a massive improvement in teacher competences on inclusive education and efforts must also be made to reduce early school-leaving in contexts of socially and culturally diverse societies.

The term 'disadvantaged' could be attributed to many groups in the countries of this study when referring to access to, progress in and completion of aspects of quality education and training. A variety of minority groups are involved including ethnic communities (the Roma in particular but not exclusively) and disadvantaged children. The latter includes: children with disabilities and special needs; children from remote and rural areas; children of refugees or internally displaced persons; children from families deported from foreign countries (mostly within the EU); and many other groups. Gender is an important element, particularly when combined with any other factor of a disadvantaged background, and poverty is an attendant salient feature in the lives of a great many families in these minority sectors. The widest possible understanding of inclusion in education and training is needed if we are to capture the full scope of related problems and accommodate the specific problems of diverse disadvantaged groups in the Western Balkan countries. This is reflected in the conceptual framework of this study which takes an approach that is balanced between the general pluralism and equal opportunities perspectives.

This research is situated in a set of contexts where each country has different (and sometimes divergent) legislative, policy and practice initiatives in place. These contexts can be roughly categorised from most generic to most specific as:

1. general context of social inclusion developments and the promotion of ethnic and other diversity and tolerance and overall democratisation of society in a post-conflict area. These developments for the countries under study should be viewed in the light of the European perspective which has contributed to peace and stability and encouraged political and economic reform. Demonstrated fulfilment of the Copenhagen accession criteria of 1993 with specific reference to 'respect for and protection of minorities' is of paramount importance for the countries in this study in the EU accession process;<sup>11</sup>
2. wider educational context, in which education and training is seen as the primary tool for social inclusion, the promotion of diversity and tolerance, and the building of a sustainable democracy based on active citizen participation. Within the description of the wider educational context, specific attention will be focused on understanding existing institutional, structural, political and other obstacles to social inclusion;
3. specific educational context of reforms to pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development, in line with the move toward learning outcomes and study programmes built around the professional competences concept and in accordance with the key role of teachers in ensuring perceptible favourable outcomes from education and training reform initiatives. Analysis of this context

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<sup>11</sup> [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession\\_criteria\\_copenhagen\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm) (page accessed on 24 August 2009)

will also cover the specific regional challenges facing teacher education on inclusive education; elements that are reflected in attitudes to social inclusion and social cohesion in wider society.

## 2.1 General context – Social Inclusion and Diversity in a Post-Conflict Area

All of the countries involved in the study were exposed to some form of conflict in the period between the early 1990s and the present. The conflict ranged from open war, through ethnic-related violence at the peak of ethnic tension and oppression, to clashes within a single ethnic group motivated primarily by political differences and enabled by a weak rule of law and insufficient democratic culture.

The countries of the region are currently in a state of relative equilibrium although the situation is still unstable. Regional cooperation is on the increase through various trade agreements (such as Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)) and bilateral or multilateral cooperation schemes. These developments are further supported by: the DG Enlargement Regional Programs and Multi-Beneficiary IPA Programming; the related Regional Cooperation Council,<sup>12</sup> and particularly the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital;<sup>13</sup> the recent establishment of the South Eastern Europe Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning;<sup>14</sup> and the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe<sup>15</sup> which applies to Bulgaria and Romania as well as the countries in this study.

Mobility of people is also steadily rising for commercial, educational and private reasons. Although some specific administrative and political obstacles remain<sup>16</sup> many of the Western Balkan countries<sup>17</sup> benefitted from the lifting of visa regimes in December 2009.

The EU has identified policy areas and priorities relevant to inclusive education and training in the Enlargement Strategy 2008-2009 (EC, 2008b). While the Western Balkan countries are at various stages in EU membership process<sup>18</sup> their progress can be tracked in their respective EC Progress Reports. Furthermore, the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (EU DG EMPL) is also focussed on the issue of social inclusion within the *EU Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process*,<sup>19</sup> with particular attention on the situation in the Western Balkans (within the national reports) and that of disadvantaged groups like children and Roma. This entity commissioned a series of independent reports completed in August 2008 and synthesised in the January 2009 publication: *Social Protection and Social Inclusion in the Western Balkans: A Synthesis Report (EC, 2009)*. The report provides in-depth information, statistics and analysis on political, economic and demographic trends. This includes details of how the educational attainment analysed relates to labour market function; eligibility for, access to, and funding of social protection; general living conditions and groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion; access to pensions, healthcare and long-term care.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.erisee.org/node/12> (page accessed on 24 August 2009)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.taskforcehumancapital.info/> (page accessed on 24 August 2009)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.seecel.hr/naslovnica/> (page accessed on 24 August 2009)

<sup>15</sup> [www.erisee.org](http://www.erisee.org) (page accessed on 24 August 2009)

<sup>16</sup> This is particularly the case between Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) and Serbia, due to Serbia not recognising Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) as an independent state.

<sup>17</sup> Visa regimes were lifted on the 19th December 2009, for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia while visa regimes remain in place for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244).

<sup>18</sup> Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have the status of candidates, while the remaining countries (except for Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) which has special status) have signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreements.

<sup>19</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/spsi/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/index_en.htm) (page accessed 24 August 2009)

These countries are all signatories to a number of international standard-setting documents, namely: the *Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (CoE, 1995a)*, (ratified by all countries apart from Kosovo);<sup>20</sup> the revised *European Social Charter (CoE, 1995b)*; the *European Convention on Human Rights (CoE, 1950)*; the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989)*; the *UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960)*; and the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006)*.

Furthermore, the countries are all participants in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, presided over by Serbia until 1 July 2009 when Slovakia took over the yearly mandate.

However, occasional outbursts of ethnically motivated unrest or even violence are testament to the fact that lasting peace and stability will only be achieved with the long-term, strong and holistic commitment of all social actors.

A particular issue of concern in this respect is the overwhelming poverty and significant differences in development within and across these countries. Low educational attainment in the population in general is one of the key factors of poverty. This is primarily viewed as a cause of poverty but is in fact also a consequence of a situation that is further exacerbated in certain ethnic groups and other minorities.

**'POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS INDICATE THAT ETHNICITY IS ONE OF THE SIGNIFICANT FACTORS OF SHAPING POVERTY ... [THERE ARE] BIG DISCREPANCIES IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION'** (ETF, 2007, PAGE 4)

These findings in essence reiterate those of other international or intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank (World Bank, 2007) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2004) that ethnicity is a factor in limiting access to education and one that is particularly difficult to counteract given the political context. Additionally, the reports underline an even more complex situation for Roma who form an ethnic minority that faces multifaceted disadvantage of long standing in each of the countries. It also is important to stress that the issue of poverty and social exclusion is a pan-European issue, a fact further supported by the EU decision to dub 2010 the *European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion* including the countries of the Western Balkans in the list of participant nations.<sup>21</sup>

This brings us to the issue of obstacles in access to quality education. These obstacles may be of a financial, institutional or procedural, structural and socio-cultural, or political nature. The latter classification was developed for this study in order to adequately address the particular issues of the region.

Financial obstacles can include the lack of sufficient family or student resources for accessing specific levels of education (e.g. higher education where tuition fees are charged); the inability to access the necessary materials and resources for quality learning (from books and computers to sufficient space for independent learning); the lack of funds for maintenance while studying (which may force students to seek paid work or even to abandon their studies).

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<sup>20</sup> Albania 1999, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2000, Croatia 1997, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 1997, Montenegro 2001, Serbia 2001.

<sup>21</sup> Article 11 of the Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010).



Institutional and procedural obstacles may include explicit tracking (i.e. explicit rules which prevent vertical and horizontal mobility between levels and types of institutions) but also implicit tracking due to specific elements of the transition procedures from one stage of education to the next.

Structural obstacles include problems with insufficient institutional networks (e.g. limited or non-existent possibilities in rural or underdeveloped areas), problems with transportation to schools, but also inappropriate or non-existent infrastructure for pupils and students with special needs (e.g. aids to learning adapted for pupils with visual or hearing impairments).

Socio-cultural and linguistic obstacles include specific procedures for enrolment, progress and completion which do not take into account individual differences in socio-economic, cultural or linguistic backgrounds. These may result in segregation as pre-school testing of children assumes working knowledge of the majority language and is therefore essentially discriminatory to minority children who may not have the necessary skills.

Political obstacles frequently arise from omissions of action rather than overtly discriminatory action. This apparent lack of overt action does not, however, reduce the exclusive impact of political inaction and lack of focus on constructive legislative and fiscal support for inclusive education in many of the countries in the study. The centrality and influence of this political neglect effectively condones exclusion at all levels throughout society and is particularly difficult to overcome as it would require a combination of democratic social pressure, collaboration between various public sectors (health, social welfare and education) and international pressure from the EU and beyond.

Given the various obstacles and their potential multiplicative impact, it is evident that a holistic approach to quality education is essential for groups faced with complex disadvantages such as: (1) refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), whose integration problems become increasingly 'invisible to the system' through the frequent changes in the administrative status of such persons (e.g. some become citizens of the host country), the concentration of refugees in 'collective centres' far from the eyes of the general public; and (2) Roma, who suffer enduring multifaceted deprivation, stigmatised by the deep-rooted prejudice of majority populations and essentially forming a minority wherever they live. Furthermore, the strong impact of the lack of education on poverty is further exacerbated through low employment opportunities for socio-economically vulnerable ethnic groups (Fetsi et al., 2007) and particularly for young people who could escape recurrent generational poverty given sufficient time and opportunities in the worlds of education and work. It should be noted that the potential public non-financial benefits of education (OECD, 2007) also include crime reduction, democratisation, improved public health, political stability and respect for human rights on top of poverty reduction. However, these potential benefits cannot be achieved unless there is assurance of an education system accessible to all and structured to promote inter-cultural dialogue and equity in learning outcomes. Finally, it cannot be stressed strongly enough that inclusive education and training is a necessary element of an inclusive society but is insufficient in itself. Additional measures in other public sectors such as social welfare and health are necessary to support education.

## 2.2 Educational context – Education as a Tool for Democratisation, Stabilisation, Inclusion and the Promotion of Tolerance and Intercultural Understanding

The countries under study all embarked on a ‘root-and-branch’ reform of their education systems as part of the overall political and economic transition and the EU membership process. In some cases, EU and international trends and processes - the Bologna process for higher education or the Copenhagen process for VET – also impacted on these reforms. Some are also affected by international attention and strong donor interest in a particular issue, as was the case with the Decade of Roma. The countries have also undergone policy and strategy development processes leading to changes in education legislation. In some cases, this has been followed by reforms to supportive policy instruments such as funding mechanisms. Local or national NGOs, regional networks of experts and policy think tanks were all strongly involved in these developments during the early stages or in providing parallel support.

In the past there was a significant lack of comparable and reliable data on education but the situation has somewhat improved in recent years with an extensive amount of literature produced in the form of regional or national studies and projects, assessments of international and intergovernmental organisations and national reports. A number of projects and activities touching upon the issue of social inclusion and education are ongoing in the region or have been completed recently. These include the Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe<sup>22</sup> project of the South East European Educational Network. The Open Society Institute has provided support to civil society and has produced analytical reports including the ongoing Monitoring Education for Roma.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, the Roma Education Fund (REF)<sup>24</sup> has provided direct support in terms of scholarships for Roma students and has made sustained efforts toward building policy capacity in the region. The work of both these entities has contributed to the development of inclusive policy and inclusive societies. There have also been a number of recent projects focusing on teacher education, such as Enhancing the Professional Development of Education Practitioners and Teaching/Learning Practices in SEE Countries<sup>25</sup> and the Regional Tuning of Teacher Education Curricula in the Western Balkans (Pantić, 2008).

Such regional activities are reliant upon (or should at least take into account) the work of various international or intergovernmental organisations on the issue, such as:

- OECD, notably the analysis and recommendations offered in: *Understanding the Social Outcomes of Learning* (OECD, 2007); *No More Failures – Ten Steps to Equity in Education* (Field et al, 2007) (which recommends 10 steps related to structure, practice and resources in education); *Teachers’ Matter – Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (McKensie et al., 2005), which underlines the importance of both pre-service and in-service training and also the need to make teacher education more flexible and responsive to the needs of schools and pupils; the *Teacher Education for Diversity* project 2008-2010<sup>26</sup> - an ongoing project focusing on common challenges and responses in the OECD countries in terms of teacher training for increasingly culturally diverse societies; and the OECD

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.see-educoop.net/aeiq/> (page accessed 7 August 2009)

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/articles\\_publications/publications/monitoring\\_20061218/monitoring\\_20061218.pdf](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/articles_publications/publications/monitoring_20061218/monitoring_20061218.pdf) (page accessed 7 August 2009)

<sup>24</sup> [www.romaeducationfund.hu](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu) (page accessed 24th December 2009)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/tesee.htm> (page accessed 7 August 2009)

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.oecd.org/document/21/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_35845581\\_41651733\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/21/0,3343,en_2649_35845581_41651733_1_1_1_1,00.html) (page accessed 7 August 2009)

Teaching and Learning International Survey TALIS,<sup>27</sup> especially the latest report *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS* (OECD, 2009) focusing on: teacher professional development, beliefs, attitudes and practices, teacher appraisal and feedback, and school leadership. Over 70 000 teachers and school principals were surveyed in 23 countries as part of the project;

- ETF, notably the aforementioned *Social Inclusion of Ethnic Groups Through Education and Training: Elements of Good Practice* (ETF, 2007) and the work of EURAC for ETF on *Access to Education, Training and Employment of Ethnic Minorities in the Western Balkans* (2006),<sup>28</sup> that identifies three different models of approach to the education of minorities and the use of minority languages in education;<sup>29</sup>
- Council of Europe, through its focus on intercultural dialogue;<sup>30</sup> minority languages - in particular the *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages* (CoE, 1992); education for democratic citizenship<sup>31</sup> (where a number of recommendations, studies and toolkits have been developed); education of Roma<sup>32</sup>, with a variety of activities and recommendations including the Recommendation of the Council of Ministers to the Member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe (CoE, 2000); as well as *How All Teachers Can Support Citizenship and Human Rights Education: A Framework for the Development of Competences* (Brett et al., 2009) which focuses on approximately 15 core competences teachers need to put democratic citizenship and human rights into practice in the classroom, the school and the wider community;
- EURYDICE, the key source of data on education in Europe, which publishes thematic studies, such as: *Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe: Measures to Foster Communication with Immigrant Families and Heritage Language Teaching for Immigrant Children* (Eurydice, 2009a), *Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities* (Eurydice, 2009b), *Levels of Autonomy and Responsibilities of Teachers in Europe* (Eurydice, 2008) and *School Autonomy in Europe. Policies and Measures* (Eurydice, 2007);
- UNESCO, in particular its *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* (UNESCO, 2009) which provides an overview of developments in the area of inclusive education (including an extensive list of relevant international conventions and declarations), addresses the issues of inclusion and quality in education, development of an inclusive curriculum, the role of policy makers, and, most relevant for the current study, the role of teachers; and
- work within the peer learning cluster focussed on teachers and teacher education under the Knowledge System for Lifelong Learning.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263231\\_38052160\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_38052160_1_1_1_1,00.html) (page accessed 7 August 2009)

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.eurac.edu/about/projects/2006/index.htm?year=2006&which=693> (page accessed 7 August 2009)

<sup>29</sup> (1) The entire curriculum is taught in the minority language, usually achieved by the establishment of separate schools or classes for teaching in the minority language, which essentially leads to segregation. (2) The entire 'regular' school curriculum is taught in the majority language, while minority pupils can take additional courses in their mother tongue, which increases their already high workload and openly segregates them. (3) The third model can be called 'bilingual education', in which mother tongue and the minority language are used in parallel, with divergent success and impact. This approach is rarely used in the countries under study.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/> (page accessed 7 August 2009)

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/default\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/default_EN.asp) (page accessed 7 August 2009)

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/default_en.asp) (page accessed 7 August 2009)

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.kslll.net/peerlearningclusters/clusterdetails.cfm?id=14> (page accessed 7 August 2009)

This extensive list of international activities, analyses, policy developments and even legislative changes all support a strong focus on teacher competences. This perspective can be justified in several ways:

- Education system reform toward inclusive education is moving from the system level downwards in the countries under study. Legislation and strategies are now in place, many countries have well designed implementation mechanisms and new curricula are being developed and adopted for pre-school, primary and secondary education. The focus of reform is gradually shifting onto the interaction between pupils and teachers in the individual school and classroom. The change to more inclusive education will simply not happen if the key actors of the process, the teachers, are not equipped with the necessary attitudes, skills, knowledge and motivations within a supportive environment
- The global economic crisis, the economic situation of the countries in question and the intense competition for public funds between education and other public sectors (health, security, pensions) make it highly unlikely that additional resources will be allocated to the sector. The increased pressure for reform will not be reflected in significant budget increases for outstanding infrastructure improvements, in terms of: improved access to existing buildings and classrooms for all students; an extended network of schools in remote areas; and the development of teaching materials fitted to the learning styles and abilities of each student. This means the necessary education reforms are even more heavily reliant on those motivated and skilled teachers who are: responsive to the needs of the community and of the individual child; able to adopt new approaches to educating children from varied backgrounds; and willing and able to participate actively in the development of new curricula or new policy documents and instruments.

The strong EU and international focus on teacher education through the work of the EU, OECD and Council of Europe has led to significant advances, but the region is still lagging behind in terms of relevant analysis of the competences required for the effective, efficient and, most importantly, inclusive teacher. So far, just two projects have focussed on teacher education in the countries under study. The first of these: *Enhancing the Professional Development of Education Practitioners and Teaching/Learning Practices in SEE countries* highlighted the issue of insufficient practical teacher training. The document showed that while teachers in South Eastern Europe (SEE) receive theoretical training on subject knowledge and skills within their pre-service training programmes, they are given little practical experience of teaching in a real-life classroom. As a result, the key recommendation of the project was to ensure that teacher education study programmes focus on competences relevant to the actual practice of teaching in a given environment.

It was this recommendation that inspired the *Regional Tuning of Teacher Education Curricula*.<sup>34</sup> This project identified some of the gaps between existing teacher training and the teaching competences needed in practice. It was encouraging to find that teachers valued competences such as commitment to equality, support of learning of all pupils and promotion of tolerance as the most important elements of teacher training for inclusive education. However, detailed inspections of some existing initial teacher training programmes showed actual coverage of those competences to be rare and sometimes even completely lacking. These findings suggest that changes in teacher awareness of the 'new' topics in education and school practices are not necessarily reflected in adequate changes in teacher preparation programmes.

The Tuning project also showed that little value was placed on the importance of competences pertinent to teacher participation in development of the education system, their own institutions or cooperation with the

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<sup>34</sup> [http://www.cep.edu.rs/eng/files/Tuning\\_Teacher\\_Education\\_Western\\_Balkans.pdf](http://www.cep.edu.rs/eng/files/Tuning_Teacher_Education_Western_Balkans.pdf) (page accessed 7 August 2009)

community. Teachers need to develop the competences required for inclusive classroom practices, and teacher education policies and programmes therefore need to include elements that increase teacher capacity to deal with inclusion-related factors that reach beyond the classroom and the school into areas such as parental and community involvement. This lack of a wider vision is one of the major challenges facing the promotion of inclusive school practices.

The low value given to teacher participation in system-wide debate on reform also implies a significant lack of a strong professional teacher voice of in terms of active teacher trade unions or other professional associations. While unions in the region tend to be quite vocal on issues of general employee rights, they are rather weak in terms of expertise on education reform, teacher education and inclusive education.

Furthermore, the lack of frameworks of standards for teacher training programmes, and the fragmented organisation of these programmes (pre-primary, class teachers and subject teachers<sup>35</sup>) form systemic obstacles to relevant and effective teacher education. The fragmentation diverts attention from the pedagogical and didactic education of teachers and hampers the development of a multidisciplinary focus on education in general and education research in particular. Finally, this region is facing a significant challenge to reinstate the good standing of the teaching profession<sup>36</sup> in terms of respect, remuneration and wider social status, a situation also common to many countries outside the region.

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<sup>35</sup> In the regional context, 'class teachers' refers to teachers in the first few years of primary education (the first 4 of a total 8 years) who teach the full spectrum of subjects on the curriculum. They are trained at teacher education colleges or faculties. 'Subject teachers' are teachers of particular subjects (mathematics, biology, history etc) and they are usually trained at separate faculties (faculty of mathematics or natural sciences, faculty of history or social sciences) and generally have insufficient pedagogical and didactic training, in both teaching theory and practice. Pre-primary teachers are trained in separate institutions of a non-university type in most of the countries under study..

<sup>36</sup> The 'teaching profession' includes teachers, head-teachers and those in higher management posts.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

#### 3.1 Key Concepts

For the purposes of this study *Mapping Policies and Practices for the Preparation of Teachers for Inclusive Education in Contexts of Social and Cultural Diversity*, the research team adopted common definitions of various key concepts. The definitions are based on academic research in the field and have been selected to reflect the common understanding of the concepts reached between the ETF and the researchers conducting the study. This report does not propose these definitions as norms for the study of teacher education or inclusive education in general, but they are included here to help interpret the findings of the present research.

##### 3.1.1 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a much researched topic that involves a number of challenges for policy-making and implementation processes. Conceptualisations of inclusive education vary from narrower views as ‘the attempt to educate persons with intellectual disabilities by integrating them as closely as possible into the regular structures of the educational system’, (Michailakis and Reich, 2009) to broader definitions as a ‘guiding principle helping to accomplish quality Education for All (EFA) – education systems that benefit from diversity, aiming to build a more just, democratic society’ (Acedo, 2008).

Inclusive education is broadly understood in this study to be the process by which schools attempt to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring curriculum organisation and provision, and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity. This process enables schools to increase their capacity to accept all those pupils from the local community who wish to attend and in so doing reduce all forms of exclusion and degradation of students on the basis of disability, ethnicity, or anything that could render the school life of some children unnecessarily difficult (Sebba and Sachdev, 1997; Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Peček *et al*, 2006). Hence, inclusive education must become a mainstreamed general policy and practice in education and not a specific intervention addressing any one particular disadvantaged group. In this broader sense, inclusion is a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion, whereby participation means greater recognition, acceptance and respect along with inclusion in the learning process and social activities in a way that enables an individual to develop a sense of belonging to society.

Teachers also have a wider professional role to play beyond their direct personal impact on an individual school operating within various levels of the education system, including the municipalities. Decentralisation of the education systems in the Western Balkan countries implies increased autonomy for schools, which may in turn lead to increased rights for professional decision-making by teachers informed by their wider evaluation of the socio-cultural ends of education and schooling. Liston and Zeichner (1990) argue that such reflection need not focus only on implicit social and cultural frameworks but also on the institutional features of schooling. Teaching professionals, they argue, must be able to analyse and change particular institutional arrangements and working conditions, especially those that might obstruct the implementation of their aims (Liston and Zeichner 1990:5).

### 3.1.2 Teacher Competences for Inclusion

A number of authors including Michailakis and Reich (2009) claim that there is a specific body of knowledge for working with 'special' children that needs to be adequately covered during teacher preparation. This may involve gaining an understanding of the socio-cultural factors that produce individual differences, or specialist knowledge about disability and children's learning needs, awareness of educational and social issues that can affect children's learning, and so on. Another distinct current stance, according to Florian and Rouse (2009), is that teacher competences for inclusive educational practices should include skills relevant to the improvement of teaching and learning for all including the capacity to reduce barriers to learning and participation as inclusion is not only about 'special' children. According to this view, teacher competence on inclusion should involve a multifaceted pedagogy that recognises how decisions informing teaching should take account of: children's individual characteristics; the learning that takes place outside school; and learners' previous knowledge, individual and cultural experiences and interests (Florian and Rouse, 2009).

This study adopts a broader view of competence as an integrated set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Assumption 1 in Annex 4). Even the most comprehensive coverage of relevant themes is unlikely to anticipate every type of difficulty teachers might encounter in their professional lives. It is essential that teachers accept responsibility for improving the learning and participation of *all* children in their classes in order to develop teacher competences for inclusive education. For this, teachers need to develop competences that involve knowledge, skills and dispositions to teach equitably and to promote the learning of all pupils. Moreover, teachers need to be able to seek and use the support of other actors who can serve as valuable resources in inclusive education, such as support staff, parents, communities, school authorities and relevant others. Hence, pre-service and in-service teacher education and training should be aligned to inclusive education approaches in order to build the teacher capacities necessary to make diversity work.

### 3.1.3 Teacher Preparation

Teacher education in the Western Balkan countries (and elsewhere) has often assumed that schools are mono-ethnic institutions with homogeneous class compositions. It has been increasingly recognised that teachers need to be better prepared to recognise, value and deal with diversity, as well as to deal with issues of discrimination and disadvantage in education and training, and work with students and parents from diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds. The present study explores to what extent such inclusive approaches are actually adopted in the existing policies and practices of pre-service and in-service teacher preparation in the countries under study.

*Policies* are understood in this study to refer to formal, governmental policies, regulations and legislation, as well as the actual implementation of these in existing practice by different relevant stakeholders in teacher preparation for inclusive education.

*Pre-service teacher education* refers to education that teacher candidates are expected to undergo in order to qualify for teaching. This involves both programmes specifically designed for future teachers, and programmes for a disciplinary area that equivalent to a school subject, which may or may not have a special track for teachers. Preparation of teachers based on competences for inclusion in real contexts of diversity is linked to higher education reform of in the Western Balkans, primarily within the framework of the Bologna Process.

*In-service teacher training and development* refers to education and training activities engaged in by primary and secondary school teachers following their initial professional certification, intended mainly or exclusively

to improve their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes in order that they can educate children more effectively in contexts of social and cultural diversity.

## 3.2 Research Questions and Study Design

The research design follows on from the key concepts described above and the assumptions adopted for the study based on an extensive literature review as presented in Annex 4. The following section describes the research questions and how they are explored in this study.

To reach the objectives set in the study, namely, (1) to analyse policies and practices regarding teacher pre-service training and in-service professional development schemes at the country level, and (2) to identify issues, challenges and good practice with regard to the skills and competences required for inclusive education practices by teachers from primary and secondary education; the following research questions are addressed by the study:

1. What teacher competences are needed for inclusive education in situations of social and cultural diversity?
2. What is the current situation regarding the inputs, processes and outcomes of a) pre-service b) in-service teacher preparation for inclusive education?
3. How can the situation regarding a) pre-service b) in-service teacher preparation for inclusive education be improved?

### 3.2.1 Research Question 1: Teacher Competences Relevant for Inclusive Education

Exploration of the first research question about teacher competences relevant for inclusive practices, is based on the concept of competence understood as a combination of knowledge, skills and dispositions (Assumption 1 in Annex 4) and a belief that teachers and other education professionals are themselves an important source of information on exactly what the competences relevant for inclusive practices in situations of social and cultural diversity mean to their work (Assumption 2 in Annex 4). Thus, this report examines the extent to which internationally recognised elements of competence for inclusion are exemplified in participant responses collected in focus groups and interviews with teachers working in environments of diversity, but also those of school principals, parents and community members, government representatives, teacher educators and relevant NGO and donor representatives.

A special instrument was developed to serve as a starting point for discussions with teachers in the focus groups. The table of competences for inclusion (Annex 3) was developed using the relevant items from a previously conducted project *Tuning Teacher Education in the Western Balkans*, key European documents and international research. It thus combines the theoretical assumptions and formulation arrived at in the regional context. The table was used as an initial list in the focus groups to prompt discussion on how those formulations translate into daily teaching practices, the competences teachers need to develop, the best way to develop them, and so on.

It is important to note that the information collected in the focus groups was used critically to enrich understanding of how teachers perceive competence for inclusion compared to a theoretically based ideal and to provide context-relevant information. It was complemented by information collected from other relevant stakeholders such as teacher educators, school principals and support staff, community and parent representatives as already described above.



### **3.2.2 Research Question 2: Mapping of Policies and Practices for Teacher Preparation**

Exploration of the second research question on the current situation of pre-service and in-service teacher preparation for inclusive education is approached from the perspectives of general pluralism and equal opportunities (Assumption 3 in Annex 4) and considers the importance of context for the development of inclusive dispositions (Assumption 4 in Annex 4). In the exploration of current teacher preparation, it is important to examine the extent to which all inputs, processes and outcomes include inclusion-relevant elements (e.g. individualised approaches to learning) while also attempting to identify any specific foci on issues relevant to dealing with students at risk of exclusion. The report thus concentrates on analysis of existing teacher preparation policies and practices and to what extent social inclusion related provisions are mainstreamed in policies relevant to inclusive education and teacher preparation in particular. There is further examination of whether the existing policies and practices contain implicit barriers to inclusive education, and whether they contain an affirmative focus on groups that have long been marginalised in the region.

Policy mapping involved the collection of information on the general context of teacher preparation for inclusion (e.g., policies on inclusion for potentially disadvantaged groups in education and training, general provisions for teacher preparation, etc.) and policies and regulations specifically referring to teacher preparation on inclusion (e.g., any provisions referring specifically to inclusion in the requirements for entry into teaching, teacher standards, induction, licensing and promotion).

The mapping of practices presented in this report includes an overview of both pre-service and in-service teacher preparation and development. This was accomplished through an online survey, by means of desk research, and in focus groups and interviews with relevant stakeholders. The approach was similar to that used in policy mapping; searching relevant data sources (catalogues of in-service programmes, existing secondary sources of relevant information on pre-service teacher preparation and in-service programmes implemented by various local and international NGOs, identification of other forms of continuing and sometimes informal professional development such as learning through networking, peer evaluation). These issues were listed in grids developed to guide data collection across the countries.

An online survey was developed to collect data on pre-service teacher preparation programmes. Research evidence on programme characteristics that help student teachers develop competences for inclusion (Assumptions 5 and 6 in Annex 4) were used to design online survey questions on course units, practical experiences, opportunities for interaction with families, critical reflection, discussion and dialogue, and beliefs about the nature of knowledge.

The data collected through desk research and the survey and the mapping of both policies and practices were complemented with qualitative data collected in individual and group interviews, and focus groups with information-rich policy-makers, course designers, teacher educators, teachers, school principals, community representatives and parents. These strategies provided opportunities for follow-up on issues identified in the desk research, granting comprehensive insight into various stakeholder perspectives on inclusive education practices and teacher roles.

### **3.2.3 Research Question 3: How Teacher Preparation could be Improved**

The third research question asks how existing pre-service and in-service teacher education policies and practices could be improved to further help teachers develop competences for inclusion and considers the relevance of cross-national research for policy-making (Assumption 7 in Annex 4). This report discusses the information collected in mapping existing policies and practices with a view to identifying opportunities for

improvements bearing in mind desired competences for inclusive education identified in international research and the barriers identified in each country context.

On the basis of findings from both field work and desk research, the authors have compiled a number of recommendations for different stakeholders with the support of an editorial team of experts on inclusion and teacher training in the region. The recommendations primarily aim to indicate potential areas for improvement in pre-service and in-service teacher education. However, these recommendations and the report itself aim to serve as discussion material for wider policy debate on teacher competences in the context of social and cultural diversity.

The recommendations have been grouped according to their relevance for different stakeholders: policy-makers; teacher educators and course designers; and teachers. Also, examples of best practice on inclusion are highlighted and discussed in terms of their relevance and transferability across the region throughout the study.

### 3.3 Research methodology

Throughout the study a predominantly qualitative research strategy was adopted. Choosing such a strategy allowed for a more effective mapping of policies and practices, since it enabled specific important questions on the relevance, unintended effects and impact of policies and practice to be addressed. Qualitative approaches allowed for more diversity in responses and for adjustments to be made during the research process in the light of new developments or issues. The approaches applied in the course of this study show all the characteristics of qualitative research as described by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), as listed below.

- Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the key instrument.
- Qualitative research is descriptive.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes.
- Qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively. Thus, they do not proceed with *a priori* questions or hypotheses to be tested.
- Meaning, in the sense of the subject's own perspectives, thoughts, assumptions, world views etc., in their own words and in their own minds, is of essential concern to the approach.

All these characteristics can be seen in the data collection techniques associated with qualitative research used in the study.

- Collection and qualitative analysis of texts and documents collected through desk research: The desk research analysis focused on critical reflection on the national legislation framework, policies and strategies relevant for the study, as well as on existing reports and research on the subject in the country and the region.
- Qualitative interviewing in the course of field work: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school managers, school pedagogues and psychologists, pre-service teacher educators, in-service teacher educators, local government education representatives and system-level decision makers.
- Focus groups in the course of field work: Focus groups were conducted with parents and community members, school teachers, student teachers and school expert teams.

### 3.3.1 Desk research phase

Desk research served as the background to the field research that was subsequently carried out. It drew on a comprehensive overview of contemporary research in inclusive education, in particular in relation to the roles and competences needed by teachers in order to support inclusiveness, EU policy and legislative documents and national documents. It thus provided input to the development of country missions and to the qualitative element of the research.

The desk research covered three thematic areas:

- context analysis;
- analysis of policies and practices for pre-service teacher preparation;
- analysis of policies and practices for in-service teacher education and continuing professional development.

The context analysis aimed to explain the overall policy and legislative context in which teacher preparation and inclusive education are embedded. It focused on the education system, on human and minority rights, and on inclusion and exclusion in education.

The analysis of policies and practices for pre-service teacher preparation aimed to provide information on legislation and regulation relating to pre-service teacher preparation programmes. It focused on the competences for inclusive education that are gained in the process of obtaining a formal degree in teaching, the organisation and management of pre-service programmes, programme design, arrangements for the mentoring of students during school practice, the process of recruitment, professional standards and the process of promotion.

The analysis of policies and practices for in-service teacher education and continuing professional development considered the general standing of the teaching profession within a country, including the process of recruitment, professional standards and the process of promotion, and the regulation and provision of in-service development practice programmes that are relevant to the development of teacher competences for inclusive education. It focused on describing relevant practices; the proportion of programmes focusing on inclusive education, including information about providers, the content of programmes, the profile and number of participants so far (where these details were available), and the application procedures for such programmes; and other forms of in-service development and incentives that may be in place to motivate teachers to develop their competences by taking part in in-service programmes in general, and programmes focusing on inclusive education practices in particular.

The desk research included a review of different primary source documents, with secondary sources being used in a critical manner. The materials reviewed in the desk research include, among others:

- relevant legislative and sub-legal documents;
- national/governmental strategies focusing on inclusion or education, with a particular focus on the role of teachers and teacher training;
- policies and regulation relating to teachers;
- catalogues and similar descriptions of in-service programmes;
- any other relevant analysis carried out by other organisations or individuals (i.e. secondary sources).

The desk research was undertaken by country team members between August and September 2009. A large majority of the relevant documents analysed for the purpose of this study were available online.

### 3.3.2 Field research phase

Field research was at the heart of the qualitative research carried out during the study. The field research provided an opportunity to discuss with primary and secondary teachers, teacher educators, school principals and NGO activists, the current programmes and trends in pre-service and in-service development of teachers for inclusive education, as well as to discuss country-specific needs, barriers to and expectations of inclusive education, particularly from the perspective of teachers' professional training. The country mission included a variety of target groups and appropriate tools to achieve the intended outcome.

The country mission concentrated on reaching three key target groups, namely:

- teacher educators and trainers in pre-service and in-service programmes;
- teachers;
- parents and community members.

The selection of institutions and initial contacts with schools, teacher-training institutions, in-service training institutions, local governments and system-level decision makers were conducted at the same time as the desk research. The field research lasted two months (October – November, 2009).

The field research was complemented by an e-survey that targeted teacher educators in teacher-training programmes for the preparation of class teachers, subject teachers and teacher trainers in in-service programmes. The survey was distributed by e-mail among teacher educators from five teacher-education institutions across Croatia and subject teachers from five primary schools. In addition, all participants were encouraged to participate in research by their departmental chairs and school head teachers. Although all schools in Croatia have internet access, and the majority of teachers have internet access at home, the e-survey response rate was low. Nevertheless, the response rate was similar to response rates in other countries that participated in this research study.

The teacher educators and trainers were surveyed in order to investigate:

- whether competences for inclusive education occupy a specific area in teacher-training programmes;
- the degree of mainstreaming of inclusion issues throughout the programmes;
- the effectiveness of existing teacher-training programmes in developing inclusive education, according to teachers' perceptions;
- which competences are considered to be necessary for inclusive education, according to respondents' perceptions.

Thus, information relevant for developing pre-service and in-service programmes for teacher training was collected from teacher educators, teachers and student teachers. Where necessary, information-rich individual teacher educators and trainers were interviewed to add in-depth views and elaborate on the above-mentioned issues that are relevant for teacher education and training. As part of the field research, focus groups were held with teachers from Croatia who are experienced in inclusive education.

It is important to emphasise that Croatia has several inclusive model schools ('Ljudevit Gaj' Primary School, Osijek; 'Fran Krsto Frankopan' Primary School, Zagreb; First Primary School, Vrbovec) that have been established in line with OECD standards formulated by inclusive education experts from New Brunswick, Canada (OECD, 1997). Since 2007 the schools mentioned have held the OECD certificate, according to which they meet all the standards for inclusive schools. Although these standards are used in schools across Croatia, and teachers and experts from the model schools collaborate with their colleagues from other schools in Croatia, the model schools were not among those in which this research was carried out.

In order to gain an insight into the work of schools attended by a diverse population of students, five primary schools from different parts of Croatia were selected. The school managers from some schools that participated in the research required official authorisation from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport (MoSES) for the type of study that was to be conducted. Nevertheless, the study participants were easily accessible and open during the interviews. Focus group participants were selected in a manner that ensured that they represented different genders, ages, nationalities and teaching backgrounds. The schools in which the focus groups were conducted are described in detail in section 3.4 of the study, and covered a variety of settings and issues relevant for inclusive education. Specifically, the groups explored participants':

- perceptions of what competences are needed to achieve inclusive education;
- perceptions of the effectiveness of preparation for inclusive practices in education (pre-service and in-service);
- application of inclusive practices (what kind of things does an inclusive teacher do in and out of the classroom);
- beliefs about students' knowledge, learning and educability.

These focus groups were organised on the premise that teachers, as practitioners with hands-on experience, are in a position to evaluate both pre-service and in-service training and evaluate the importance of teachers' beliefs in shaping their practice and performance.

Other focus groups, which are also described in detail in section 3.4 of the study, involved parents and community members, and discussed the following issues:

- perceptions of the competences needed by teachers in order for them to promote inclusiveness;
- the question of why teachers should have a role in promoting inclusiveness
- information about practices and issues involved in their cooperation with schools (e.g. students' well-being, discipline, school achievement, particular educational needs);
- how teachers should perform their role in promoting inclusiveness;
- how teachers (and their inclusive practices) affect students in particular, and society in general;
- the extent to which the respondents can influence decisions made at school level.

The focus groups with parents and community members allowed these stakeholders to elaborate their views on the concept of inclusive education. The rationale for their inclusion was the fact that they might be able to provide support or pressure for or against inclusion (e.g. parents demanding that their child does not sit with, or attend the same class as, Roma children; or community members expressing anger that the stairs in their

local school do not allow a local child with cerebral palsy to attend, so that the child has to attend a residential special school 200km away).

The secondary target groups for the field research were:

- school principals and providers of school support services (pedagogues, psychologists, etc);
- local government representatives;
- system-level policy decision makers;
- student teachers;
- NGO and donor representatives (providing additional training opportunities in inclusive education and opportunities to teach, and to learn from experience, in pilot inclusive education programmes).

Apart from the student teachers, who were surveyed through an online e-survey tool, the secondary target groups were mainly interviewed either in person, or via phone or e-mail. Selected individuals were targeted to provide information and give their views on the relevance of teacher competences in ensuring inclusive education practices. In addition, they provided insights into how they see their own roles in ensuring the development of teacher competences for inclusive education, in support of the teachers' training in inclusive practices, and in developing means of further enhancing teacher competences for inclusive education.

School principals and providers of school support services were interviewed in order to find out how they see their roles in supporting teachers to develop competences for inclusion and inclusive practices. The local government representatives were interviewed in order to gain insights into the issues of relevance for inclusive education at local level. They were also asked about the means of support for inclusive education that they could or could not provide for the development of inclusive education, and about the role they assign to teachers in creating inclusive education in their local environment. The system-level policy decision makers are key stakeholders in ensuring national policies on inclusive education and placing the role of teachers and teacher competences within such policies. They were thus interviewed in order to find out about the existence or absence of such policies, the desired policies in that area, and the means by which such policies could be implemented. The student teachers were surveyed in order to ascertain their views, beliefs and attitudes regarding inclusive education and the need for inclusive education competences in their training as future teachers. NGO and donor representatives were interviewed in order to find out their views on the current provision of teacher training for inclusive education in Croatia, but more importantly on their practices in providing support to teachers in developing inclusive competences and practices, both through formal courses and through experiential learning on pilot programmes.

### 3.4 Participants

Purposive sampling was applied in selecting the respondents, targeting information-rich individuals from relevant stakeholder groups and ensuring a variety of perspectives. The schools that participated in this research include among their populations students with developmental disabilities (physical and intellectual difficulties, behavioural disorders, ADHD), socially deprived students and students from ethnic minorities. The last of these categories included students from Roma and Serbian minorities and Croatian students whose parents had immigrated from Janjevo in Kosovo<sup>37</sup>. The research was conducted throughout October and November 2009, and included a series of focus groups with parents and teachers and interviews with members of the school expert teams in five elementary schools throughout Croatia.

Primary School A is located in a community with approximately 12% of Roma and Roma settlements. It has the largest proportion of Roma students of any school in Croatia: 64% of the school's 466 students are Roma, and this proportion is rising. The school also has a large number of children with disabilities or behavioural disorders. In total there are 26 classes, both mixed and homogeneous (only Roma), 39 teachers, 1 expert team member (pedagogue) and 2 Roma assistants. Most of the Roma children do not speak the Croatian language, their families generally live on social assistance, and the school is the only space in which these two groups (Roma and Croat) meet and mix.

The research team conducted four focus groups in Primary School A:

- focus group (1) with classroom teachers had 10 participants and lasted 80 minutes;
- focus group (2) with subject teachers had 2 participants and lasted 90 minutes;
- focus group (3) with the school expert team members had 3 participants and lasted 1 hour 40 minutes;
- focus group (4) with parents had 10 participants and lasted 45 minutes.

Primary School B is located in rural inland Croatia and is mostly populated with Janjevci, the Croatian minority group from the Janjevo area of Kosovo. Janjevci have specific cultural habits, have large families (an average of 6.7 children per family), live mainly on social welfare benefits, and have low prospects for employment. Parental educational levels are relatively low (primary school). The school also has students from the Serb ethnic minority and students with developmental disabilities. There are 300 students, 30 teachers and 3 expert team members (pedagogue, psychologist and educator-rehabilitator).

The research team conducted three focus groups and one interview in Primary School B:

- focus group (1) with teachers had 12 participants and lasted 45 minutes;
- focus group (2) with the school expert team members had 3 participants and lasted 60 minutes;
- focus group (3) with parents had 12 participants and lasted 60 minutes;
- interview (4) with the school principal lasted 30 minutes.

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<sup>37</sup> (as defined by UNSCR 1244)

Primary School C<sup>38</sup> is located in the centre of Zagreb and has been recognised as an inclusive school. In its 30 classes there are 330 students, 150 of whom are students with special educational needs. The school has 10 expert team members (pedagogues, psychologists, educators-rehabilitators). The teaching staff have extensive experience and training in teaching students with special educational needs.

The research team conducted two focus groups in Primary School C:

- focus group (1) with teachers had 7 participants and lasted 60 minutes;
- focus group (2) with the school expert team members had 2 participants and lasted 80 minutes.

Primary School D is located in a suburb of Zagreb, and by many characteristics corresponds to the average school in Croatia. There are 570 students in the school, of whom 24 are students with special needs and 20 are Roma students. Both students with special needs and Roma students are fully integrated into regular classes.

The research team conducted two focus groups in Primary School D:

- focus group (1) with teachers had 10 participants and lasted 90 minutes;
- focus group (2) with the school expert team members had 2 participants and lasted 40 minutes.

Primary School E is located in a large town in southern Croatia. The school has 878 students enrolled in 37 classes, a total of 55 teachers and 3 expert team members (pedagogue, psychologist and educator-rehabilitator). Students with special needs (Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, blindness, learning difficulties, ADHD) attend regular classes, while students with autism attend a separate class and have a teacher who specialises in the area of special education.

The research team conducted two focus groups and one interview in Primary School E:

- focus group (1) with teachers had 10 participants and lasted 60 minutes;
- focus group (2) with parents had 10 participants and lasted 80 minutes;
- interview (3) with 1 expert team member lasted 40 minutes.

In addition to the research undertaken in schools, the following were conducted:

- two focus groups with student teachers;
- two interviews with pre-service teacher educators;
- two interviews with in-service teacher educators (both NGO and Teacher Education and Training Agency representatives);
- three interviews with local government education representatives;
- one interview with a central government education representative.

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<sup>38</sup> Primary School C may be termed a 'magnet school'. In the United States, magnet schools are public schools with specialised courses or curricula. 'Magnet' refers to the way in which the schools draw specific groups of students from across the normal boundaries defined by authorities (usually school boards) as school zones that feed into certain schools.



In addition to the qualitative section of this research study, 11 teachers, 14 teacher educators and 9 student teachers responded to the online survey.

## 4. OVERALL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

### 4.1 Context

While social inclusion in the Croatian education system is not regulated by special acts, it is built into the Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette, 2008a), the Act on Preschool Education (Official Gazette, 2007), the Act on Primary Education (Official Gazette, 2003a), the Act on Secondary Education (Official Gazette, 2003b), the Law on Vocational Education (Official Gazette, 2009b) and the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (Official Gazette, 2003c). According to the Constitution all students have the right to be educated and trained, and primary education is compulsory and free for all students. Preschool, secondary and higher education are not compulsory, but are available to all under the same conditions.

The cultural rights of minorities, including the protection of their languages, histories and cultures through education, are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 2001), the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (Official Gazette, 2002), the Action Plan for Implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2008a) the Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 2000) and the Anti-discrimination Act (Official Gazette, 2008c).

The Croatian Constitution places a strong emphasis on the equality of all individuals and groups, prescribing that everyone shall enjoy equal rights and freedoms, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other belief, national or social origin, property, birth, education, social status or other characteristics. The Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities establishes strict criteria for the protection of minority rights, while the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities confirms the right of national minority members to education in their own first language and script, in preschool, primary school and secondary school, with a parallel right and obligation also to learn the Croatian language and Latin script. The Action Plan for Implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2008a) was enacted to ensure the implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities and to overcome problems that national minority members face at local and regional level.

Furthermore, the Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 2000) emphasises that if the conditions for the founding of special national minority schools are not met, education can be organised in classes with a smaller number of students than the average school class size.

The Croatian parliament has also adopted the Anti-discrimination Act, fighting discrimination on racial, ethnic, political, religious, gender, sexual and any other grounds, thus aligning the country's legislation with EU standards. Finally, Croatia is also a signatory to all the relevant international treaties protecting minority and human rights.

Although the legal framework is well established, the institutional protection of minority rights is still moving slowly with regard to implementation, with mechanisms for monitoring such protection still not sufficiently developed (Nikolić and Škegro, 2008). The Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion of the Republic of Croatia (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2007a) focuses on the main challenges relating to issues of poverty and social inclusion.

The Joint Memorandum lists the main measures that should be taken in the area of education, including an increase in the number of children attending preschool institutions, additional teacher education for work with children with special needs, and the provision of scholarships and stipends to support the schooling of students from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Additional concrete measures are proposed by the National Programme for the protection and promotion of human rights (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2007b). The programme promotes the combating of prejudices and stereotypes in the curricula of the education system through, first, the exclusion of content that is unacceptable on the grounds of any discrimination and, second, the incorporation of content that promotes tolerance and appreciation of diversity in educational curricula for children and adolescents. The institution responsible for this task is the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MoSES). Given the particularly unfavourable position of Roma in terms of the prevalence of unemployment, poverty, lack of education and social exclusion, Croatia adopted the National Programme for the Roma (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2003) and the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2008b). The National Programme for the Roma defines measures aimed at preparing individuals for employment and self-employment and for co-financing the cost of jobs for unemployed persons who are members of the Roma national minority.

Since its formal acceptance as a candidate for membership of the EU, Croatia has adopted a wide range of programmes and policies aimed at meeting the criteria for accession. However, the commitments made at the international level have not yet been fully translated into practical strategies to support communities, schools, teachers and students.

The Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities includes principles of affirmative action in an attempt to promote equal opportunity for members of minorities in their interactions with workplaces in public services<sup>39</sup>. One act of positive discrimination assures the employment of members of minorities in public companies and services, pro rata to their proportion within the general population. The Croatian Constitution guarantees the right to work, and provides for special protection at work for people with disabilities. Legislation also provides for the right to professional rehabilitation and training for employment for people with disabilities. The Labour Law (Official Gazette, 1995c) explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability in recruitment and employment.

The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with a Disability (Official Gazette, 2005) mandates that individuals with a disability should be given preferential treatment for employment if they hold the qualifications required for a vacancy. Employers with less than 20 employees are exempt from this regulation. If compulsory schooling were to be extended to the age of 18, it would be necessary to change the labour laws, which still permit youngsters to work from the age of 16. It is possible that less able youngsters, those with behavioural problems or those from ethnic minorities could not be encouraged to continue in school. Furthermore, it would be necessary to provide follow-up guidance to vocational school graduates, and to ensure that there were adequate staffing levels to provide such a service, as a means of supporting employment for people with intellectual disabilities (Open Society Institute, 2005).

As previously mentioned, and as emphasised in the OECD (2007) report, official strategies and legislation are relatively progressive and support inclusive education. The specifics of the inclusion of students with special educational needs are stressed in the National Strategy of Unique Policy for Persons with Disabilities from 2002 to 2006 (Republic of Croatia, 2002). The principle underlying Croatian legislation is that integration/inclusion is always best for a child, and that only in the most severe cases should a student be

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<sup>39</sup> Article 22 of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities.

placed in either partial integration or separate special education classes or schools. While special institutions follow the regular programme as much as possible, they adapt to the various degrees of disability and offer vocational and employment skills training to those who are capable of undertaking it.

The majority of children with special educational needs at primary level are included in regular classrooms; there is a limit of 3 students with special educational needs per class, and a class with 3 students with special needs can have maximum of 20 students. There is full integration if a child has a mild disability and partial integration for those with a moderate disability; children with severe disabilities may be educated in special schools or institutions. According to OECD (2007a) data, 66% of children with special educational needs attend mainstream schools<sup>40</sup>.

Three models of minority education have been implemented at primary school level (MoSES, 2009b). Model A relates to schooling in the national minority language (Croatian programmes are translated into the national minority languages; the Croatian language is taught for four hours per week). Model B relates to bilingual teaching (social sciences and humanities are taught in the minority languages, and natural sciences in Croatian; the Croatian language is taught for four hours per week). Model C relates to nurturing the mother tongue and culture (five hours per week of the minority language throughout the school year; summer schools etc.)<sup>41</sup>.

The following comment is very apposite, in view of the impact of the Croatian War of Independence and the challenge of reconstructing a functional community: "As a result of the suffering cause by the war, there are still problems with the inclusion of ethnic minority children. In the areas affected by war that have a large Serbian and Croatian population, ethnic frictions still reflect on children<sup>42</sup>."

The Erdut Agreement, which was signed in 1995 between Serbian representatives and the Croatian authorities under the auspices of the international community, created a framework for the protection of the minority rights of the Serbian community. The agreement also touched upon rights in education. Under the agreement, the Serbian community opted for model A (described above). Although the Erdut Agreement was intended to last for five years, thus creating an opportunity to revise the organisation of educational practice, until September 2007 students were still separated physically, either by sending them to separate schools or by having different shifts within one school. After September 2007, in some schools education for both groups started to take place in the same buildings and at the same time, though still in separate classes (Čorkalo Biruski and Ajduković, 2008).

Research conducted by Čorkalo Baruški and Ajduković (2008, 2009) indicates that attitudes of parents in the area of Vukovar<sup>43</sup> are changing with regard to the organisation of education for their children. The authors note that space has been created for a discussion on whether the current model of education in Vukovar is the most appropriate in terms of protecting collective and individual minority rights, but also in terms of

<sup>40</sup> According to the latest census around 9.6% of young people under the age of 19 have some type of impairment, 6 500 boys and 4 500 girls. A register has now been set up under the Croatian Institute of Public Health. In preschool and primary school, more children are integrated into regular schools than are in special schools, but at secondary level this situation is reversed. There were 254 disabled students in higher education in 2003/04, sharply up from 24 in 2000/01. Students receive help with accommodation, and transport and facilities in universities have been adapted (OECD, 2007a).

<sup>41</sup> Annexe 2 provides a detailed description of the education system and a breakdown of the number of students attending different models of minority education provision.

<sup>42</sup> NGO representative, Interview (November, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> Vukovar is a city in the eastern part of Croatia where the war had particularly devastating consequences. However, the authors use Vukovar as a paradigm example which they had the opportunity to research over a significant period of time (Čorkalo Biruski and Ajduković, 2009).

reconstructing the social relations within the community. Furthermore, they stress that the teachers represent an interest group whose existence depends on the organisational model applied in education in Vukovar and the wider region. Therefore, any organisational intervention into the existing education model needs to pay particular attention to teachers.

However, it is fair to point out that most of the minority groups in Croatia run their own educational institutions, classes or programmes. The majority of these programmes are at the preschool level, but the programmes are also offered at the primary and secondary school levels<sup>44</sup>.

There is much debate within the Croatian academic community on reconciling respect for the minority right to choose education, as well as ensuring its provision, and the principle of interculturalism, whereby children attend school together under the same programme and exchange their cultural capital among themselves.

All of these programmes are approved by the MoSES, since they are an integral part of the national school system. Thus, all minority educational institutions and programmes are co-financed from the state budget. In general it can be concluded that education financing laws and practices stimulate social inclusion. Centralised budgets for primary and secondary schools cover the increased costs of schooling for additional programmes for national minorities and programmes for children with special needs, participation in financing of alternative and private schools, and other programmes. The financial resources for national minority programmes are allocated according to official criteria published each year (MoSES, 2008a) in a document that lists the main programme areas eligible for funding. The first programme area is support for national minority education (co-financing of textbooks, didactic materials and games in national minority languages; co-financing of expert teams to compile programmes in national minority languages and script). The second programme area includes special educational programmes for national minorities (co-financing for the education and training of teachers in Croatia and in the home countries of those from minorities; co-financing of summer and winter schools and mother-tongue language courses for students). The third programme area includes the national programme for Roma (co-financing of programmes for Roma students preschool education and after-school care for primary school, school tuition, college tuition, adult education programmes, accommodation, summer and winter schools, preparations for college, participation in various competitions, study trips; co-financing of the education of teacher aides to work with Roma students and the education of Roma parents).

## 4.2 Teacher competences for inclusive education

Teachers were aware that during their pre-service teacher education they had not received sufficient training to prepare them for work in inclusive settings. They also emphasised that in-service education rarely focuses on the development of competences for inclusive education. Furthermore, teachers expressed the belief that material conditions in schools are limiting inclusive practices, particularly when they are working with students with special needs. The Regulatory Act on the Number of Students in Combined Classes and Educational Groups in Primary Schools (Official Gazette, 2009a) states that regular classes can have a maximum of three students with special needs. At the same time, a regular class with 1 student with special needs can have a maximum of 26 students, a class with 2 students with special needs can have a maximum of 23 students, and a class with 3 students with special needs can have a maximum of 20 students. Despite the legal regulations, the actual situation usually differs from the given standards. Teachers stressed<sup>45</sup> that when there is a student with

<sup>44</sup> For further details see Annexe 2.

<sup>45</sup> Elementary School E, Focus group with teachers (October, 2009).

special needs in the class, they do not have enough time to deal with that individual without neglecting other students. The workload in a particular class can be determined only by examining the needs of each of the students and the social composition of the class.

Teachers stated that they are educated to teach the regular student population but the problems they face in their work require extensive knowledge of special education. Teachers said that they felt able to recognise students' needs, and accepted that each and every student needs an individual approach, but they also acknowledged that they are not familiar with the teaching methods that can be used when working with students with diverse needs (learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural disorders, social deprivation, and different cultural and ethnic backgrounds).

As stipulated in Article 10 of the Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 2000), most teachers in the minority programmes are members of the national minority or have full command of the minority language. In order to ensure the competences relevant for teaching as a profession, as well as for language proficiency, teacher education is provided in some minority languages at teacher faculties in Croatia. The state also provides financial assistance to future teachers who are studying abroad, together with opportunities for professional development. In this respect the provision of education to the Roma minority in the Romani languages is of particular importance. There are no teachers who are currently able to teach in any of the Romani languages, and teaching materials for working with Roma students are extremely limited. Roma teaching assistants have been working in a small number of schools. According to official criteria for financing national minority programmes (MoSES, 2008a), funding is provided to employ Roma teaching assistants where there are large numbers of Roma students, and to ensure that adequate training and preparation are provided for them.

There are two issues that arise in relation to the presence of teaching assistants in classes with students with special needs, socially deprived students and ethnic minority students. The first issue relates to teamwork, and the fact that pre-service education in Croatia does not prepare teachers for collaborative working in diverse settings, and does not offer relevant experiential learning to student teachers. One teacher stated: "There are great benefits for students with special needs when they work individually with the teaching assistant. Nevertheless, it is difficult to work when you have a teaching assistant in the classroom: the assistant's individual work with the student with special needs affects the classroom dynamics<sup>46</sup>." The second issue relates to actual preparedness of teaching assistants for working with students. While some teachers expressed satisfaction with teaching assistants who have official training in the area of education and/or rehabilitation<sup>47</sup>, others were not satisfied with the knowledge and actual usefulness of teaching assistants who work with students with special needs in regular classrooms<sup>48</sup>.

Roma teaching assistants cooperate with teachers in monitoring Roma students' progress, and help with language problems. They are employed on special programmes financed by MoSES. The teachers interviewed reported that Roma teaching assistants working in the schools lack training that would help them to provide support to students in the classroom<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Elementary School C, Focus groups with teachers (September, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Elementary School C, Focus groups with teachers (October, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Elementary School E, Focus groups with teachers (October, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Elementary School A, Focus groups with teachers (September, 2009).

In the authors' view, the need to develop teachers' competences for inclusive education is partially met. On the basis of an analysis of the in-service and pre-service programmes on offer and the opinions of participants in this research, it appears that teachers have the basic knowledge and skills to support personalised approaches to learning. In their everyday work, teachers adapt curricula to particular students using various forms of assessment, and liaise with students and their families. Nevertheless, teachers recognised that they need additional guidance in their attempts to design and implement individual learning plans.

Teachers reported that when working with students from different ethnic groups, they recognise and respect individual and cultural differences among students and encourage intercultural respect between them. Moreover, the teachers recognised that language is the largest barrier to the inclusion of Roma students. While teachers do try to learn basic words in the Romani language, that level of knowledge is not sufficient for successful teaching. Furthermore, teachers rarely use students' backgrounds as a basis for teaching and learning. Both pre-service and in-service teachers expressed a commitment to the values of social inclusion and an understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of education, and were familiar with the Convention of the Rights of the Child and with anti-discrimination issues. However, teachers do not have the competences required to enable them to conduct research to advance their understanding of the contribution of education to social inclusion.

### 4.3 Barriers to inclusion

The reform of the education system is an important precondition for reducing poverty and social exclusion. Croatia's education system is currently undergoing a process of change. The aims of the country's educational reform are:

- to improve preschool education coverage;
- to increase the proportion of children and young people who successfully complete programmes;
- to analyse the causes of school drop out, and prevent it;
- to improve the match between educational programmes and labour market needs;
- to increase the percentage of the population with higher education (MoHSW, 2007).

It is important to emphasise that teachers believed that the current educational reforms (Croatian National Educational Standard (MoSES, 2005)) have not been successful because of a lack of support from MoSES and the insufficient or inappropriate training offered by the Teacher Education and Training Agency.

The potential difficulties in implementing inclusive education strategies could be related to issues at local government level. The local government educational adviser<sup>50</sup> emphasised that Croatia is going through both administrative and financial decentralisation in the area of education, while there is no actual decentralisation in terms of curricula. In the towns and counties in the southern part of Croatia there are no programmes at local government level to implement specific social policies that might lead to social inclusion. Hence, there is no systematic planning relating to teacher education and training for work in inclusive settings.

This problematic situation could be directly related to the inclusive practices witnessed and commented on by parents and teachers. Parents of students with special educational needs recognised the importance of

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<sup>50</sup> Educational adviser for the City of Split, Interview (October, 2009).

inclusive education. They noticed that teachers are willing to work with their children, but at the same time lack the necessary knowledge to deal with the specific educational needs<sup>51</sup>.

According to teachers, the main barriers to inclusion are the unfavourable material conditions in schools and inadequate pre-service and in-service training. Furthermore, teachers emphasised that socially deprived students and those from ethnic minority groups (Roma students and Croatian immigrants from Janjevo) face educational neglect as a result of the values of their parents and social groups. Teachers believed that parents do not appreciate the importance of educating their children, and that there is a resistance towards education among Roma families because educated Roma tend to leave their communities.

Furthermore, teachers stated that it is hard to communicate with parents of socially disadvantaged students, because the parents either are unable to speak the Croatian language well (e.g. Roma)<sup>52</sup>, or are not interested in education and schooling (e.g. Janjevo)<sup>53</sup>. During the focus group with Roma parents it became apparent that they do see education as being important and are willing to send their children to school. Nevertheless, Roma parents reported that their children have difficulties in school and are not always treated fairly by other students<sup>54</sup>. According to one teacher: “When a Roma boy falls in love with a Croat girl, he soon realises that girls do not perceive him as a boy, but as a Roma boy. These situations increase the frustration and aggression in the school<sup>55</sup>.”

Roma parents expressed the belief that teachers are devoted to their work and are always there to help their children. They also said that teachers and expert team members are willing to work individually with Roma students and offer them extra help when needed<sup>56</sup>. However, one expert team member remarked: “Most of the teachers are very patient and are willing to work with Roma students. Nevertheless, some teachers are working here because this is their only option<sup>57</sup>.”

#### 4.4 Policies relevant for teacher preparation and development

As a result of the implementation of the Bologna process, and the participation of Croatian educational institutions in various EU projects as part of the Tempus, Erasmus and CARDS programmes, the Croatian pre-service teacher-training system is currently undergoing significant changes. According to legal regulations, there is no difference in terms of employability between teachers who hold a Bachelor’s degree and those who hold a Master’s. Pre-service training varies according to the level at which a teacher intends to teach. The main legislative acts on teachers’ qualifications and professional requirements are the Act on Primary Education and the Act on Secondary Education.

According to the pre-Bologna system of pre-service teacher training, the qualification required for teachers employed in preschool education is the Diploma for pre-primary teaching, gained after two years of study. Classroom teachers in lower primary school (grades 1–4) must hold the Diploma for primary school classroom teaching, obtained after two or four years of study.

<sup>51</sup> Elementary School E, Focus groups with parents (October, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> Elementary School A, Focus groups with teachers (October, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Elementary School B, Focus groups with teachers (October, 2009).

<sup>54</sup> Elementary School A, Focus groups with parents (October, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Elementary School A, Focus groups with teachers (October, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Elementary School A, Focus groups with parents (October, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Elementary School A, Focus groups with expert team members (October, 2009).



Upper primary school (grades 5–8) and secondary school subject teachers are educated at different faculties depending on their subject area. After completing the study programme, together with relevant courses in pedagogy, didactics and developmental psychology, students obtain a teaching diploma in a particular subject. Teachers at secondary vocational schools usually hold a diploma from polytechnic, medical or economic education and must undertake additional training in pedagogy, didactics and developmental psychology in order to become a teacher. The same additional training is undertaken by teachers in secondary vocational schools for industrial subjects and crafts, except that those teachers do not need to hold a higher education degree if such a degree does not exist in their field.

There is no course of study in Croatia that leads to a degree in special teaching/education. Teachers of children with special educational needs are not usually specifically trained, developmental psychology is part of regular teacher training, and in some universities there are one-semester courses in special needs education. The Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Zagreb offers four-year courses in seven departments (covering vision impairment, hearing impairment, etc.) that lead to a graduate degree.

The Bologna process has transformed initial teacher training and has also influenced in-service teacher education. The education of preschool teachers has been upgraded, and currently lasts three years. Preschool teacher educators are still schooled at vocational colleges. The training for prospective primary teachers has been upgraded from vocational college to university level. The duration of training for all school teachers (classroom and subject, primary and secondary level) has been brought into line with that of other university programmes that lead to the Master's degree. Bologna guidelines place a very strong stress on competences and learning outcomes, and this is clearly visible in the syllabuses of all teacher-training programmes. Nevertheless, in the authors' view the teacher-training programmes do not include competences relating to inclusive education to any great extent.

The number of first-year students enrolled in all higher education institutions for pre-service teacher training is limited by quotas set by MoSES. All teacher-training institutions have similar admission procedures. Students are enrolled on the basis of admission scores which are usually composed of entrance exam scores and secondary school grades in relevant subjects. Following the implementation of the State Matura<sup>58</sup>, admission procedures will change significantly in 2010 when the first generation of students will be enrolled on the basis of their State Matura scores. The handbook on State Matura specifies that students with disabilities take the same exams in terms of content, but the choice of examination method should be adjusted to the needs of the students (MoSES, 2009c).

Teachers in Croatia have public servant status. Hence, a framework contract with the teachers' unions regulates the benefits that teachers are entitled to receive for working under special conditions (such as combined classes, specialist work with students with special needs, or teaching in schools in remote areas) and supplementary payments for academic levels. The salaries of teachers, school directors and administrative

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<sup>58</sup> The State Matura is compulsory for students of gymnasium and four-year vocational and arts high school programmes. The State Matura comprises compulsory and elective parts. The compulsory part consists of a state exam in the Croatian language, mathematics and a foreign language. Students of national minorities take an exam in their mother tongue as well as in the Croatian language. Along with the two languages they can choose whether they take the third exam in mathematics or in another (foreign) language. The compulsory part of the State Matura can be taken at advanced (A) or basic (B) level. The higher education institutions decide on which level (A or B) is required for admission to their programme (this information is available to students prior to taking the State Matura). The elective part of the State Matura is not limited, so students can freely decide in which and in how many additional subjects they want to take the state exam. Apart from the foreign languages, the elective subjects are all taken at the same levels. The higher education institutions determine which specific additional subjects, apart from the compulsory State Matura, are required as a prerequisite for admittance (this information is available to students prior to taking the State Matura).

personnel are calculated on the basis of coefficients regulated by central government. Salaries for employees in primary and secondary schools, daily travel costs for employees in primary schools, compensation for employees according to a contract settled with the trade union and in-service education of teachers are covered by the centralised budget for primary and secondary schools. Average salaries for teachers have decreased significantly, from 3.28% to 1.70% of GDP between 2001 and 2006 (Batarelo et al, 2009).

The net salaries of primary school teachers vary between EUR 550 and EUR 600 per month, and the amount paid to teachers during their provisional employment period is equivalent to the minimum wage. The salaries of primary and secondary school teachers depend on both the qualifications and the position of the individual teacher. Teachers receive a net salary of approximately EUR 550 per month in their first post. By the end of their professional lives their salary levels will have increased by between 25 and 40%.

The professional status of teachers in Croatia is not high, and this influences the numbers enrolling in teacher-training institution. Vlahović Štetić and Vizek Vidović (2006) noted that the teaching profession is not usually the first choice for many students, and highlighted the obvious feminisation of the profession in primary and secondary education, which is evident in the ratio of female to male teachers (74 : 26).

Teachers can be hired and dismissed by the head teacher and administrative committee. According to regulations, MoSES is not required to approve the employment of each teacher. However, the employment of head teachers is commonly approved by MoSES officials, which indicates that Croatian schools are centrally influenced in relation to educational administration. There are no particular quotas for the employment of teachers from specific backgrounds. Nevertheless, according to the Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia, teachers employed in schools in a national minority language and script must be members of that particular national minority or be fluent in a national minority language and script.

The Croatian education system is centralised at the level of the school curriculum. As previously mentioned, with the implementation of the Croatian National Educational Standard and National Curriculum Framework the first steps towards decentralisation of the school curriculum were taken, and this should lead to increased teacher autonomy. Textbooks used in Croatian schools are approved by MoSES, and teachers are able to select the textbooks they wish to use from a list of several titles for each subject. The teachers have a choice of methodologies and pedagogical approaches in the classroom, but they lack practical knowledge of active teaching methods. In contrast with the highly centralised school curriculum, the assessment and monitoring of students is left to the teachers. Hence, it is not possible to make comparisons based on grades within or between schools. This situation should change with the implementation of the State Matura, which is centrally managed and assessed by the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education. At the same time, Croatian schools have started to implement procedures for the assessment and monitoring of students' attainment and performance.

All teachers are required to upgrade their professional knowledge. This process is ensured through a system of accredited conferences, seminars and workshops organised at national, regional and municipality levels by the Teacher Education and Training Agency, teacher-training faculties and colleges, teachers' professional associations, and some NGOs. Once they are employed, teachers are obliged to take an examination after a legally prescribed period of between one and a half and two years. They are examined by a committee based at MoSES in order for them to become fully qualified and certificated teachers. There are two more levels of advancement for qualified teachers: teacher-mentor and teacher-counsellor. Requirements for the promotion of teachers are defined by the Regulatory Act on the Promotion of Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette, 1995a). Promotion is based on an evaluation of teaching quality and

the enhancement of learning, involvement in extracurricular activities and continuous professional development. In this respect, in-service training is an incentive for promotion. More specifically, the promotion procedure requires that teachers collect all the required written documentation (such as certificates of attendance at in-service education and training programmes or conferences, published articles etc.). In addition, the teachers' council, the school's head teacher and a supervisor from MoSES must evaluate their work. In order to apply to become a teacher-mentor, as well as fulfilling the requirements described above a teacher must have a minimum of six years' teaching experience; in order to apply to become a teacher-counsellor, a minimum of 11 years' teaching experience is required.

The evaluation of teaching quality and of the work of both teachers and schools in general falls within the domain of the School Inspectorate which is an autonomous unit within MoSES that is regulated by the School Inspectorate Act (Official Gazette, 1995b). Inspectors are obliged to monitor education work on a regular basis and to react promptly to all complaints from citizens, who are free to submit their complaints to the School Inspectorate. With regard to teachers, inspectors monitor whether they are acting within the required educational and professional standards by focusing on the documentation provided by the teacher or school head.

## 5. MAPPING TEACHER PREPARATION FOR INCLUSION

### 5.1 Pre-service

Universities and their colleges are relatively autonomous in the creation, development and review of their programmes. There is no systematic research that precisely identifies courses linked to social inclusion. Spajić-Vrkaš (2002) conducted an analysis of the courses relating to civic education which are taught at the University of Zagreb, where pre-service teachers have an opportunity to attend courses dealing with human rights education and intercultural education.

Although mainstream teacher training in Croatia does include some initial knowledge regarding child development, only the teacher-training programme at the University of Rijeka offers a two-semester course in special education that includes compulsory practical experience. All other teacher-training programmes offer classes that last one semester and do not include practical experience. According to the statistical data gathered through the e-survey, 8 out of 14 teacher educators stated that the teacher-training programme at which they teach specifically addressed inclusive education as one of its objectives. At the same time, the large majority of student teachers that participated in the survey did not recognise any inclusive content/objectives in their classes: 7 out of the 9 student teachers did not know whether their classes had inclusive content, 1 said that their classes did not have inclusive content, while 1 said that their classes did have inclusive content.

The teacher educators who were interviewed supported the idea of inclusive education, but recognised that they are not adequately preparing pre-service teachers for work in inclusive settings. Future teachers are typically obliged to take one core class in special education, while at some universities (for example, the University of Zagreb and the University of Split) they have an opportunity to attend the elective class in teaching methods for work with students with special needs in inclusive schools. Despite this, student teachers said that they do not know the strategies required for working in inclusive schools. They do not learn how to adjust specific curriculum content to students with various disabilities, nor do they learn specific adaptations and modifications such as teaching adjustments (for example, systematic instruction, natural cues and employing verbal, visual or tactile cues), task break-down, the use of appropriate teaching materials and assistive technology. Furthermore, it is important to mention that teacher educators who also teach critical thinking methods for NGOs commonly use this knowledge in their work with future teachers, but are not allowed to openly teach future teachers how to use methods of critical thinking in their future work<sup>59</sup>. This situation is linked to official NGO regulations on how to organise in-service training in critical thinking.

Student teachers<sup>60</sup> who attend elective classes in education for gifted pupils noticed that the gifted population is barely mentioned in classes on special educational needs. This is a typical situation: classes focus on disability and are not taught in a way that focuses on differentiated instruction. The elective class on education for gifted pupils focuses on approaches that support individual needs (for example, a multilevel curriculum, curriculum overlap, substitute curriculum). Hence, it is possible to use knowledge gained in classes on gifted education with students with a variety of special educational needs.

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<sup>59</sup> Pre-service and in-service teacher educator, Interview (October, 2009).

<sup>60</sup> University of Split, Focus group with student teachers (November, 2009).

Some teaching method classes (including those for natural and social sciences, and languages) prepare students for inclusive schools through content that focuses on diversity and acceptance of diversity (for example, ethnicity, gender and disability).

Previous studies and life experience can have a positive impact on student teachers' overall attitudes towards inclusion. The students majoring in pedagogy who participated in the focus group<sup>61</sup> expressed the belief that inclusive schooling is a necessity and should be implemented for students with special educational needs and for students from different ethnic groups. In addition, student teachers recognised the educational disadvantage of Roma students and believe that special efforts should be made to facilitate the education of those who are particularly disadvantaged.

As part of teaching method classes, student teachers might spend time in schools and experience inclusive practices. According to one of the teacher educators interviewed: "Although the teaching method classes do not focus on adaptations and modifications for work with children with special needs, the practical part of the class is always conducted in inclusive schools. Hence, student teachers have an opportunity to observe strategies that are used in work with children with special educational needs<sup>62</sup>." In addition, the teacher educator interviewed emphasised that these practical experiences should be made more frequent and that student teachers should have an opportunity to interact individually with students with special educational needs.

Some of the student teachers who participated in the focus group<sup>63</sup> had an opportunity to work individually with children with special needs as volunteers in an inclusive environment. These student teachers greatly valued the experiences that they gained while working with children who had special needs. They visited these schools/classrooms thanks to the initiative of the teacher educator responsible for the class on special educational needs. In addition to various initiatives by individual teacher educators, student teachers are often involved in voluntary organisations that arrange activities such as helping children individually with their homework and providing other forms of help for children and young people with special needs. The largest volunteering organisation that involves student teachers is Volunteers' Centre Zagreb<sup>64</sup>. In the authors' view, student teacher practice in inclusive schools should become the norm, rather than simply being a positive initiative by individual teacher educators or student teachers.

Teacher educators noted that teacher-training institutions are not themselves inclusive. Candidates with disabilities are commonly discriminated against in university entrance exams. Teacher educators expressed the belief that teacher-training institutions should take positive action to encourage the participation of people with disabilities and members of minority ethnic groups in higher education, both as staff and students. There are examples of positive discrimination in access to teacher-training institutions for members of the Roma ethnic minority. There are currently several Roma students attending the Teacher Education Academy in Čakovec (Open Society Institute, 2007).

According to statements from local government educational representatives, there is a need for more extensive cooperation between universities and local governments. Both pre-service and in-service teacher education should be linked to local community needs, and university texts and lectures should reflect the

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<sup>61</sup> University of Split, Focus group with students majoring in pedagogy (November, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Pre-service and in-service teacher educator, Interview (October, 2009).

<sup>63</sup> University of Split, Focus group with student teachers (November, 2009).

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.vcz.hr/>

inclusive practices in local schools. The pre-service teacher education curriculum should use local resources and address local concerns in order to ensure local relevance and community involvement and thereby consolidate educational decentralisation<sup>65</sup>.

The Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Zagreb offers in-service teacher education for work with students with special educational needs, through seminars and workshops. However, cooperation between other pre-service teacher-training institutions and the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences is weak and inadequate. In the authors' view, fragmentation of faculties is a possible barrier to the better development of inclusive education. Analysis of the inclusive education courses taught at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation shows that the most frequent topics are the inclusion of children/people with disabilities in society. Furthermore, the practical experiences linked to the classes offered are conducted in inclusive preschools and schools. Most of the schools in Croatia employ expert team members who completed their studies at Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation. It is apparent that programmes of study at this institution have changed greatly during the past five to ten years and that they are offering specialisation in inclusive education and rehabilitation. In the authors' view, the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Science seems to focus mainly on special education issues relating to disabilities and difficulties, while cultural disadvantages are not systematically addressed in its programme, nor within teacher-preparation programmes at other teacher-training institutions.

Moreover, the area of bilingual education is poorly developed, is primarily linked to language studies and lacks educational emphasis. However, it is important to mention that teacher training in the Italian language is organised at the University of Pula for class teachers and pre-primary teachers. The Teachers' Academy in Zagreb previously organised a programme for class teachers, strengthened with additional subjects, to build competence to teach in the Serbian language. As a result of the low level of interest from students, the programme has not been provided since the 2006/07 academic year. At the University of Zagreb and University of Osijek 190 students study Hungarian language and literature, while the University of Zagreb provides Czech, Slovak and Ukrainian language and literature programmes at both Bachelor's and Master's levels (MoSES, 2009b).

In the authors' view the teacher licensing arrangements outlined in the new Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette, 2008a) will have significant consequences for pre-service education and should establish national competence standards for the teaching profession that could be implemented at all teacher-training institutions.

## 5.2 In-service teacher training

State funding is assured for teachers' participation in in-service development programmes, but the law does not specify a compulsory number of hours of professional training for teachers. This should change with the implementation of the Primary and Secondary Education Act (Official Gazette, 2008b), which schedules teacher licensing to start in 2012. The National Centre for External Evaluation of Education will be in charge of this process. Although current standards do not include specific competences relevant for inclusive education, and there are no incentives for teachers to participate in in-service training programmes relevant to social inclusion, it is likely that this will change with the implementation of the licensing procedure.

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<sup>65</sup> Educational adviser for the City of Split, Interview (October, 2009).

Teacher development opportunities are organised according to suggestions received from teachers' councils at school level, later delegated to regional councils for further discussions. The Society for Psychological Assistance is an NGO that offers in-service teacher-training seminars with an emphasis on the role of the school ethos in preventing behavioural disorders, and provides support and consultation for teachers and schools regarding students' psychosocial competences.

In-service teacher education also takes place in teachers' activity groups, where teachers have the opportunity to exchange experiences and examples of good practice in their work (Pavin et al, 2006). The National Centre for External Evaluation of Education is in charge of a project on peer learning that is being piloted among teachers in several schools in Croatia. In addition, teachers are involved in a number of learning communities that support professional growth by providing opportunities for teachers to think, talk, read and write about their daily work. These are grouped together in a Teacher Learning Community Network<sup>66</sup>.

Currently, in-service development programmes offered by the Teacher Education and Training Agency are accredited by the Agency's Council. In the future it is likely that these programmes will also require MoSES accreditation. MoSES has a directorate for in-service training that evaluates and accredits programmes offered by various NGOs. These programmes are co-financed from the state budget. The number of inclusion-relevant programmes within the overall in-service training provision is relatively low. Nevertheless, there are a number of programmes at the various education levels (preschool, primary, and secondary) that deal with social inclusion issues (children's rights, special needs, after-school education) and inclusive practices (critical thinking, cooperative learning). Some programmes target specific groups of children (for example, gifted children, children with special needs). Nevertheless, training courses relating to the teaching of Roma children have only been offered as part of in-service training organised by some NGOs such as Step by Step and the Forum for Freedom in Education. Teachers have also started to use active teaching methods, influenced by in-service training organised by NGOs such as the two mentioned.

The Teacher Education and Training Agency is not currently offering workshops or courses on teaching Roma students, nor on teaching and learning in a multicultural environment (Open Society Institute, 2007). One of the expert team members who participated in this study stated: "My studies did not prepare me for work with students who are raised in such difficult conditions as Roma children<sup>67</sup>."

The majority of in-service programmes organised by the Teacher Education and Training Agency are linked to particular educational levels and subject areas, while several programmes are interdisciplinary. Teachers can select in-service training in any area of interest. The prerequisite for participation in in-service training is an application to a senior counsellor from the Agency. This application is required in order to prepare for the training (number of participants, materials needed) and for participants' certification. In-service development programmes offered by NGOs differ from Agency programmes in their application procedures and actual costs. The school budget is insufficient to fund teachers' attendance at all the in-service courses in which they are interested.

In-service programmes do not currently offer courses in bilingual education, yet language competences and communication emerged as important themes in interviews with teachers and member of school expert teams. All study participants stressed that students' language skills are a prerequisite for successful education. Roma students do not have access to a bilingual curriculum, which would be especially important for the first years

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<sup>66</sup> Teacher Learning Community Network. Available at: <http://mzu.sbnet.hr/index.php>

<sup>67</sup> Elementary School A, Focus groups with expert team members (October, 2009).

of schooling, since basic skills and abilities are more easily developed in the early years in the child's mother tongue. Because of language barriers at school, Roma children cannot adequately access curricular content.

The study raises the question of how the linguistic gap can be solved. Some teachers believed that all teachers should learn the basics of ethnic minority languages in order to better understand students and meet their needs. Others believed that students from ethnic minorities should only enter school once they have mastered the Croatian language. Teachers believed that as a result of the isolation of Roma communities, the relatively brief mandatory preschool period is insufficient to prepare Roma children for schooling, in terms of both language and culture. Experts from the Step by Step organisation have developed a programme to include Roma children in preschool education in order to prepare them for primary school. Children who have been included in preschool education and guided through the process of learning Croatian and acquiring basic hygiene and social skills have shown good academic results once they have started attending school.

Parents of children with special educational needs spoke out in favour of including their children in regular schools. It is apparent that inclusion is not just a school issue but extends to the communities in which children and their families live.

As indicated in the Monitoring Report (Open Society Institute, 2005), the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools in Croatia is limited, and even for this limited number of children the level of support in most schools is inadequate. According to the report data, 54% of teachers who participated in the survey believed that including children with developmental disabilities in regular classes is the right way to educate them, as well as being the best way to integrate them into the community. At the same time, teachers emphasised that inclusion should only take place in schools that have the necessary resources and other professional conditions<sup>68</sup>. In schools with a large number of socially deprived students, regular classes function poorly. Teachers stated that teaching and learning in classes with 20 socially deprived students is almost impossible<sup>69</sup>. A similar situation is found in classrooms with a large number of Roma students, while teachers reported very good results for classes with a small number of students (10 students or less)<sup>70</sup>. An NGO representative who was interviewed expressed the belief that legal regulations should serve as a framework, while school teams themselves should determine the number of students in each department, according to the actual situation<sup>71</sup>. The teacher should be competent to assess individual students, perceive their social dynamics and determine an appropriate number of students in any particular class. Only in such circumstances does the teacher have a chance to be effective, to see students really achieve and to feel satisfied. Satisfaction is the greatest motivator for better and more engaged work.

The Teacher Education and Training Agency now organises professional development particularly aimed at teachers providing minority education. In 2008, in addition to targeted professional development seminars for teachers of Italian, Czech, Serbian, Hungarian and Slovak national minorities, for the first time a joint expert seminar for teachers teaching in model A schools was organised. Similarly, a joint expert seminar for teachers, teaching associates and principals of primary schools where education is carried out according to models B or C was organised in 2008 (MoSES, 2009b).

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<sup>68</sup> Elementary School E, Focus group with teachers (October, 2009).

<sup>69</sup> Elementary School B, Focus group with teachers (October, 2009).

<sup>70</sup> Elementary School A, Focus group with teachers (October, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> NGO – Forum for Freedom in Education, Interview (November, 2009).



The basis of social inclusion in the Croatian education system is set out in the preschool, primary school, secondary school, VET and higher education laws. These legal acts emphasise the equality of all students, but do not include specific rules on inclusive practices. Nevertheless, they refer both to the Act on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia and relevant primary legislation and secondary regulations on people with disabilities.

The Croatian education system is going through a process of change. Two major documents that support changes in the education system are the Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES) (MoSES, 2005) and the National Curriculum Framework (MoSES, 2008b). CNES includes guidelines for curricular adjustments and support for national minority students and students with special educational needs. The purpose of CNES is to abandon redundant educational programmes, introducing modern teaching methods based on research-based classes, individual and group work and applicable knowledge and skills. While the implementation of CNES is supported by a series of activities, all the parties involved agree that there is a need for additional training of teachers to support its implementation. The foundations of the National Curriculum Framework ensure quality education for all, the inclusion of all students, respect for human – including children's – rights, and the promotion of multiculturalism, tolerance and respect for differences. Nevertheless, the document does not provide consistent guidance on the methods by which these principles should be put into practice in schools and classrooms.

Teachers are introduced to the latest educational policies and strategies through the in-service training organised by the Teacher Education and Training Agency. A new curriculum should enable teachers to tailor their classes to their students, leaving sufficient time for them to use the teaching methods that will best ensure success in educating all students to develop their abilities. In practice, teachers have little training on ways of adjusting the curriculum at school level, developing their own topics and implementing new methods of teaching. The main concerns of teachers are the lack of specialised support teachers and the lack of guidance on the assessment of students with special educational needs in relation to the national standards of achievement (OECD, 2007a). Furthermore, teachers lack support in working with children from different backgrounds. The solution that has been tried in some cases has been to place Roma children in separate classes. This form of segregation persists, despite widespread agreement that all children would benefit from studying in mixed classes. MoSES should take the necessary steps to prepare teachers and schools for integrated learning (Open Society Institute, 2007).

According to the Law on Education in the Languages and Scripts of National Minorities, educational programmes in the languages and scripts of national minorities are conducted by trained teachers who are members of a national minority, or by teachers who are of another nationality but are fluent in the language and script of that national minority. Nevertheless, the government does not have an established policy on determining the content and priorities of teacher education and training (Spajić-Vrkaš, 2002).

In the authors' view, the development of competences for inclusive education should be an integral part of the teacher licensing process. The new Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette, 2008a) emphasises that teachers, professional associates and directors of academic institutions have the right and the obligation to receive continuing professional development in such areas as pedagogy, didactics, educational psychology, methods, information and communication technology, advisory work, management, and educational policy. Professional training programmes are approved by MoSES. Teachers and professional associates have a right and a duty to renew their licence every five years, with the licensing procedure being conducted by the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Principles of social inclusion are built into the Croatian legal framework. The existing legislation and strategies are relatively progressive and support inclusive education. The underlying principle is that integration/inclusion is always best for a child and that only in more severe cases should a student be placed in either partial integration or separate special education classes or schools. Similarly, the legal framework guarantees the rights of minorities to education in their own language and script. The state also accredits and finances different models of education for minorities.

However, some of the existing regulations tend to be inflexible or unclear. As stressed by teachers in the focus groups, the individual workload of teachers can only be assessed individually. Hence, the Regulatory Act on the Number of Students in Combined Classes should allow more flexibility.

Difficulties could also arise regarding the relations between central and local government levels. Croatia is going through administrative and financial decentralisation in education, while at the same time there is little decentralisation at curriculum level.

Furthermore, schools are faced with a lack of money, buildings that are unsuitable in terms of their architectural design, and weaknesses in teacher training.

With regard to teacher competences for inclusive education, teachers stressed that they are educated to teach 'regular' students, while the actual classroom population requires extensive knowledge in special education. Teachers recognised that every student needs an individual approach, which is a prerequisite to inclusive educational practice in classrooms. However, although they tended to assess that they have the competences required to recognise the individual needs of their students, teachers stated clearly that they lack knowledge on teaching methods that they could use in classrooms with students who have diverse needs (ranging from learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural disorders, to social deprivation and different cultural and ethnic backgrounds). The teachers interviewed in the study said that when working with students from different ethnic groups, they respect individual and cultural differences and encourage intercultural respect among students. However, the teachers pointed out that language is the greatest barrier to the inclusion of Roma students. While the teachers who were interviewed had made efforts to learn basic words in the Romani language, their knowledge of language was not sufficient for successful teaching. Furthermore, the parents of Roma students stressed that their children are often treated differently by other students in the class, though they acknowledged that teachers and expert team members were devoted to working with all students.

Universities and their colleges are relatively autonomous in the development and review of their programmes. All the programmes have recently undergone changes with the implementation of the Bologna process. While the studies for teachers have been lengthened and the syllabi rewritten so as to outline clearly the competences and learning outcomes for each of the programmes, teacher-training programmes have not been revised to include competences relevant for inclusive education. Although there has been no systematic analysis of the programmes, it appears that most of the programmes include a few subjects that address inclusion, mostly through one obligatory course in special needs education. In addition, the area of bilingual education is poorly developed and is primarily linked to language studies, thus lacking the necessary educational emphasis.

In the authors' view, fragmentation of faculties is one of the possible barriers to more inclusive approaches across relevant programmes. There is a need to develop better cooperation between different programmes

and faculties, as well as to open faculties and universities to collaboration with civil society, in particular in the area of inclusion.

Moreover, in the authors' view social inclusion should be integrated as a cross-cutting theme throughout the programme, in both theory and practice, rather than as a small set of subjects addressing particular groups of students with additional educational needs.

The licensing procedure outlined in the new Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette, 2008a) will have significant consequences for pre-service education, and, if the opportunity is used, could establish the basis for national competence standards for the teaching profession that would be implemented at all teacher-training institutions. In the authors' view, institutions could also be required to introduce social inclusion comprehensively into the relevant programmes through effective setting of standards that would give appropriate significance to teacher competences for inclusive education.

Teacher educators pointed out that the student teacher population in itself is rarely diverse and that potential student teachers with special needs are often discriminated against. Furthermore, as a result of the lack of competition for selection in pre-service programmes, the motivation of student teachers to become teachers is questionable. Therefore, teacher-training institutions need to revise the access criteria in order, on the one hand, to encourage diversity among student teachers and on the other, to introduce assessment of the level of motivation for teaching. The changes in the entrance exam system required by the introduction of the State Matura offer an opportunity to tackle the entry system to pre-service education for the teaching profession more broadly.

In-service training is conducted through accredited conferences, seminars and workshops for teachers at national, regional or local level, and is organised by the Teacher Education and Training Agency, teacher-training faculties and colleges, teachers' professional associations and some NGOs. Most of the training offered is linked to the educational level and subject area, while several programmes are interdisciplinary. The in-service training organised by the Teacher Education and Training Agency offers an opportunity to learn about the latest educational policies and strategies. However, teachers still lack support in building competences for working with students from a variety of backgrounds.

As with pre-service teacher training, the licensing procedure to be implemented in Croatia offers an opportunity not only to link in-service teacher training with the licensing and promotion of teachers, but also to gear the system towards building teachers' competences for inclusive education practices. In the authors' view, if social inclusion and inclusive education are built into the licensing procedures as underlying principles in both pre-service and in-service education, then teacher education can be aligned to better serve the needs of teachers in building their competences for inclusive education.

Finally, while preparing the study it was evident that there was a lack of systematic data, research-based analysis and studies on the preparation of teachers for social inclusion. The systematic collection of relevant data on social inclusion in education is necessary in order to make the best use of existing good practices and to reverse negative trends. There is also a lack of research studies that focus on the relationship between legal enactment and its actual implementation in the formal education system.

Based on the findings summarised above, the authors have formulated the following set of recommendations that may be considered by different stakeholders.

## 6.1 Policy makers

The short-term changes recommended relate to preschool, primary and secondary education. In the coming years it will be necessary to implement measures to increase the attendance of socially deprived children in preschools, especially those who would otherwise not be included in any preschool education programmes. In relation to the education of Roma children, successful examples of providing support to enrol Roma children in preschool education should be replicated.

A brochure on social inclusion for in-service teachers and student teachers should be published, with the aim of supporting social inclusion.

The medium-term changes recommended relate to teacher preparation in general. Both pre-service and in-service teacher-training programmes should develop teacher competences for work in inclusive settings. This recommendation is directly linked to the new legal regulation on teacher licensing, and requires the establishment of clear teacher accreditation criteria that would include competences for work in inclusive settings.

The long-term changes recommended relate to further decentralisation in the areas of administration and finance, and necessary curricular decentralisation. In addition, such decentralisation efforts are necessary to develop extensive social programmes at local government level, including social inclusion policies.

## 6.2 Teacher trainers/educators

### 6.2.1 Pre-service

The short-term changes recommended relate to changes in university policies, and specifically to the selection criteria applied at teacher-training institutions. It is necessary to include motivation as one of the criteria for admission to teacher-training programmes. Although there are examples of positive discrimination for members of ethnic minority groups in relation to access to teacher-training institutions, these good practices should become a state-wide standard.

The medium-term changes recommended relate to changes in pre-service teacher-training curricula, with more classes in pedagogy, psychology, sociology, communication, parent–teacher collaboration, and bilingual, intercultural and special education. Furthermore, it is necessary to integrate compulsory topics on social inclusion education into the pedagogic, psychological and didactic curricula of teachers. These medium-term goals could be accomplished by strengthening cooperation among higher education institutions in Croatia (teacher-training institutions and the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Zagreb) and among universities and NGOs.

Moreover, student practice should be compulsory, and should include placements in both ‘model’ schools and ‘traditional’ schools, while school mentors should be selected according to their competences in the area of social inclusion. This should ensure that future teachers are provided with an opportunity to gain practical experience relating to inclusive practices. In addition, the content of university texts and lectures should reflect inclusion practices in the ‘real’ world.

The long-term changes recommended relate to changes in both the employment structure of full-time, part-time and short-term faculty members, and policies to support the employment of faculty members with competences in the area of social inclusion.

### **6.2.2 In-service**

The short-term changes recommended relate to a required increase in the number of in-service programmes that prepare teachers for work in inclusive settings and the provision of financial support for participation in in-service courses and programmes relating to inclusive educational practices. In addition to in-service programmes it is necessary to support peer learning and other methods of exchanging knowledge and examples of best inclusive practice among teachers.

The medium-term changes recommended relate to ensuring that in-service courses and programmes relating to inclusive practices are included in the requirements for teacher licensing.

## **6.3 Teachers**

The short term-changes recommended focus on the provision of programmes that offer additional training/education, counselling and supervision for teachers working in inclusive settings.

The medium-term changes recommended relate to the implementation of a family-centred approach through which schools can promote the development of collaborative, reciprocal relationships with families. Although teachers do connect with students and their families, they rarely use student backgrounds as a scaffold for teaching and learning, and rarely implement intercultural curricula according to which all students would learn about the culture of ethnic minority groups.

The long-term changes recommended focus on the development of research competences of in-service teachers and their active participation in policy making. Furthermore, teachers should gain competences in other policy-related topics, especial curricular decentralisation.

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## ANNEX 1 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Pre-service teacher training* - education that teaching candidates are requested to undergo in order to qualify for entry into teaching, including both programmes specifically designed for future teachers and those programmes in which students study a discipline that is equivalent to a school subject.

*In-service teacher training* - education and training activities undertaken by primary and secondary school teachers and heads; this follows their initial professional certification and is intended mainly or exclusively to improve their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes in order that they can educate students more effectively.

*Preschool education* - education in preschool institutions, or schools that precedes, and serves as preparation for, primary education.

*Primary education* - education in primary schools, including the lower years in which classes are taught in all subject areas by a class teacher, and upper years of primary schooling in which different teachers teach different subject areas.

*Secondary education* - post-primary education in any secondary school, whether academic or vocational.

*Teacher* - overall term for those qualified to teach at any level of school, including preschool teachers, primary class teachers or subject teachers, and secondary school teachers.

*Teacher educator* - university professor or other college or higher education institution lecturer who teaches student teachers in pre-service training and who provides training for practising teachers in primary and secondary schools.

*Student teacher* - a student studying at a pre-service institution preparing primary class or subject teachers and secondary school teachers, both academic and vocational.

*Probationer teacher* - a recently qualified teacher who is qualified academically but does not yet have full practical 'licence' to teach.

*Mentor teacher* - a teacher who is qualified, promoted or assigned to monitor student teachers during their visits to schools for practice.

*Additional support needs* – the needs of children and young people for extra support to enable them to benefit from school education at any time, for any reason (e.g. very able students; students whose education is disrupted by illness, or because they are a refugee; students with a chaotic home life; bilingual learners).

*Special educational needs* – the needs of students, including those who have physical, sensory or cognitive or other specific disabilities, or any combination of these; it might also include students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

## ANNEX 2 – OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF CROATIA

The Croatian education system includes preschool, primary, secondary and university education. Preschool education is delivered to children between the ages of six months and six years. Compulsory education in Croatia begins with primary education, which consists of eight years of schooling. The eight years of primary education are divided into two stages: classes one to four and five to eight. Primary school education is compulsory and free of charge for all children aged seven to fifteen.

Secondary education comprises grammar schools, vocational schools and art schools. Grammar schools are divided into general, mathematics and IT, linguistic, classical and scientific schools. Vocational schools offer courses lasting for one, two, three or four years, including a period of practical instruction. Art schools include music, dance, visual art and design. In 2007 a national programme of measures that would lead to the implementation of compulsory secondary schooling were introduced by MoSES and the Croatian government.

Pre-primary, compulsory primary, and secondary education are provided by public, private, and church educational institutions, public schools, and other educational institutions. The majority of the minority groups in Croatia run their own educational institutions, classes or programmes. Most of these programmes are at preschool level, but a significant number are offered at primary and secondary school level. All of these programmes are approved by MoSES, since they are an integral part of the national school system. At the primary school level three models of minority education are implemented (MoSES, 2009a):

- Model A refers to schooling in the national minority language (Croatian programmes are translated into the national minority languages; the Croatian language is taught for four hours per week). In the school year 2008/09 students were taught in the following languages: Serbian (eighteen primary and eight secondary schools); Italian (thirteen primary and four secondary schools); Czech (three primary schools); and Hungarian (four primary and one secondary school).
- Model B refers to bilingual teaching (social sciences and humanities are taught in the minority languages, natural sciences in Croatian; the Croatian language is taught for four hours per week). In the school year 2008/09 students were taught in Czech (one primary school) and Hungarian (one primary school).
- Model C refers to nurturing mother tongue and culture (five hours per week throughout the school year; summer schools etc.). In the school year 2008/09 students were taught in the following languages: Albanian (two primary schools); Austrian and German (one primary school); Czech (seventeen primary schools); Hungarian (fifteen primary schools); the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (four primary schools); Slovakian (sixteen primary schools); Slovenian (one primary school); Serbian (twenty primary schools) and Ukrainian (three primary schools).

**TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN, INSTITUTIONS AND TEACHERS IN PRE-PRIMARY, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MINORITY EDUCATION (A, B AND C MODELS)**

Minority	2007				2008			
	Total number of children	Number of institutions (pre-primary, primary, secondary)	Total number of classes	Total number of teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary)	Total number of children	Number of institutions (pre-primary, primary, secondary)	Total number of classes	Total number of teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary)
Albanian	-	-	-	-	27	2	2	2
Czech	990	25	79	75	920	22	77	72

Minority	2007				2008			
	Total number of children	Number of institutions (pre-primary, primary, secondary)	Total number of classes	Total number of teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary)	Total number of children	Number of institutions (pre-primary, primary, secondary)	Total number of classes	Total number of teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary)
<b>Hungarian</b>	1 251	31	141	131	1 225	25	146	106
<b>The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian</b>	25	2	2	2	41	4	9	4
<b>German and Austrian</b>	67	1	7	7	51	1	6	4
<b>Rusini</b>	48	1	6	2	72	2	9	3
<b>Slovak</b>	510	10	39	6	526	11	38	7
<b>Slovenian</b>	-	-	-	-	6	1	1	1
<b>Serbian</b>	4 094	53	299	637	4 334	56	319	558
<b>Italian</b>	3 061	39	203	510	3 048	33	216	537
<b>Ukrainian</b>	10	1	2	1	11	2	3	2
<b>TOTAL A,B,C</b>	<b>10 056</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>1 371</b>	<b>10 261</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>824</b>	<b>1 296</b>

Source: MoSES (2009b)

Roma students are the most disadvantaged group. According to previous research studies conducted (Open Society Institute, 2007), Roma students experience social exclusion as a result of a lack of or poor knowledge of Croatian, which represents an additional obstacle in the process of their integration into the school system. In the school year 2007/08, a total of 4 840 members of the Roma minority were in the education system, of whom 810 (409 male, 401 female) were in pre-primary education, 3 786 (1 934 male, 1 852 female) in primary education, 244 (145 male, 99 female) in secondary education and 12 (4 male, 8 female) in higher education institutions (MoSES, 2009b).

All children are assessed before they enter primary school. If a child is not deemed to be school-ready, entry can be delayed by a year. Assessments are carried out by an expert commission (medical doctor, school psychologist, school pedagogue, classroom teacher) and can be followed by a period of pedagogical observation to determine any special needs the child may have. Parents can appeal the decisions.

Education for children with special needs is conducted in regular schools and special schools. Within regular schools, full or partial integration is possible.

The principle underlying Croatian legislation is that integration/inclusion is always best for a child and that only in more severe cases should a student be placed in either partial integration or separate special education classes or schools. Hospital and home teaching are provided by teachers from the nearest primary school. Even special institutions follow the regular programme as much as possible, adapting to the various degrees of disability and offering vocational and employment skills to those who are capable, varying from sheltered workshops to open employment. However, most schools (70%) operate in shifts, and very few schools in Croatia have been adapted to provide wheelchair access. Regulations now require that new school buildings must include access for students with physical disabilities; in some cases, lifts have been installed in existing buildings with the help of community fundraising (OECD, 2007a).

Full integration constitutes the inclusion of a child who has additional education support needs into regular classes, where the child follows a regular or an adapted curriculum through an applied individual approach in

terms of teaching methodology. The student is an integral part of the class together with other peers, and the students are taught by a teacher. In primary schools students with special needs can not fail the first four grades: they continue through the first four grades with the programme individually adjusted.

From the fifth to the eighth grades, a student can fail and repeat a grade on the recommendation of the education-rehabilitation specialist and all teachers involved in the student's education<sup>72</sup>. One class can include up to three students with special needs. A student with special needs has the right to additional support from education-rehabilitation specialists, which is conducted in a specially equipped space within the school. For students with vision, hearing or movement impairments, a 'prolonged specialist programme' is organised. The additional programme is conducted before or after regular classes by education-rehabilitation specialists and is considered to be a part of the whole educational programme of the student.

Partial integration is conducted in a regular school, an entails a student attending part of the education programme in a special class and part in a regular class. The special classes are taught by an education-rehabilitation specialist, while the regular classes are taught by a teacher. Partial integration is most often conducted for children with intellectual difficulties.

There are special curricula for children with developmental difficulties, for example, in preschool for children with autism, children with intellectual difficulties, children with cerebral palsy and others. In primary schools there are individual education plans for each individual child. Teachers are starting to use active teaching methods, influenced (especially in primary) by Step by Step and similar NGO initiatives (OECD, 2007a).

Students who have completed regular primary schooling, either through full or partial integration, have a right to continue their education in regular secondary schools. Before the end of grade eight, all children registered as having special educational needs are counselled on possible career choices and directions in secondary schools.

Croatia uses an orientation list, which includes vision, hearing, speech (and other language-related disabilities such as dyslexia) and physical disabilities, intellectual difficulties (mild, moderate, severe, profound), behavioural disorders, autism, and multiple disabilities. Data are difficult to obtain; however, according to the latest census around 9.6% of youngsters under the age of 19 have some type of impairment: 6 500 boys and 4 500 girls. A register has now been set up under the Croatian Institute of Public Health. In preschool and primary school, more children are integrated into regular schools than are in special schools, but at secondary level this situation is reversed. There were 254 disabled students in higher education in 2003/04, sharply up from 24 in 2000/01. Students receive help with accommodation, and transport and facilities in universities have been adapted (OECD, 2007a).

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<sup>72</sup> From fifth to eighth grade students have a number of different subject teachers.

## ANNEX 3 | TABLE OF COMPETENCES FOR INCLUSION

	basic	advanced
<b>Personalised approach to learning</b>	Improves competencies of all students	Innovates teaching to help all children learn
	Tailors teaching strategies to each child's needs	
	Uses various forms of assessment to help children learn and improve instruction	Designs and implements individual learning plans
	Works effectively with support staff	
	Adapts curricula to particular pupils	
	Guides and supports all learners	Pro-actively addresses inequities in materials, policies and so on
<b>Understanding and respect of diversity</b> (gender, socio-economic groups, ability/disability, culture, language, religion, learning styles)	Attends to students' cognitive development, and to their social-emotional and moral growth	
	Connects with students and their families at an interpersonal level	
	Recognises and respects cultural and individual differences	Uses students' backgrounds as scaffolding for teaching and learning
	Understands different values students and their families hold	
	Is aware of her own preconceptions and value stances	
	Recognises how her assumptions influence her teaching and relationships with different pupils	
<b>Commitment to values of social inclusion</b>	Recognises that knowledge is value-laden, constructed by the learner and reciprocal	Learns languages
	Is able to recognise pupils' special needs and provide for them or seek help	
	Is able to recognise gifted pupils' needs and provide appropriately for these	
	Encourages intercultural respect and understanding among pupils	
	Maintains high expectations regardless of students' background	Conducts research to advance understanding of education's contribution to social inclusion
	Treats all children with respect, affirms their worth and dignity	
	Believes in educability of every child	
	Helps all children develop into fully participating members of society	
	Understands the factors that create cohesion and exclusion in society	
	Understands the social and cultural dimensions of education	
	Understands the contribution of education to developing cohesive societies	
	Is familiar with conventions of the right of child and anti-discrimination	

Table developed on the basis of Tuning Teacher Education in the Western Balkans (Pantić, 2008) and European documents such as Common European Principles for Teachers' Competences and Qualifications (EC, 2005) and Improving Competences for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (EC, 2008c).

## ANNEX 4 | RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## Research Design

The figure below reads horizontally to show how the theoretical assumptions adopted in the conceptual framework inform corresponding parts of the research design and methodologies.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND (THEORIES, BELIEFS)		RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS
<p>Competence is an integrated set of knowledge, skills and dispositions (Assumption 1)</p> <p>Teaching professionals themselves should be the main source of information in the process of defining teacher competence (Assumption 2)</p>		<p>The table of competences for inclusion developed in Pantić (2008) and key European documents were used for focus groups with teachers working in diverse environments</p>
<p>Social inclusion should be mainstreamed in all policies for teachers (general pluralism) and balanced with a targeted approach for children from marginalised/vulnerable groups (Assumption 3)</p> <p>Dispositions are predominantly socio-culturally developed (Assumption 4)</p> <p>Programmes based on beliefs about knowledge being value-laden and constructed by the learner are more inclusion-friendly (Assumption 5)</p> <p>Teacher Education programme experiences building teacher competences for inclusion include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- focus on inclusion-relevant topics in courses</li> <li>- provision of practical experiences</li> <li>- opportunities for interaction with families</li> <li>- opportunities for critical reflection</li> <li>- opportunities for discussion and dialogue</li> </ul> <p>(Assumption 6)</p>		<p>The country team looked into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policies and regulations</li> <li>- data from interviews with policy-makers, course designers, teacher educators, teachers, school principals, parents, community representatives and others</li> </ul> <p>Online survey of initial Teacher Education programmes including questions on course units, practical experiences, opportunities for reflection and dialogue, the beliefs of teacher educators</p> <p>Catalogues and other sources of information about in-service programmes</p>
<p>Cross-country similarities are important for policy making (similar heritage, prospective European integration and relevant policies and practices) (Assumption 7)</p>		<p>Collection of examples of best practices from the Western Balkans</p>

## **Assumption 1: Competence is an integrated set of knowledge, skills and dispositions**

The concept of competence is central to the three main questions addressed by this study:

- What teacher competences are needed for inclusive education in situations of social and cultural diversity?
- What is the current situation regarding the inputs, processes and outcomes of a) pre-service b) in-service teacher preparation for inclusive education?
- How can the situation regarding a) pre-service b) in-service teacher preparation for inclusive education be improved?

It is therefore necessary to outline the definition of competence as it is adopted in this study.

The concept of competence has gained popularity and credence in literature for teachers and teacher training on the international scale. Competence features in some key European documents for teachers (EC, 2005, 2008), some European projects on higher education curricula reform (Gonzales and Wagenaar, 2005) and recent studies in the Western Balkan region (Pantić, 2008; Rajović and Radulović, 2007; Zgaga, 2006).

Studies from the region invariably suggest that teacher training provides sound academic coverage of subjects and pedagogical knowledge on themes and issues, but that knowledge on how to identify and deal with problems in a real life setting is largely missing. Such expertise involves a combination of cognitive and practical knowledge and skills, but also values, motivation and attitudes - a combination widely referred to as 'competence' in the literature (Rajović and Radulović, 2007). It has been suggested that teacher education should be oriented toward the development of certain key competences that can help teachers perform effectively in their daily practice.

However, this competence-based model has been criticised for an overly narrow understanding of teacher expertise as the mere observable performance of daily teaching routines, downgrading the role of teacher to the simple technical implementation of policies and programmes. Critics argue that teaching is an ethical, normative profession that presupposes something of value is to be taught, whereupon they are bound to encounter problems that are not susceptible to resolution in value-neutral, technical terms (Carr, 1993). This is reflected in some of the most recent frameworks for competence (Tigelaar et al., 2004; Stoof et al., 2002) that adopt a view of competence that combines theoretical and practical knowledge and skills with attitudes and values.

This study adopts the broader view of competence as an integrated set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. A number of authors claim there is a specific body of knowledge necessary for working with 'special' children, and that these competences for inclusion need to be adequately covered during teacher preparation. Such training may involve developing an understanding of the socio-cultural factors that produce individual differences, or specialist knowledge on disability and children's learning needs, awareness of educational and social issues that can affect children's learning, and the like.

Another distinct stance operates on the basis that inclusion is not only about 'special' children, and that therefore teacher competence for inclusive educational practices should include skills relevant to improved teaching and learning for all, whilst reducing barriers to learning and participation.



This sort of approach could involve a multifaceted pedagogy recognising that: decisions taken to inform teaching should be based on children's individual characteristics; learning takes place outside school; learning must build on previous knowledge, individual and cultural experiences and interests (Florian and Rouse, 2009).

Teachers need to develop their dispositions alongside their knowledge and skills when considering competences for inclusion. Even the most comprehensive coverage of relevant themes is unlikely to anticipate every type of difficulty teachers might meet in their professional lives. Teachers undergoing preparation for inclusive education must be made to accept their responsibility to improve the learning and participation of all children, and be disposed to teach all learners equitably. Dispositions are tendencies for an individual to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on their beliefs (Villegas, 2007). They involve teacher beliefs about the purposes of education, knowledge, learning and the educability of their students. The latter is of particular importance for inclusive education as this forms the basis of teacher expectations of their students. These expectations can lead them to treat students differently, resulting in positive or negative performance, aspirations and self-images dependent upon the original teacher assessments.

The definition of 'competence' as a combination of knowledge, skills and dispositions is reflected in the approach to both the definition of teacher competences and to the evaluation of existing policies and practices where all these aspects are featured.

## **Assumption 2: Changes in educational policies and practices fare better when they are congruent with teachers' beliefs about what is worthwhile in education**

Growing research evidence states that the success of reforms introducing new practices such as inclusive education are critically dependent on their compatibility with teacher beliefs on the value of the change and transferability to daily teaching practices (Beijaard et al., 2000; Day, 2002; Day et al., 2007; Fives and Buehl, 2008; Wubbels 1995). Literature on change and innovation in education suggests that changes in education practices require careful consideration of the differences between the existing and desired models with a view to identifying consensual and/or competing forces in the change process. Changing systems are typically characterised by the coexistence of old and new 'states of affairs'. The emergent new state may have elements in common with the old one, and the wider apart the two states are initially, the more difficult the transition process will be (Anchan, Fullan and Polyzoi, 2003; Fullan 2007).

We must have a clear understanding of existing policies and practices of teacher preparation for inclusive education in the Western Balkan countries and of teachers' own perceptions of the competences they need and the help they require to develop these competences in order to identify the true extent of scope for improvement. An earlier study of teacher perceptions of competences conducted in the region (Pantić, 2008) reported that teachers attributed high importance to competences on equality and supporting the learning of all pupils. However, detailed study of examples of teacher preparation in the region showed current teacher preparation does not adequately cater for those competences as it does not provide enough opportunities to connect theoretical knowledge with actual teaching experiences in real-life classrooms and does not address issues such as parental and community involvement that would build teacher capacity to deal with a number of out-of-school factors relevant for inclusion.

Hence, teaching professionals themselves are the best source of information on how inclusion-relevant competences translate into their daily practices and what kind of support they need to develop those competences. However, school principals, parents and communities, government representatives, teacher educators and course designers, and relevant NGO and donor representatives must also be consulted regarding teacher competences for inclusion as these stakeholders can provide important insights into the context in which teachers operate.

### **Assumption 3: A philosophy of pluralism prevails among inclusive and culturally aware teachers**

Educational inclusion is a much researched topic involving a number of challenges encountered in the policy-making and implementation processes. Interpretations of the notion of inclusive education itself vary from narrower senses as 'the attempt to educate persons with intellectual disabilities by integrating them as closely as possible into the normal structures of the educational system' (Michailakis and Reich, 2009) to broader definitions as a 'guiding principle helping to accomplish quality Education for All (EFA) – education systems that benefit from diversity, aiming to build a more just, democratic society' (Acedo, 2008), or even as a process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring curricular organisation and provision and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity.

This process helps a school to expand its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces all form of exclusion and degradation of pupils on the grounds of disability, ethnicity, or any other issue that could render the school life of some children unnecessarily difficult (Sebba and Sachdev, 1997; Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Peček et al, 2006). In this broader sense, inclusion is a process to increase participation and decrease exclusion, where participation equates to recognition, acceptance and respect, inclusion in the learning process and social activities in a way that enables an individual to develop a sense of belonging to a group.

Similarly, in the literature on intercultural education, a variety of approaches range from 'culturalism', which places an emphasis on cultural differences and a need to accommodate any differences seen as typical of entire groups, to approaches known as 'pluralism' (ethnic or general) in which the emphasis is placed on diversity within groups (with or without explicit reference to ethnic relations), involving working on good relations within and between groups and their educational opportunities. The latter comes close to the 'equal opportunities approach', built on a vision of intercultural education where the emphasis is on pupils from ethnic minority groups and their educational opportunities. Intercultural education is seen as a means of combating the educational disadvantages of pupils from an ethnic minority background (Leeman and Ledoux, 2005).

In this study, we adopt the broader view of inclusive education as a process to reduce exclusion and contribute to the opportunities and skills for participation in society of all pupils, whilst adopting a balance between general pluralism and an equal opportunities approach to intercultural education.

The rationale for this choice is grounded on the arguments that such approaches reduce the emphasis on 'different' or 'additional' needs and any 'us and them' kind of antithesis, and imply the extension of what is 'generally available' in order to improve the learning and social participation in of all children. Extending what is 'generally available' reduces the need to provide support for what is 'different from' or 'additional to'. This approach is comparable to the architectural concept of 'universal design' where solutions are

anticipated by improved access for everyone and the avoidance of physical and other environmental barriers in the first place (Florian and Rouse, 2009).

The next argument in favour of the pluralist approach, is that a philosophy of pluralism prevails amongst culturally aware teachers (Ford and Trotman, 2001). Culturally aware teachers attempt to understand the worldviews of diverse students and respect them as different and legitimate. Educational research, even where it traditionally focuses on effective instruction and academic success, as in the Netherlands or Finland, recognises that quality of education is partly determined by the individual pupils, the moment and the context, and recognises that the professionalisation of teachers should focus more on 'diversity' and reflection of how diversity occurs in teachers' educational practice and on their actions on the basis of this reflection (Leeman and Volman, 2000).

Finally, the selected approach has the advantage of exposing two of the issues common in educational exclusion in the Western Balkans. Firstly, it is very common for schools to use subtle and not so subtle forms of exclusion (from the lack of communication with families and lack of language and learning support to physical barriers) to emit strong messages that some students are not welcome (Roma, ethno-linguistic minorities, disabled children) to the point that these children and their parents will seek segregation or avoid school altogether rather than experience rejection, humiliation or 'failure' in their local school.

Secondly, a pernicious notion of the school 'need to exclude' is exposed in some cases. This is phrased in terms of systemic factors that appear to place inclusion beyond the apparent benevolent human capacity of school staff to be more inclusive. Such exclusion is often voiced in regretful statements, such as "We would love to have more Roma children here but they come to us so late and are so behind in everything that they cannot pass the tests to progress up the school."

These systemic factors very often cover deeply held prejudices or profound ignorance of what can actually be done to include more diverse children, and these negative views often prevail over what is intended to be pro-inclusion legislation.

#### **Assumption 4: Dispositions are predominantly socio-culturally developed**

Socio-cultural theory offers a productive way of thinking about the development of teacher dispositions for inclusive education (Huizen et al, 2005; Lasky, 2005; Korthagen, 2004; Wubbels, 1992). In the Vygotskian tradition, the functioning and development of human individuals is studied in the context of participation in socio-cultural practices, of which teacher education is but one example. Individuals also learn and change through contact with other people in various contexts where people participate in activities. Such participation pre-supposes the 'moving inward' of social functions to be appropriated as psychological functions (Vygotsky, 1988-1999). In order to do this, individuals (teachers in this case) need an environment modelling an ideal standard and supporting conditions for a successful approximation of this standard – the zone of proximal development. They also need opportunities to explore public and social meanings behind the standard in relation to what makes participation personally meaningful to them.

Vygotskian and neo-Vygotskian theories on teacher preparation are important in consideration of the opportunities for the development of inclusive dispositions provided by existing policies and practices in pre-service and in-service teacher preparation. Teacher preparation needs to help teachers orientate themselves

towards the values and goals provided in the cultural and political setting of the schooling in which they engage. Other influential theories, such as Kolb's theory of experiential learning (Kolb and Fry, 1975) and Schön's notion of the reflective practitioner (1983) suggest that the learning processes of the professional are associated with making sense of concrete experiences. Professionals do not just apply theories. They learn by doing and engaging in on-the-spot problem-framing and experimentation followed by reflection. Student teachers need opportunities to exercise their judgment in practice.

Moreover, some of the most influential authors in the literature on teaching professionals argue that the role of the professional extends beyond reflection on their own practice into the wider societal context in which they find themselves (Zeichner and Liston, 1987). This will be taken into account when considering the context and mechanisms for supporting and motivating teachers to adopt inclusive dispositions, both during pre-service preparation and in-service practices.

### **Assumption 5: Programmes based on beliefs about knowledge being value-laden and constructed by the learner are more inclusion-friendly**

A comparative study of teacher education programmes (Tatto, 1999) identified two types of approaches underlying the design of teacher preparation programmes characterised as 'constructivist' and 'conventional'.

Constructivist approaches seem to:

- look at teaching as a vehicle towards a more equal and just society
- encourage student-teachers to see themselves and their pupils as makers of meaning
- provide opportunities for learning through discussion, reflection on and challenges to traditional conceptions of the teacher role, learner role, subject matter and pedagogy
- allow learning to teach to occur in context.

On the other hand, conventional approaches seem to:

- be driven by technical views of teaching and learning to teach
- show a tendency to see pupils as fixed entities or uncritical recipients of knowledge
- aim at helping teachers to fit into pre-existing school structures
- divorce teaching knowledge about subject matter and pedagogy from practice.

The study showed that in constructivist programmes, where teachers were seen as professional individuals capable of making informed instructional choices, teachers had more opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills to adjust instruction to the diverse needs of learners.

This finding is relevant in the consideration of existing programmes of pre-service preparation of teachers. The above characteristics of programmes were included in the items of a survey designed to explore the provision of, and assumptions underlying, teacher education programme designs and teacher educator beliefs about the nature of knowledge.

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**Assumption 6: The programme experiences that help student teachers develop culturally responsive dispositions include five dimensions**

A qualitative study (Kidd et al, 2008) of student teacher accounts of the experiences within teacher education programmes that helped them develop competences for inclusion, showed the importance of the following teacher education components:

- focus on issues of culture, linguistic diversity, poverty and social justice in special course units
- provision of practical experiences in diverse classrooms
- interactions with diverse families
- opportunities for critical reflection
- opportunities for discussion and dialogue

The survey within this study on behalf of ETF explored the presence of the above elements in existing pre-service teacher preparation. In the future, the survey findings will be used to consider how these key components can be enhanced to support teachers in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively increase the learning of all pupils, and to provide experiences that enable student teachers to examine issues relevant to social inclusion and understand how their own values, beliefs and teaching practices are shaped by their cultural backgrounds and prior experiences.

**Assumption 7: Comparison of historically, culturally and politically similar countries can generate a knowledge base for evidence-based policy making**

The knowledge base for policy making should be sought through cross-national studies with the aim of establishing meta-national commonalities in teacher competences for inclusive education in this region. Comparative research in education advocates cross-national research as valuable and even indispensable in establishing the generality of findings and the validity of interpretations derived from single-nation studies (Broadfoot, 1990; Kohn, 1989). Where similarities in cross-national studies are found, 'structural constants' or 'identities in social structures' should be identified that enable generalisation at the policy level. Given the similarity of issues addressed in this study across the countries involved, the findings can inform efforts to improve pre-service and in-service teacher education policies and practices in the Western Balkan region.

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