

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

## **SERBIA COUNTRY REPORT**

**WORKING DOCUMENT  
JANUARY 2010**

A Report prepared by SCIENTER and  
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January 2010

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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

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate General for Employment
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
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
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
REF	Roma Education Fund
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is one of seven being prepared in the context of a regional study entitled Mapping Policies and Practices for the Preparation of Teachers for Inclusive Education in Contexts of Social and Cultural Diversity, which was commissioned by the European Training Foundation (ETF) and is being conducted by SCIENTER and the Centre for Education Policy. It focuses on policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in Serbia, with particular focus on pre-service education and in-service professional development. This is a qualitative study exploring the perceptions of the relevant actors through document analysis, interviews and focus groups, and, to a lesser extent, qualitative information collected in an online survey.

After a period of inaction in educational reform that lasted from 2004 to 2008, Serbia is currently in the process of implementing new legislation (the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System), which was passed by the Serbian National Assembly in late August 2009. This new act includes a number of provisions supporting inclusive education that are due to be implemented over the next two years. The strategies adopted in the area of education will promote educational equity and justice as well as quality and efficiency within the education system. The wider legislative framework supports social inclusion, non-discrimination and the protection of human rights. This process is complemented by numerous other initiatives also focusing on various aspects of education reform. An ongoing project undertaken to develop a new financing model for education will pay specific attention to the issue of inclusion. A number of other projects, each focusing on particular aspects of education or on particular disadvantaged groups (e.g. Roma), are also under way. Serbia, as a member of the Bologna Process, is also expected to reform its higher education system, including pre-service teacher education. Since the new legislation was passed while this study was in progress, our fieldwork findings do not include experience with the implementation of the new legislation. Nevertheless, a review of the provisions of the new law relevant to inclusive education clearly indicates that it does hold some promise for the provision of more inclusive education in Serbia.

However, the environment in which the new education strategies and legislation will have to be implemented is burdened with serious obstacles, including systemic institutional barriers, socio-psychological barriers (discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes in both society in general and in schools), teacher lack of preparation and motivation for teaching in diverse classrooms, legislative barriers from previous laws and, ultimately, poverty. All of these factors represent potentially problematic areas for the implementation of the inclusive practices advocated by the new legislation.

Teacher pre-service education is characterised by the acquisition of mostly general theoretical knowledge; it includes little instruction on how to implement this knowledge in practice and offers scant opportunities to acquire practical classroom experience with students who have special educational and non-educational support needs. Teachers are trained as though the schools were mono-ethnic institutions with a homogeneous student population. Although some changes evidence slight improvements and a move towards a more inclusive discourse within the curricula of university institutions, these are far from being sufficient to ensure the preparation of future teachers for inclusive education. Most teacher education courses do not include material relating to inclusion. According to interviewees from all target groups and data from the e-survey respondents, the quality of preparation for inclusive education at teacher education institutions is exceptionally poor, mostly due to the negative attitudes of teacher educators towards inclusion, insufficient practice and inadequate curricula.

With respect to in-service professional development, the legislation stipulates that all teachers must, over a period of five years, attend at least 100 hours of public tender-based professional education (in-service training (INSET) programmes) chosen from the catalogue of such programmes published annually.

A review of the content of this catalogue for the last three school years reveals a slight increase in the number of programmes in the sections dealing with special needs and national minorities. However, they are still insufficient. Furthermore, a number of objections have been raised concerning the INSET system and programmes. These include the issue of the extrinsic motivation of predominant teachers to participate in such programmes, the insufficient duration of courses, the high number of accredited programmes (which may undermine the integrity of the accreditation process especially in light of the criticism of the composition of accreditation commissions) and the lack of any external evaluation and monitoring, i.e. the lack of any obligation to put into practice what is learned during such courses.

All these factors represent significant challenges that will have to be met in the preparation of teachers for inclusive education. This report therefore concludes with a set of recommendations for decision makers at various levels and providers of teacher pre-service and in-service preparatory courses and also for teachers themselves. These aim to ensure proper implementation of the new legislation, in-depth reform of pre-service teacher education programmes, and a reform of the procedures and criteria for accreditation and provision of INSET programmes.

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

COUNTRY REPORT FOR SERBIA

## 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).

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<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).

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.

<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).

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**

In this study, a predominantly qualitative research strategy was used to answer questions concerning the relevance and the unintended effects and impact of policies and practice. This qualitative approach made the researchers the key instruments for data collection and allowed them to access data in the natural setting. Qualitative research is descriptive and concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes. In this case it involved inductive data analysis of participant perspectives, thoughts, assumptions and views expressed in their own words.

The qualitative approach allowed for greater diversity in responses and made it easier to adapt to the new developments and issues that emerged during the research process. For example, since the new legislation was passed in Serbia while this study was in progress (August 2009), some of the information gathered by desk researchers in September and October already needed to be updated in the next two months (e.g. because of an intense debate on teacher standards between the National Education Council and the Institute for the Improvement of Education, the publication of a report by the Ministry of Education entitled Information on Development Programmes and Projects in Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (hereafter, Information on Development Programmes), etc). The qualitative approach proved beneficial in that it allowed for the inclusion of relevant questions in the interview schedules. On the other hand, the limited number of participants in the field study precludes countrywide generalisation of findings.

The data was collected using the following techniques among others:

- Desk research: collection and qualitative analysis of texts and documents
- Fieldwork: qualitative interviews
- Fieldwork: focus groups.

#### **3.3.1 Desk research phase**

Desk research served as the background to the fieldwork and drew on a comprehensive review of up-to-date research on the subject of inclusive education, in particular, with respect to the role of teachers and the competences needed to support inclusiveness, as well as EU and national policy and legislative documents. In this way it provided input for the development of the field study and the selection of participants.

The desk research was carried out between July and September 2009 but was also closely interconnected with the subsequent field research. Due to the intense activity in the field of education and inclusive education in Serbia during the period from September to December 2009, the researchers were often directed by the participants to new relevant sources of information concerning new documents that were being developed while the fieldwork was underway. The desk research covered three thematic areas:

- Context analysis
- Policies and practices for pre-service teacher preparation
- Policies and practices for in-service teacher education and continuing professional development

The context analysis explains the overall policy and legislative environment affecting teacher preparation and inclusive education. It focuses on the education system, human and minority rights and inclusion and exclusion in both education and society as a whole.

The analysis of policies and practices for pre-service teacher preparation provides information on the legislation and regulation governing pre-service teacher preparation programmes. It focuses on the organisation and management of pre-service programmes, programme design, the acquisition of the competences needed for inclusive education in the course of obtaining a formal degree in teaching, arrangements for trainee mentoring during teacher practice, the recruitment process, professional standards and the promotion of teachers.

The analysis of policies and practices for in-service teacher education and continuing professional development evaluates the general standing of the teaching profession in the country, including the regulatory framework, the recruitment process, professional standards, and the promotion process. It also reports on the availability of in-service development practice programmes relevant to the development of the competences required for inclusive education, the practices, and the proportion of programmes focusing on inclusive education. It provides information on course providers, programme content and, when available, on the profile and number of participants in such programmes to date. The application procedures for these programmes and other forms of in-service development are also reviewed together with the incentives that exist to motivate teachers to develop their competence by taking part in in-service programmes in general and programmes focusing on inclusive education practices in particular.

The desk research included a critical review of many different primary and secondary sources. The materials reviewed include, but are not limited to, the following: relevant legislative or sub-legal documents; national/government strategies focusing on inclusion or education, with particular focus on teacher training and the role of teachers; policies and regulation relating to teachers; catalogues and any similar descriptions of in-service programmes; and any other relevant analysis done by other organisations or individuals (i.e. secondary sources).

### **3.3.2. Field research phase**

Field research is at the heart of this study. It provided an opportunity to discuss the current programmes and trends in the pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers for inclusive education with primary and secondary teachers, teacher educators, school principals and support staff, parents, policy makers, local government representatives and NGO activists. It also allowed researchers to discuss the barriers to, and needs and expectations of, inclusive education in Serbia, particularly with regard to teacher preparation. A variety of tools were used to gather information from diverse target groups in order to achieve the intended outcome.

- The three key target groups were teacher educators and trainers in pre-service and in-service programmes, teachers and parents and community members. The secondary target groups were school principals, school support personnel (pedagogues, psychologists, etc), local government representatives, system-level policy decision makers, student teachers and the representatives of NGOs and donors (who also provide opportunities for inclusive education training and opportunities for teaching and learning from experience in pilot inclusive education programmes).
- The focus groups held with teachers experienced in inclusive education covered a variety of issues relevant to inclusive education, specifically the participants' perceptions of the competences needed for inclusive education, their views on the effectiveness of preparation for inclusive practices in education (pre-service and in-service) and the application of inclusive practices (the kind of things an inclusive teacher does in and out of the classroom) and their beliefs about their students knowledge, learning and educability.
- The selection of participants for the focus groups and interviews was based on the following criteria: relevance of the respondent's position/status, the researcher's previous professional contacts with the interviewee, the interviewee's expertise and/or visible results in inclusive education (e.g. a teacher's long and worthy experience in teaching pupils with special and additional needs, a school director's or psychologist's interest and intrinsic motivation for improving inclusive culture in schools, participation in inclusion-oriented programmes and projects, students' voluntary work or activities in the field of inclusive education, etc). If the first-choice interviewees were not available, researchers asked people to recommend some of their colleagues. In some cases researchers also used contacts recommended by the Centre for Education Policy or the ETF.
- The convenience sample relying on the professional contacts of the researchers was used for two reasons: firstly, because of the short time available in the study for conducting interviews (so participants willing to be interviewed at a certain time and with no delay were sought); and secondly, because researchers were looking for the most open, sincere and trustworthy respondents among people who had information and experience with efforts to promote inclusive education in Serbia.

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 to assess the importance of teacher beliefs in shaping practice and conduct. The focus groups with teachers were especially rich, since the participants had a strong need to speak about their profession, to explain their views, to share their feelings and thoughts and to reflect on the way they teach and conduct their classes.

The focus groups with parents and community members allowed these stakeholders to express their views on the concept of inclusive education. The rationale for the inclusion of these groups was the fact that they may offer support or exert pressure in favour of or against inclusion (e.g. parents demanding that their child does not sit beside or share a classroom with a Roma child or community members expressing anger that the stairs in their local school prevents a local child with cerebral palsy from attending the school with the result that the child has to attend a residential special school 200 km away).

The focus groups with parents were organised with the support of the professional contacts of the researchers within schools. Since the researchers were in a way recommended to the parents by a particular person from the school, these focus groups were conducted in an open atmosphere. Parents were motivated to discuss all topics and felt free to make known their views, attitudes, criticisms and praise.

The field research was complemented by an e-survey targeting teacher trainers working in in-service programmes and teacher educators involved in teacher training programmes for the preparation of class teachers and subject teachers. The survey was designed both to ascertain whether competences for inclusive education occupy a specific area in teacher training programmes and to investigate the degree of mainstreaming in the programmes, the degree of mainstreaming of inclusion issues throughout the programmes, the effectiveness of existing teacher training programmes in fostering inclusive education practices and, in the view of the respondents, the competences teachers considered necessary for inclusive education.

There was a fairly poor rate of response to the survey (see section 3.4). Nevertheless, some information relevant to the development of pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes was collected from teacher educators, teachers and student teachers.

Except for 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 email. Selected individuals were targeted to provide information and their views on the relevance of teacher competences in ensuring inclusive education practices. These participants also provided insights into how they perceived their own role in ensuring the development of teacher competences for inclusive education, in supporting teacher training in inclusive practices and in developing ways of further enhancing teacher competences in inclusive education.

School principals and school support personnel were interviewed to discuss how they perceived their roles in supporting the development of competences for inclusion and inclusive practices among teaching staff. Local government representatives were interviewed to gain insight into the issues relevant to inclusive education at the local level. They were asked to explain what means of support they could/could not provide for the development of inclusive education and what role they assigned to teachers in the implementation of inclusive education in their area. The system-level policy decision makers are key stakeholders in the process of ensuring the adoption of national policies on inclusive education and situating the role of teachers and teacher competences within such policies. They were therefore interviewed to discuss the existence or non-existence of such policies, desired policies in that area and the means for implementing such policies. The students were e-surveyed to discuss their views on, beliefs about, and attitudes to, inclusive education and the need for competences related to inclusive education in their preparation and training as future teachers. NGOs and donors were interviewed to learn about their views on the current provision of teacher education for inclusive education, but more importantly to find out what they did to support the development of inclusive competences and practices in teachers through both formal courses and experiential learning in the context of pilot programmes.

### **3.4. Participants**

A purposive sampling approach was used to select the respondents with a view to identifying information-rich individuals from relevant stakeholder groups and ensuring a variety of perspectives. Three focus groups were conducted with teachers, three with parents and community representatives, and three with representatives of local authorities in Belgrade and Novi Sad. Interviews were conducted with eight school principals and school psychologists, five teacher educators, eight higher-level policy makers, five representatives of NGOs, and five in-service teacher trainers. The focus groups were conducted in three elementary schools, as follows: (1) a city centre school in Novi Sad (in the province of Vojvodina) with an active approach towards inclusive education and where classes are taught in both Serbian and Hungarian; (2) a very large urban school in Belgrade with 1,700 students in the first four grades, including 10 Roma students who come from a nearby deprived settlement; (3) a small school in Rušanj, a rural suburb of Belgrade, with 200 students of whom 40% are

mostly domicile Roma. A further 27 teachers, 4 teacher educators and 4 student teachers responded to the survey.

## 4. OVERALL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION CONTEXT

### 4.1. Context

This description of the overall context in which teacher education and in-service professional development take place is based on interviews with decision makers and a review of strategy documents and legislation.

The major strategic aim of education policy in Serbia—quality education for all—was defined in the policy documents developed during the overall reform of the education system initiated during the period 2001–2004 (Kovács-Cerović and Levkov, 2002; Kovács-Cerović et al. 2004). The aim of this reform was the decentralisation, democratisation, and professionalisation of the education system, with particular emphasis on structure, management, financing, the teaching force, curricula, text books and assessment. Based as it is on extensive local consultation and public debate, the publication *Quality Education for All. A Way Toward a Developed Society* (Kovács-Cerović and Levkov, 2002) provides a comprehensive vision for the Serbian education system and the strategy for its development, with decentralisation and democratisation as the key principles for the reform of the education system.

On the basis of those documents and extensive local consultations, a Law on the Foundations of the Education System (covering all pre-university levels) was passed in 2003. This act decentralised management and established new institutional structures, professional requirements for teachers, new outcome-oriented curriculum regulations and a system for assessment and evaluation. After governmental changes, which included extensive changes within the Ministry of Education, amendments to the 2003 law were passed in 2004, which, in many respects, reincorporated solutions from the 1980s and 1990s and derogated the sub-legal acts developed between 2001 and 2003 (Kovács-Cerović, 2006, p. 488). This situation lasted until the summer of 2008, when a new government took office and the Ministry of Education renewed its efforts to modernise the educational system. The Law on the Foundations of the Education System (hereafter, LoF) passed in August 2009 introduced new provisions promoting equal rights and access to education for every Serbian citizen, quality and efficiency of education, equal access to all levels of education, and horizontal mobility throughout the education system in Serbia (Information on the LoF, Ministry of Education, 2009).

The common elements in the strategic documents adopted by the government in the field of education are the following three priorities:

1. Educational equity and justice
2. Quality and competitiveness within the European framework
3. Efficiency of the education system (Inclusive Education Roadmap. National Report of the Republic of Serbia, 2008, p. 53, hereafter Inclusive Education, 2008).

Both education strategies and other relevant strategies referring to education emphasise and focus on the following aspects: social inclusion through the contribution of education to reducing poverty (Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003, p. 139); the protection of minority rights through the contribution of education to the social inclusion of Roma (Strategy for the Improvement of Roma Education, 2003, p. 16); improvement of the status of the Roma population through education, employment, housing and health (Common Action Plan for the Advancement of Roma Education, 2005); the rights of especially vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities and those belonging to socially marginalised groups (National Action Plan for Children, 2004, p. 7); universal access to primary education (National Millennium Development Goals, 2006); non-discrimination through respect for people with disabilities and the right of all disabled people to adequate education and

equal opportunities for learning and development in the local community (Strategy for Improving the Position of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Serbia 2007-2015, 2006).

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, everyone has the right to primary and secondary education, with free compulsory primary education and free but not compulsory secondary education (Article 71).

Discrimination is prohibited by the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, which includes special provisions on discrimination in the fields of education and professional development (Article 19). The legislative framework explicitly supports inclusive education in Serbia by way of the Law Preventing Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, the Law on Higher Education (2005) and the LoF (2009). While the Law on Higher Education recognises the right of persons with disabilities to higher education ('students with disabilities' is the official term used in the legislation), only a small percentage of people with disabilities attend Serbian universities. Although there is no official data available, according to the president of the Serbian Association of Students with Disabilities, there are about 300 students with disabilities at the University of Belgrade, enrolled mostly in the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation and the Faculty of Social Sciences, about 90 students with disabilities at the University of Novi Sad and about 50 students with disabilities at the University of Niš. Even though some faculties have taken steps to improve wheelchair access to their buildings (e.g. at the University of Niš), physical obstacles remain one of the fundamental reasons for the small number of enrolled students with disabilities (Inclusive Education, 2008, p. 47). There are no students with disabilities at teacher education faculties because of an entrance examination that requires, among other things, physical, musical and verbal abilities. It should be noted that, like other signatories of the European Cultural Convention, Serbia is a member of the Bologna Process and its higher education institutions are obliged under the Law on Higher Education and by accreditation standards and guidelines to organise their programmes around learning outcomes expressed in terms of competences. The extent of reform of higher education curricula varies from field to field; this is also true in the field of teacher education where some institutions have gone further in the reform and have included specific subjects on inclusive education (e.g. in Jagodina), whereas in other cases the structure has remained unchanged (e.g. several programmes for subject teachers at the University of Belgrade) (further discussed in section 5.1).

Therefore, the legislative framework of the educational system in Serbia supports social inclusion, human rights and non-discrimination. The following features have been defined as basic principles:

- Accessibility of education
- The right to acquire an education under equal conditions
- Education harmonised with a person's development level and age
- The right to choose the language of instruction.

The LoF comprises articles that define and prohibit discrimination in education (Articles 44 and 161). According to the LoF, members of ethnic and national minorities have the right to education in their mother tongue at all levels of education (Article 9). Regarding the education of the Roma, a national minority with an extremely low educational level, the Ministry of Education has implemented numerous affirmative action measures to promote the enrolment of Roma into all levels of education:

- In primary schools, by allowing admission without any identity documents.

- In secondary schools, through lower admission standards and scholarships based on social criteria for students who enrolled in secondary education (project run by the province of Vojvodina and supported by the Roma Education Fund 2007).
- Enrolment in state universities: 32 students in 2003/2004, 53 students in 2004/2005, 67 students in 2005/2006, 104 students in 2006/2007 and 107 students in 2007/2008, in the Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Philology and other technical faculties (Inclusive Education, 2008, pp. 68-69). Recent data show further increases in the number of Roma students enrolled through affirmative action: 168 students in the 2008/2009 academic year rising to 220 in 2009/2010 and representing an increase of 30%. All students referred to the Ministry of Education by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and the National Roma Council were enrolled in the school of their choice (Report for the Enhanced Permanent Dialogue of the EC and Serbia, Ministry of Education, 2009).
- Provision of Roma pedagogical assistants (23 hired in December 2008, and 26 new in September 2009) and setting inclusive education as one of the priorities in teacher education (Report for the Enhanced Permanent Dialogue of the EC and Serbia, Ministry of Education, 2009).

With respect to the future, it is foreseen that the education of Roma children will be supported by specific activities financed with IPA funding as of 2010. The project Education for All-Increasing Availability and Quality of Education for Children from Marginalised Groups (worth 3 million EUR) should lead to the recruitment of approximately 120 additional assistants and community liaison coordinators and the establishment of support for the education of children from marginalised groups. Inclusion of vulnerable groups in education is to be supported from 2010 by a project entitled Delivery of Integrated Local Services financed by a World Bank loan of 12 million EUR; support will take the form of training courses, manuals, school grants and a new system for financing education based on a per-capita formula that includes specific parameters designed to target socially disadvantaged groups and areas. The provisions of the new legislation relating to fostering inclusion and preventing discrimination, and also the provisions targeting the quality of education, address the problem of facilitating access and preventing early dropouts in the education system (Report for the Enhanced Permanent Dialogue of the EC and Serbia, Ministry of Education, 2009).

The LoF clearly defines inclusion as a principle and introduces a number of important provisions that ought to help overcome some of the existing obstacles to inclusive education, especially those related to equity in and access to the regular education system.

The LoF introduces the right to education and access to education without discrimination or segregation for students from marginalised and vulnerable social groups and those with developmental disabilities. This is defined in Article 6, which states that “persons with mental and physical disabilities have the right to education in the regular education system.” The school needs to create individual education plans for both gifted students with exceptional abilities and for students who, due to social vulnerability, have mental or physical disabilities or who, for other reasons, require additional support in education.

An individual education plan includes an individual curriculum by subject and individualised educational practices in an approach tailored to the type of disability or need. The Ministry of Education has the power to promulgate more detailed instructions for the application and evaluation of individual education plans (Article 77). If the additional support requires funding, a formal written request is sent to the doctor at the competent healthcare centre to assess the need for additional educational, healthcare or social support, with the final

decision taken by an interdepartmental committee. The sub-legal act specifying the detailed conditions for assessing the need for the provision of additional educational, health or social support to students as well as the composition and procedures of the interdepartmental committee will be approved jointly by the ministers responsible for healthcare, social policy and education by the end of 2009 (Article 98). Articles 77 and 98 will come into force in the 2010/2011 school year.

The LoF enables improvement of the inclusion level for marginalised groups by changing the enrolment procedure that prevented affirmative action and essentially discriminated against specific groups of students. The new legislation implements the following changes:

- Students from marginalised social groups can enrol without a residence document and other required documentation. This is of particular importance for Roma children who often live in unregistered settlements. To date this practice has been regulated by a sub-legal act.
- Results of pre-school psychological tests are no longer a precondition for enrolment in regular primary schools. Students already enrolled in school can be tested in their mother tongue by the school's psychologist and pedagogues using the standard procedures and instruments recommended by the competent institute or authorised professional association. If it is not possible for the testing to be conducted in a student's mother tongue, the school shall provide an interpreter recommended by the national council of the pertinent ethnic minority (Article 98);
- A child older than seven and a half years of age who, due to illness or other reasons, is not yet enrolled in the first year of primary school can enrol in the first or appropriate year on the basis of a knowledge assessment (Article 98).

Moreover, schools should organise additional language courses for refugees and internally displaced persons who do not speak the language of instruction (Article 100). Another provision that contributes to equity of education is the introduction of 24 classes of direct instruction for students, comprising 20 classes of regular teaching and 4 classes of additional teaching and other forms of work (Article 136). This should make available sufficient time for students who need additional teacher support.

With respect to other levels of education, the LoF provides solutions for disadvantaged students by introducing new measures aimed at increasing the equity of education and removing existing barriers. These include the prolongation of the free preparatory pre-school programme from six to nine months and free secondary education for irregular students, as well as the right to assessment in the student's mother tongue and the right to education in the foreign language (Ministry of Education, Information on the LoF).

Under the new LoF, institutions can employ pedagogical assistants and teaching assistants. A pedagogical assistant provides advice and additional educational support to students according to their needs, cooperates with parents, and also cooperates with relevant institutions, organisations, associations and local authorities (Article 117). The LoF also foresees the possibility that the personal assistants of students with developmental disabilities will attend their student's classes (Ministry of Education, Information on the LoF, 2009).

Another form of systemic support to teachers of students with special needs in class is based on the document entitled Professional Instruction About Forming Classes and Financing in Primary and Secondary Schools, which was sent to school principals by the Ministry of Education in July 2009. According to this document, the total number of students in the class can be reduced by two students if there is one student with mild developmental difficulties and by three students if there is one student with severe developmental difficulties; in any one class there may not be more than two students with developmental difficulties.

By stipulating that students with exceptional capabilities must be identified, monitored, and stimulated (Article 3), the LoF also recognises the importance of the education of gifted and talented students by way of the principle that talented and gifted students, irrespective of their material conditions, must have access to the relevant educational levels and institutions.

With respect to the efficiency of the system, the LoF includes new provisions related to financing. A new system is to be introduced gradually starting from the 2011/2012 school year and will be applied to all institutions from 2014/2015. The level of financing of educational institutions will be determined on the basis of the actual cost per student for following the educational curriculum (the per-capita formula). The actual cost of education per student will be determined on the basis of the number and type of students educated in the institution, applying an additional corrective coefficient for specific characteristics relating to geographic area, socioeconomic groups, levels and types of education, necessary number of employees, etc (Article 155). To check the suitability and efficiency of the new concept, the new method of determining financing will be piloted in a limited number of educational institutions (Information on the LoF, 2009).

The new legislation (LoF, 2009) strongly supports inclusion in Serbia, primarily by removing legislative barriers raised by previous laws, which did not oblige regular primary and secondary schools or pre-school institutions to enrol students with developmental disabilities or from other vulnerable groups.

The final provisions of the LoF, which define the transition from the current to the future situation, repealed certain articles of the previous law that allowed regular schools to remain completely inaccessible and discriminatory with respect to the right of children to education. One of the repealed articles is Article 85 of the Law on Primary Education (2002), according to which the decision about the type of school a child can attend can be made on the basis of the type and degree of development disability. Parents can appeal the decision and the appeal is decided by the relevant municipal or city authority. The parent is ultimately obliged to enrol the child in the school determined by said authority.

Provisions included in the new LoF are supported by various projects financed by the Ministry of Education. The 2009 Information on Development Programme describes the projects that address the needs identified with respect to strengthening institutional capacities, the professional development of employees, violence prevention and exercise of the right to education. The aim of the Information on Development Programmes report is to inform educational institutions about the basic ideas of development projects and on how to participate in such projects.

Furthermore, a number of projects focused on inclusive education are currently being implemented in Serbia. The Inclusive Education project provides full support to schools which, given the composition of their student population, need to implement an inclusive approach. Such support may include the following: training of teachers for the preparation of individual curricula, standards and education outcomes; development of active learning methods; and development of appropriate methods for assessment, grading, etc.

The World Bank-supported Delivery of Integrated Local Services project includes financial support amounting to 4.9 million EUR for educational institutions that present development projects and innovations aimed at increasing the quality and equity of education in line with the new legislation. The funds will be allocated for specific priorities and objectives, one of which is inclusive education. All primary and secondary schools and pre-school institutions will be able to submit their proposals over a period of two school years starting in 2010. It is foreseen that around 800 institutions will get funds for their projects. A special group of projects targeting the improvement of the education of Roma and students from other vulnerable groups includes the following initiatives: the Common Action Plan for the Advancement of Roma Education in Serbia; Education for

All-Increasing Availability and Quality of Education for Children from Marginalised Groups; and Support for the Education of Minorities and the Roma.

As can be seen from the above, the context in which education in general and teacher education in particular is taking place is going through significant changes. The new LoF provides an outstanding opportunity to put forward excellent ideas on how to put inclusive education into practice. In this regard, the analysis presented is like a snapshot of a moving target. Given the timeline of the implementation of the LoF, the fieldwork revealed the perceptions of various stakeholders in the previous system and not the implementation of the LoF. However, the analysis does include some data on how the new LoF is perceived and may also provide useful information that will contribute to a more successful implementation of the LoF at all levels.

## 4.2. Teacher competences for inclusive education

The analysis of teacher competences for inclusive education is based on the data collected during the field research phase. It includes a comparison between the data collected and the reference framework of teacher competences for inclusive education shown in Appendix 3. This reference framework was not shown to the focus group participants in order to ensure the authenticity of their perceptions.

According to our field research, teachers consider the following attitudes and competences (defined in section 3.1.2) to be necessary for inclusive education (illustrative remarks by respondents are provided in parentheses):

- Positive attitudes towards inclusion, tolerance, and understanding of differences (“It is important that teachers are capable of recognising differences, but not to single out students, rather to find ways to include and harmonise them, to lead and stimulate all students.”<sup>37</sup>)
- Knowledge and understanding of the developmental possibilities and characteristics of students
- Capacity to create individual education plans
- Knowledge and understanding of individualisation
- Teamwork capacity as a method of achieving cooperation among students (“Each child should have a role, a task that s/he is able to perform and which is important for the group activity.”)
- Innovative teaching methodologies (“Teachers should work without ready-made recipes, be free to research and try various methods and techniques in order to, through experience, find out what is the best.”)
- Capacity to create a pleasant and positive atmosphere in the class or group
- Belief that every child can learn, higher expectations for students and continuous research into efficient methods of cooperation with parents.

It is particularly interesting to note the opinion of some teachers and in-service teacher trainers that teacher confidence in their own competences is most important for inclusion and enables them to find a way that each child can be taught. As one teacher put it: “There is no magic wand in the area of either pedagogy or

<sup>37</sup> All quoted statements are taken from interviews with individuals from one of the stakeholder groups described in section 3.4. All respondents were informed at the outset that their opinions as expressed during the interview would be kept confidential.

defectology, nor does any defectologist know anything more than me if I really want to work with such students and to commit to them. If there were a magic wand, students from special schools would continue their life normally, but, this is not the case. For me, it is a challenge that a student with special needs is with me, I am proud that he is my student.” The same respondent, when referring to the knowledge necessary for teachers to work with students with special needs, stated that this includes “pedagogical, psychological and methodological knowledge, rather than knowledge of defectology. And to know that this is their competence, diagnosis alone will not improve their lives.” An in-service teacher trainer stated as follows: “It is necessary to gain knowledge about the most distinctive forms of behaviour that arouse fear in all of us: aggression, stubbornness, dependence, insufficient sensory sensitivities, difficulties in intellectual activity and learning, autistic children, etc. By receiving professional advice on the situation and confirmation from experts that ‘this is a part of life’ they also know how to work with special need students.”

If we go beyond the negligible differences in formulation, the competences identified by the respondents resonate to a certain extent with the reference framework of the competences for inclusion defined on the basis of the project entitled Tuning Teacher Education in the Western Balkans and also European documents such as the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications and Improving Competences in the 21st century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools (see Appendix 3). However, we should point out that there are also some gaps. For example, one gap between the respondents' perceptions of relevant competences and the reference framework is the ability to work effectively with support staff and to use different forms of assessment. Moreover, the participants did not formulate any statements suggesting that they recognise that a teacher's own assumptions influence his/her teaching or that knowledge is value-laden. These gaps probably reflect the teacher's lack of appropriate education since training was not focused on the development of reflective practices. They may also be due to the wider context of education in general, and not just teacher education, as this is characterised by a strong objectivist normative approach with limited space and time for critical reflection and discussion. Since this study did not include class observation, we do not know to what extent the competences identified are truly visible in practice and, vice versa, to what extent the competences that the respondents did not mention are actually visible in practice. However, as can be seen from one of the illustrative quotes above, respondents do recognise the need for teachers to do research on their own to gain a better understanding of the contribution of education to social inclusion.

### 4.3 Barriers to inclusion

The key barriers to inclusive education encountered so far in the implementation of the aforementioned principles of access, equity and quality and which have been identified in prior studies, include:

- Barriers associated with previous legislation and systemic institutional barriers (placement of school-age Roma children in special schools and schools for adult education, rigid bureaucratic enrolment procedures, etc)
- Lack of municipal plans for establishing desegregated school enrolment policies (Roma Education Fund, 2007)
- Socio-psychological barriers (discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes in the context of both society and the school)
- Poverty, given that access to education, progress and completion of studies depend largely on whether a family can afford the cost of schooling for children.

Apart from these factors, there are numerous barriers in practices and in the overall educational system, which include, but are not limited to, the following: a network of preschools and schools that is unevenly distributed geographically; the physical inaccessibility of pre-schools and schools to students with developmental disabilities; insufficient and inadequate equipment in pre-schools and schools; an overdeveloped network of special schools; a lack of horizontal and vertical mobility between the regular and special educational system; selective implementation of the right to education in the nearest educational institution in the case of students with developmental disabilities; a lack of cooperation between educational institutions, social care institutions, healthcare services and local government bodies; curricula and working methods that are not adapted to the education of students with developmental disabilities; a lack or delay in early stimulation and inclusion in pre-school education (Inclusive Education, 2008, p. 48-49).

Barriers to quality education for Roma children are as follows:

- The tendency of teachers to have lower expectations for Roma students, which effectively leads to lower schooling outcomes, for example:
  - ◊ Many Roma students who repeat the first few grades also drop out of school
  - ◊ Only 30% of Roma students who enrol in the first grade actually finish primary school (data from 2002/2003)
  - ◊ At the national level the repeat rate is 1% while the same rate for Roma students in the first three grades of primary school is 11% (data from 2005)
- The absence of bilingual education in Romani and the lack of bilingual techniques in early childhood education
- Inadequate quality of teaching (frontal, teacher-oriented approach)
- Teacher prejudices towards Roma
- Limited and superficial cooperation between schools and parents
- Various forms of discrimination by school administration, teachers, other students and non-Roma parents (Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma, 2007, pp. 535-553)
- Rigid and factual curricula that are not conducive to the mastering of transferable knowledge and learning skills. (Kovács-Cerović, 2006)

The serious structural obstacles that impede access by Roma children to pre-school and primary education are as follows:

- The limited capacities of pre-school institutions
- The preference for enrolling pre-school children whose parents are both employed
- Legal and administrative requirements for enrolment
- Insensitive or discriminatory assessment procedures, which often result in Roma students being inappropriately placed in special schools
- The hidden costs associated with education

- The fact that the cost of schooling children in special schools is lower than in mainstream schools
- The isolation of Roma residential settlements and geographical distances to the nearest school (Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma, 2007, pp. 535-553).

Based on our fieldwork, we were able to identify many other serious barriers to inclusion. In the opinion of our respondents, the following are barriers to inclusion (illustrative quotes by respondents are provided in parentheses):

- A general lack of teacher preparation for inclusion due to numerous systemic weaknesses in their initial studies (“Teachers have prejudices towards students with special needs and fear that they will not be efficient and successful enough in teaching them.”)
- A lack of teacher motivation for working with special needs students in regular schools because inclusion is perceived to be an obligation forced on the school by law (“Inclusion must be based on the voluntary principle, it is not right that someone ‘gives you’ a child with special needs, and you have to work with them; if it were so simple, studies in the Faculty of Defectology would not last for 4 years...”)
- Numerous weaknesses in the in-service training system, which also does not compensate for the shortcomings of pre-service teacher education
- Inability to select personnel (“In line with the collective agreement entered into by the government with trade unions, principals have to employ teachers made redundant by other schools,” an adverse selection process because “the teachers who have not been distinguished by their work and capabilities are made redundant first.”)
- A lack of special evaluation of teachers working with special needs students and of mechanisms for rewarding those working well in practice (“Teachers differ in their approach to students and their commitment and the school principal has got no mechanism to separate these things even symbolically. Until this is done, we will not have sufficiently motivated people.”).

In the opinion of our interviewees, the school system in Serbia is not ready for inclusion in either a technical sense or in terms of human resources. The issue of inclusion appears to be reduced to an issue of integration since it is difficult to change the existing situation. Thus, the system needs to be flexible enough to allow this to happen over the long term or, in the words of one of our respondents, an in-service teacher trainer: “Insufficient external assessment, an undeveloped system of self-evaluation, and inadequately managed schools and kindergartens are not appropriate for the implementation of the inclusive education principle.”

When reflecting on our respondents’ opinions concerning the implementation of the new LoF, we must bear in mind that the interviews took place just one month after the new legislation came into force so that some of the views expressed are a consequence of the fact that, at that time, the respondents had rather limited information about all the mechanisms planned by the Ministry of Education for supporting inclusive education.

The opinions of some of our respondents can be seen as a starting point that reflects how some people feel when faced with the reconstruction of the whole educational system they are part of; their perspective is coloured by the worries and uncertainties associated with the situation. In our opinion, some of the views expressed are based on fear and worry about change in general and feelings of insecurity about certain new working duties that seem too distant or unknown. Nevertheless, some of these fears do seem to reflect deep-rooted prejudices against students who do not belong to a mainstream category. On the one hand, such

beliefs represent the ultimate obstacle for inclusive education because change may depend on a fundamental shift in culture and beliefs. On the other hand, the existence of such beliefs is facilitated precisely by the lack of inclusive education at all levels.

#### **4.4. Policies for teacher preparation and development**

Under the provisions of the LoF, teachers are employed by the school. Teachers are recruited by way of a public call for applications announced by the school principal, who then selects the successful applicants. When making decisions about the selection of teachers, once applicants have passed a psychological and medical check-up the principal also takes into account the opinion of the management body. The assessment of whether an applicant has the appropriate psychological and physical capabilities for working with students is performed by the relevant employment department in accordance with standardised procedures (Article 130). There are no provisions stipulating particular quotas for teachers from specific backgrounds. While the salaries, social security contributions and health insurance of all school staff are paid by the government, the employment of teachers is regulated by the Law on Employment and they do not have the civil service status enjoyed by teachers in some other European countries. Teacher salaries decreased dramatically during the 1990s, but since then have increased on a monthly basis and are now above average in terms of public sector pay in Serbia. Teaching in the school system is seen as offering basic security, a low workload and long holidays but not economic or career prospects (Kovács-Cerović, 2006, p. 497). Today, the starting salary for a teacher without a license is about 420 EUR and this increases when the teacher passes state examinations, obtains a license or gains work experience. However, it should be noted that the cost of living differs significantly throughout Serbia and that, in relative terms, the teaching profession offers a slightly higher standard of living in areas with lower living costs but is actually lower than average in areas where living costs are higher.

With regard to the qualifications required for teaching, under the provisions of the LoF a teacher must have a university degree acquired through either a second-level cycle of university studies (graduate studies or master degree) under the provisions of the Law on Higher Education (in force since 2005) or a first-level degree of at least four years as per the regulation that governed higher education until 2005. In exceptional cases, a teacher can be a person with lower level studies comprising three years of higher education.

The LoF stipulates that, as of the 2012/2013 school year, all newly employed teachers must have training in psychological, pedagogical and methodological disciplines from an institute of higher education and must have acquired 30 credits during their studies or after graduation, and six points of internship work at an institution, as per Article 8 of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). These new provisions should improve teacher education and prevent other professionals (for example, engineers and doctors) from teaching in secondary, vocational or other schools as subject teachers without any psychological, pedagogical and methodological preparation.

Teachers in primary and secondary schools are free to use their own teaching methods in the classroom. They are expected to apply innovative methods in their classes (and thus make them more appealing to students) and to use different teaching methods involving greater student participation and interaction (LoF, Articles 69, 70 and 71). Furthermore, teachers are required to accept the high educational and motivational value of active and interactive (cooperative) methods of teaching and learning. When drawing up curricula, they should ensure that, throughout all units, at least one third of instruction is organised around the use of such methods (Rulebook for Seventh Grade Primary School Curriculum for 2009/2010, 2009).

However, it should be noted that these are the provisions of the new LoF and it is, therefore, unsurprising that some parents' perception of teaching methods is quite different. For example, a parent in an urban school stated as follows: "Many things are done according to a pattern, student individuality is not taken into consideration, the same things are done with everyone, no attention is paid to students with difficulties, the material is taught quickly because there is no time, teachers are incapable of getting involved and stimulating the students' interest in learning." This parent's comment highlights the importance of preparing teachers to implement new approaches to teaching and learning. Even the best legislation will not be fully effective or achieve the improvement sought in practice if the teachers are inadequately prepared and lack the support they need to help them change their teaching methods. An effective implementation of any education strategy requires a combination of top-down and bottom-up measures.

Teaching plans and curricula for each year of primary and secondary school, including primary and secondary schools for students with disabilities, are applied throughout Serbia and are defined in special rulebooks published by the Ministry of Education. Teachers are allowed and obliged to adapt the curricula for students who, due to social deprivation, developmental disabilities, physical disabilities and other reasons, need additional support in education; in other words schools should draw up individual education plans, devise individual programmes and use individualised teaching methods. More detailed instructions for defining the right to individual education plans, as well as the application and evaluation of such plans are issued by the Ministry of Education (LoF, Article 77). Article 171 of the LoF states that the Ministry shall issue bylaws within two years of the enactment of this law, which will include instructions for individual education plans. Once again, these are the provisions of the new LoF and do not correspond yet to actual practice in the field.

Teachers are also free to choose the textbooks they believe will help them most in covering the curriculum (LoF, Article 94). Since 2003, the Serbian market for textbooks and teaching materials has been liberalised. A number of publishers (as many as 27) have been approved by the Ministry of Education and licensed to publish teaching materials. New legislation concerning the publication of textbooks was passed in late August 2009. In addition, free textbooks were provided for first grade students in primary education in 2009/2010.

Another innovation introduced by the LoF is related to the system of quality assurance for education institutions using the following mechanisms: self-evaluation (carried out by professional bodies, parent councils, student parliaments and the management body); external evaluation (professional and pedagogic supervision carried out by the Ministry of Education and the Institute for the Evaluation of Education Quality); development planning for education institutions which takes the form of a strategic plan for a three-to-five year period developed by the management body (Article 48). The self-evaluation process is carried out by education institutions over several years. Currently, the Rulebook for School Evaluation and Self-Evaluation (Ministry of Education, 2005) is used for this purpose. This rulebook, the result of a four-year cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Education and the British Council, was piloted in 100 primary, secondary vocational schools and grammar schools.

Self-evaluation is defined as a process that should involve as many actors as possible, including teachers, school management, parents, local community representatives, local authorities, etc. It is implemented through open discussion and analysis of school activity, analysis of outcomes, the selection of key fields and areas to be evaluated, the planning of self-evaluation, situation assessment and evaluation, and the processing and analysis of the results obtained. On the basis of the analysis of the situation, the school draws up a development and action plan for eliminating any weaknesses identified. Evaluation should cover the following key areas: school curriculum and the annual school activity programme, teaching and learning, student achievement, student support, ethos, resources, management, organisation and quality assurance. Quality levels in specific key areas are assessed by collecting information, opinions and attitudes on school activity

from diverse actors and by observing individual segments of school life and reviewing documentation. The rulebook provides the instruments for assessing the situation in each individual area. In our opinion, while the rulebook does not refer directly to inclusive education, the manner in which it specifies that certain key areas should be evaluated does represent clear support for inclusive education in the school.

The aim of the programme entitled Development of Standards and Instruments for External Evaluation of the Quality of Education Institution Activity, implemented by the Institute for the Evaluation of Education Quality in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and supported by the Netherlands, is to develop a quality framework for monitoring the activity of educational institutions, including standards, indicators and norms for external evaluation and the external evaluation procedure. Quality standards are developed for each of the key areas already defined in the self-evaluation procedure. Once standards for external evaluation have been defined, evaluation instruments and procedures for expert pedagogical supervision are developed. The standards, indicators and evaluation instruments are being developed by a group of education advisors who are receiving specific training and who, once the project is completed, will be entrusted with the task of passing on the knowledge they have acquired to their colleagues. After the standards and instruments have been tested empirically in a number of schools, the proposal for the external evaluation system will be submitted for adoption to the National Education Council by the end of 2010 (Information on Development Programmes, 2009).

Another issue is that of student assessment. In the first grade of primary education, student assessment and final marks are descriptive; in all other grades of primary and secondary education assessment is descriptive and numerical except when otherwise specified by the Ministry of Education. A descriptive grade contains feedback for both students and parents and provides clear instruction about how the student's work can be improved (LoF, Article 108). During the school year, assessment is descriptive and numerical and should be based on monitoring the student's achievement according to special achievement standards. The final marks, which are given at midterm and at the end of the school year, are numerical only. Students with developmental disabilities for whom special achievement standards are defined must be assessed in accordance with these adjusted standards (LoF, Article 107). A student with developmental disabilities passes the final exam (after completing eighth grade of primary school or third or fourth grade of secondary school). This exam is adapted to the student's motor and sensory capabilities, i.e. to the conditions required by each specific type of disability (Articles 83, 84, 85 and 86). Revision of the Rulebook for Primary Student Assessment and the Rulebook for Secondary Student Assessment to bring them into line with the LoF provisions for formative assessment has started. The aim of this revision is to complement the numerical marking system previously used to assess students (from a lowest score of 1 to a highest score of 5).

First year enrolment in Serbian universities is based on the results of an entrance exam, a test of abilities and general achievement in secondary education (Law on Higher Education, Articles 23, 25, 28, 82, 117). At teacher education faculties, candidates are tested on their oral, physical and musical abilities as well as their general knowledge of Serbian language and literature. The Faculty of Education in Jagodina (University of Kragujevac) is an exception because it changed the concept of the entrance exam in 2009 to one based on tests of basic literacy, reading comprehension and social competence.

In the last few years, student enrolment for teacher education institutions has not been very competitive and the faculties have enrolled almost all applicants. In 2005/2006, the Faculty of Education in Jagodina and in Užice enrolled 130 of 190 and 150 of 180 applicants, respectively. The exception was the University of Belgrade Teacher Training Faculty, where in 2004/2005 only 140 of the 294 applicants were enrolled. However, during the 2009/1010 school year, the number of applicants increased across the board when 280 of the 605 applicants to the Teacher Training Faculty in Belgrade and 170 of the 398 applicants to the

Faculty of Education in Jagodina were enrolled. These figures appear to indicate that the level of interest in teaching as a profession is increasing and that it is becoming more attractive.

The LoF also introduced changes relating to teacher standards. One of the responsibilities of the National Education Council is to establish standards of knowledge and professional development for teachers (Article 14). Standards are drawn up by the Centre for the Professional Development of Education Employees. This centre is part of the Institute for the Improvement of Education, which in turn is obliged to pass standards on to the Ministry of Education (Article 21). In May 2009, a commission was formed within the Centre for the Professional Development of Education Employees to define and draft a proposal for teaching standards in Serbia. The proposal was duly completed and submitted to public debate, but the National Education Council has stated that, in their opinion, the proposed standards are too conservative. Therefore, at the present time, there are still no official teacher standards.

Traditionally, teachers in Serbia did not have any career prospect other than leaving the teaching profession or engaging in managerial tasks as school principals or becoming advisors or inspectors in the Ministry of Education. The 2003 legislation changed this by introducing career advancement through four steps, with salary increases linked to the progression: advisors, mentors, instructors and senior advisors. The first two career levels are achieved within the context of the school through a set of internally assessed criteria, including evidence of participation in a required number of accredited teacher education programmes, engagement in developing innovative teaching practices and evidence of high-quality teaching as assessed by peers. The two highest levels are achieved through an external assessment process based on a request from the school and an appraisal conducted by external experts and Ministry of Education officials, but also requires participation in in-service training (as an instructor or training programme developer) and favourable performance as judged by a set of quality indicators (Kovács-Cerović, 2006, p. 500).

Teachers, educators and staff associates, with or without licences, are required to undergo continuous development in order to successfully implement and improve educational work and acquire the competences necessary for their work, in accordance with the general principles of the legislation and to meet educational goals and standards of achievement. According to the LoF, teachers may advance through professional development by obtaining the title of pedagogical advisor, independent pedagogical advisor, higher advisor or senior pedagogical advisor, with a salary increase linked to each higher rank.

The Rulebook for Teacher Professional Development (2004, 2005) establishes decision-making bodies and the procedures for promotion and the achievement of a higher rank in the course of professional development. Each teacher is obliged to attend at least 100 hours of professional development programmes over five years of work in order to be entitled to promotion and to apply for a higher rank. The rulebook defines a lengthy list of conditions for assessing the degree to which educational goals have been achieved compared to the initial situation and working conditions.

According to the LoF, priorities for the professional development of teachers are defined by the Ministry of Education for a three-year period (Article 37). One policy maker informed us that the Ministry of Education plans to organise seminars and trainings aimed at improving the work of primary educators, with the following priorities for the 2010-2013 period: (1) inclusive approach, aimed at the inclusion of children with developmental disabilities, marginalised groups and Roma children; (2) recognition and prevention of discrimination; (3) protection of children against violence, abuse and neglect; (4) identification of, and support for, talented and gifted students through the education system (Priorities 2010-2013, Ministry of Education, 2009).

In conclusion, a number of policies have been put in place and a number of rulebooks relevant to teacher self-evaluation and career progression have been issued, with others in the process of being developed, such as teacher standards and standards for external evaluation of educational institutions. What seems to be missing is the coordination that would ensure coherence between these different sets of standards and indicators being drawn up within different projects and by different institutions. The new legislation introduces provisions that aim to achieve a holistic approach to inclusion by mainstreaming inclusive provisions in different teacher-relevant policies. It may be worth conducting a similar analysis to this one within approximately five years to assess the impact of the changes introduced.

## 5. MAPPING TEACHER PREPARATION FOR INCLUSION

### 5.1. Pre-service education

The system of teacher education in Serbia is fragmented and is different for teachers employed at different levels of the education system.

Pre-school teachers are currently educated for three years in vocational colleges of higher education. Another route is to study at teacher education faculties or faculties of education where the basic programme lasts for four years plus one further year, after which the student receives a master's in preschool teaching.

Primary class teachers (teaching in grades 1 to 4) gain their initial education at one of the five teacher education institutions in Serbia. The study programme offered at these faculties currently involves four years (eight semesters) of basic studies ending with a diploma exam followed by one year of postgraduate studies ending with a master's thesis, in accordance with the ECTS system. Doctoral courses, which involve the preparation of a doctoral dissertation, can be taken only for subject didactics. The curriculum of basic studies varies at the different faculties. However, the coverage of the different curricular areas is typically distributed as follows: teaching subjects as academic disciplines, 35%-40% of the total; subject didactics for teaching subjects, 35%-40%; education sciences, 10%-15%; general subjects, 5%-10%; and teaching practice, 10%-12%. The course usually starts with general subjects and education sciences, with teaching subjects and subject didactics coming later, while teaching practice is spread throughout the curriculum in smaller amounts in the early years but increasing as the course progresses. The main teaching methods are of the traditional academic type, i.e. teacher-oriented. Introducing innovations at the level of teaching methods is allowed but not systematically fostered or required (Kovács-Cerović, 2006). In addition, not only are teaching methods not interactive, but the content of some subjects seems to be out of date and not connected with actual changes in real school life. As illustrated by teacher statements: "The professor working in the faculty retires with the same teaching topics and literature as at the beginning of his career" or "I graduated 20 years ago and, recently, when I took a higher education diploma at the Teacher Training Faculty in Belgrade, I was obliged to sit the same exams based on the same literature for the same professors as 20 years ago. I had to learn the same subject didactics again, in the exactly the same way as before."

The education of subject teachers does not differ between primary and secondary school teachers, except in the case of teachers of vocational subjects. Subject teachers are educated at faculties for the respective academic discipline. The general orientation of the curricula at these faculties is academic and the teaching method is usually traditional lecturing, often even in education sciences courses. Most of the faculties that qualify subject teachers do not require teaching practice and, even if they do, this does not exceed 2%-3% of the total instruction time. Education sciences, if offered, do not occupy more than 6%-8% of study time and are most often offered in the first and second year of study, well before prospective student teachers can assimilate them into a realistic professional self-image. Subject didactics are usually offered at the end of the study programme and are disconnected from education sciences (Kovács-Cerović, 2006).

Vocational subject teachers are professionals educated at faculties specialising in their basic profession, which do not cover core knowledge areas essential to the teaching profession. Thus, graduates of medicine, law, engineering, economics, etc, can become teachers without having mastered any courses on subject didactics, pedagogy or psychology.

Recently, VET subject teachers received training in the teaching methods and curriculum development skills necessary to deliver new models of teaching for newly developed occupational profiles in the mechanical, electrical and civil engineering, agriculture and health VET schools in the Reform of Vocational Education

project financed by the EU Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) programme (Kovács-Cerović, 2006, p. 520).

With respect to inclusive education and VET schools, there is limited information on the number of students with developmental disabilities who are enrolled in any form of secondary education. Regular schools are not adapted to students with developmental disabilities, primarily in terms of physical accessibility. There are special schools that offer one-, two- or three-year training for certain professions. These special schools are affected by a trend also affecting the regular schools: students with developmental disabilities are dropping out of secondary education. The percentage of Roma students enrolling in secondary schools remains very low; in the academic year 2007/08 it was just over 0.6% (Inclusive Education, 2008, p. 45).

Regarding the question of curriculum reforms in teacher education institutions, the Faculties of Education in Sombor and Jagodina initiated a process of internal reform supported and financed by the government of Finland in 2002 (Serbian Teacher Education Project). Within this project, the two faculties have developed a new curriculum for teacher education, have made several study visits to Finnish educational faculties, have dealt with issues of student practice and schools for practice and have developed opportunities for distance learning. The Faculty of Education in Jagodina continued with the reform through the EU TEMPUS project Curriculum Reform in Teacher Education (2007-2009), with the aim of improving student practice by preparing teachers and mentors to lead, monitor and evaluate student internships.

Regarding the question of curriculum orientation towards inclusion, the majority of teacher education institutions do not currently include subjects dealing with inclusive education. Curricula may include some subjects with content intended for the preparation of future teachers for working with students with special needs, but these are mostly oriented towards defectology and is not considered useful for practical work by teachers and students, as illustrated by one student teacher who said only the classification of disabilities and how to diagnose them was learnt, rather than how these students should actually be dealt with. The situation is even worse at the faculties that educate future subject teachers, because their curricula lack the subjects that would provide at least elementary knowledge of teaching and child development principles and have little or no content on inclusive education practices.

Currently, the situation with respect to the preparation of future teachers for working with students with special needs and students who need additional support, as seen through the curricula of the teacher education faculties, is as follows:

- At the Teacher Training Faculty of the University of Belgrade, a subject on methods of working with children with special needs was introduced as mandatory, along with the possibility of students specialising in working with children with special needs as an optional course. However, it appears that this is not sufficient, since, in the words of a teacher educator, “this subject does not prepare teachers for working with either students with development difficulties or with students from socially deprived areas or Roma students.” Another teacher educator said: “It would be good if student teachers had subjects in which they learned about differences and not only from a defectology and medical point of view. The issues of students from other marginalised groups and what to do with them are not taken into consideration. Thus, student teachers are not capable of recognising them as students who need special support and do not know what to do to mitigate their starting position.”
- The Teacher Training Faculty of the University of Kragujevac in Užice offers a course on a methodology for special work with students with minor development disabilities. The goal of this course and of the literature on which it is based is to emphasise the medical model for the education of students with special needs. As one respondent said: “The objective is to introduce students to the legalities of the

development and rehabilitation of persons with various levels of developmental disabilities, to help them acquire a basic knowledge of defectology.” Subject teaching methodologies do not mention the existence of other diversities among students apart from specifying the need to identify gifted students in art subjects.

- The department for pre-school teachers in the same faculty offers a course on working with children with special needs for a minimum of 2 ECTS credits. An introduction to the concept of inclusive education is found in the course on science teaching methods, which includes a topic on the concept of children’s rights.
- The other faculties visited in the course of this study, namely, the Faculties of Sport and Physical Education, Biology, and Chemistry at the University of Belgrade, offer no subjects dealing with inclusive education. Furthermore, based on the bibliography and the amount of practice foreseen, it appears that even the courses that could be seen as the starting point for introducing inclusive education, such as educational psychology, are unsuitable not only for the preparation of subject teachers for the teaching of students with obstacles to learning and social participation, but also for any teachers at all. For example, the Faculty of Biology in Belgrade includes a course in psychology in the programme for biology and chemistry teachers. This course involves two hours of classes per week and allows no time for practice. The literature supplied is extremely general and outdated (mostly from the 1980s or before, e.g. Djordjević’s *Educational Psychology* (1979), Rot’s *Psychology of Personality* (1980), Smiljanić’s *Children’s Psychology* (1982), etc). Indeed, in pedagogy, which is taught in several of the mathematics and natural science courses in Belgrade, there are few topics concerned with inclusive education, such as, for instance, an introduction to the specifics of the education of students with special needs, work with gifted students or an introduction to issues such as lifelong learning, distance learning, inclusive education and functional literacy.

An exception to such non-inclusion-oriented and outdated practices can be found at the Faculty of Education in Jagodina, where a course on working with children with special needs (obligatory in the third year) has a strong orientation towards inclusion, social discourse on special needs and the child-centred approach, covering topics dealing with socioculturally underprivileged students, Roma students and gifted students. It was introduced during the 2008/2009 academic year to replace a course on methodologies for special work with students with minor development disabilities, which had a core medical/defectology orientation. The intercultural education class (an optional subject in the first year) introduced in the same academic year covers the topics of prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination, respecting cultural differences, examples of good intercultural practice in schools, etc. Some content relating to inclusive education and children rights is introduced as part of other subjects in the same faculty: English language (dictionary of inclusion, second year) and English language teaching methods for younger children (fourth year); family pedagogy (education of children with special needs and education of children with behaviour disorders); and education methods in mathematics (methods of working with children gifted in mathematics).

Another exception is the College for Pre-School Teachers in Novi Sad. In a course on the subject of inclusion of children with developmental disabilities, students learn about current initiatives, quality projects and campaigns for raising awareness, as well as about the characteristics of an inclusive community and European and local legislation. The coursework includes study of the literature and other documents, fieldwork and the writing of seminar papers. It fosters a social inclusion model and criticises the currently predominant medical inclusion model. In another introductory course to multicultural education in the same school, students learn about inclusive education from topical documentaries, guest lecturers, short projects involving fieldwork

undertaken in their community to identify the elements for the inclusion of children with development disabilities), practical tasks that give them experience working with Roma students and students with special needs and developmental disabilities and also reflections on and presentation of such experiences.

The Faculties of Philosophy in Novi Sad and Belgrade offer specialised courses for students of psychology or pedagogy at basic, master's, and doctoral level (e.g. teaching and learning with children from vulnerable groups, a doctoral course from the University of Belgrade). The pedagogy course at the Faculty of Mathematics in Belgrade includes topics which introduce students to the specifics of educating students with special needs and working with gifted students. The Faculty of Mathematics at the University of Kragujevac has a course on additional mathematics teaching in primary school specifically for gifted students. The Psychology Department of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade offers a class on the subject of multicultural education.

In the opinion of the students interviewed, the development of competences for inclusion during their studies is likely to occur mostly through contact with an informed and motivated teacher who has positive attitudes towards inclusion, the energy to motivate students and the ability to present them with various information sources, as can be seen from the following quotes by students: "A well prepared teacher who is capable of motivating students to accept new knowledge and to review their attitudes is just as important as the books students learn from" or "The key influence on the students is the teacher educator's attitude towards inclusion."

A specific experience shared with us by young teachers, former students of the Teacher Training Faculty in the University of Belgrade is of particular interest: "During the second year of our studies, we listened to some guest teachers talk about how they taught Roma students. Subsequently, we met the children of Roma nationality of various ages who did not go to school, who cleaned car windshields at traffic lights. We offered them our support to teach them to read and write. By socialising with those children, we experimentally found ways to solve the problems involved in teaching them. Subsequently, we studied the literature, wrote seminar papers and learnt what the activities, approach and relationship with these children are called in theory." This learning process, spontaneously initiated by student teachers themselves, contributed to their experience of diversity. Real experience of diversity, interactions with diverse families, discussion and dialogue are some of the elements that contribute to developing culturally sensitive dispositions (Kidd et al, 2008, pp. 316–329). These students later founded the Open Classroom-A Society for Voluntary Support to Children in Learning, in which, through peer learning, they transferred their knowledge to new students who joined the voluntary activity programme working with special needs students at several primary schools in Belgrade (2005-2007). Though the experience described is a unique contribution to educational inclusion of Roma children, it was unfortunately not a result of the curricular strategy and/or inclusive culture of the Teacher Training Faculty in Belgrade.

The whole project was, above all, the result of serendipity and the initiative of this group of exceptionally talented students, that is, a combination of voluntary activity and mentoring by a single teacher: "The programme lasted while we were studying; it was implemented at three primary schools that were willing to receive us. The Faculty was neither wise enough nor willing to recognise the qualities and possibilities of such a learning method in our studies and the programme was soon closed when we all graduated and left the Faculty."

All of the above changes are very significant because they indicate slight improvements in the inclusive discourse within the curriculum of university institutions. However, they are far from being sufficient and satisfactory. Similar views are also reflected in the replies of our interviewees from all target groups and from the e-survey: the quality of preparation for inclusion at teacher training faculties is exceptionally poor.

Obstacles to improving basic studies, that is, the lack of initial studies, are classified in categories below and illustrated with respondent quotes.

### **NEGATIVE ATTITUDES OF TEACHER EDUCATORS**

“TEACHER EDUCATORS HAVE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. THERE IS A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT INCLUSION AMONGST TEACHERS AT TEACHER TRAINING FACULTIES AND AN IGNORANCE OF THE EFFECTS OF THE INCLUSIVE APPROACH.” (NGO REPRESENTATIVE).

“TEACHERS HAVE NO IDEA ABOUT [INCLUSION] AND THEY HAVE QUITE MARKED PREJUDICES ABOUT ALL GROUPS OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. STUDENTS WITH SENSORY AND INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTIES HAVE THEIR SPECIAL SCHOOLS, THEREFORE, TEACHERS AT THE FACULTY DO NOT CARE ABOUT [INCLUSION], THEY ARE IN CHARGE OF TEACHING THEIR STUDENTS ABOUT MAINSTREAM STUDENTS.” (TEACHER EDUCATOR)

“TEACHERS THINK THAT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IS NOT A FIELD FOR PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENT DISORDERS, NOT UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS IS AN ISSUE OF RIGHTS RATHER THAN OF CAPABILITY.” (NGO REPRESENTATIVE)

Besides, teachers lack information on changes in the legal framework and lack general knowledge of inclusion.

“THE RESISTANCE OF TEACHER EDUCATORS TO TRAINING IS POSSIBLE, AND THERE IS ALSO THE RESISTANCE TO THOSE WHO WOULD TRAIN THEM, ESPECIALLY IF THESE ARE PROFESSIONALS WITH LOWER ACADEMIC DEGREES, PRACTITIONERS WITH EXPERIENCE.” (SYSTEM-LEVEL DECISION MAKER)

“THE OBSTACLES ARE THE PREJUDICES AND INCOMPETENCES OF TEACHER EDUCATORS.” (E-SURVEYED SCHOOL TEACHER)

“THE TEACHERS WHO EDUCATE FUTURE TEACHERS ARE NOT THEMSELVES EDUCATED IN THIS RESPECT, EXCEPT FOR SOME INDIVIDUALS. FUTURE TEACHERS HAVE NOT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE TRAINED FOR INSTRUCTION IN INCLUSIVE CLASSES.” (E-SURVEYED STUDENT TEACHER)

As can be seen, these perceptions can be found within almost all relevant groups of stakeholders; they thus represent a strong message about the current problems and, consequently, indicate areas for future improvement.

### **INSUFFICIENT PRACTICE**

There are few practical classes and practical work takes place at institutions where staff are not trained in inclusive practices. This situation further intensifies student prejudices and results in adverse attitudes to inclusion. Students absorb the prejudices of the teachers whose classes they take. For example:

“STUDENTS WITH MORE COMPLEX DEVELOPMENT DISABILITIES CANNOT BE HELPED MUCH AND, TO A LARGE DEGREE, THEY HAMPER OTHER STUDENTS, THE WORK OF TEACHERS AND THE PROGRESS OF THE WHOLE GROUP.” (STUDENT TEACHER)

“MUCH, MUCH MORE PRACTICE IS NEEDED THROUGH INSTRUCTION IN VARIOUS SCHOOLS AND CLASSES WITH A TEACHER MENTOR.” (SCHOOL TEACHER)

Teaching practice does not include volunteering, not even when student teachers are intrinsically motivated to volunteer to work with special needs students. Employees at voluntary organisations were unwilling to support this initiative and there was also no support from the faculty. According to a student teacher: “They did not let us volunteer at the Zvečanska Street Centre for Neglected Children. Although they have problems because they lack staff, they treated us with suspicion. We wanted to help the children and help the staff, but they did not let us do it because this is not normal practice at the centre.”

## CURRICULUM

The curriculum problems cited by the respondents included the following (respondent quotes in parentheses):

- The lack of content on inclusion in teaching methodology courses (“The curriculum does not reflect real changes in school and society as a whole.”)
- The medical and defectology discourse of some courses
- The existence of ‘special’ subjects (“Everything was directed towards special psychologies, special pedagogies and special teaching methods. This was violence, it turned into violence. Because teaching someone to segregate and discriminate against someone else, this is violence. There should be no special subjects, because from the very beginning, because of their title, these subjects make student teachers differentiate between students, segregate them and discriminate against them.”)
- The lack of methodological, psychological and pedagogical focus in the faculties where future subject teachers are educated
- The few classes in pedagogical and psychological subjects at teacher education faculties and teacher departments
- The lack of content about inclusive education in the faculties where future subject teachers are educated
- The lack of content regarding the teaching of children from marginalised groups and socially and culturally deprived communities (“Teachers don’t know how to work with children who are not mainstream because at the faculty they are taught that children are a single category. They are taught that there are no differences. The result of such teacher education is that they fail to differentiate between the concepts of being equal and being the same and they therefore disregard the idea that ‘we are not the same, but we should be equal.’ Therefore, it’s not unusual that teachers are afraid of diversity.”)
- Subjects that would give the students the practical skills and capacities they need to work with certain categories of children with special needs (sign language, Braille, speech therapy exercises, etc)

Our respondents identified the following possibilities for improving studies and ensuring better preparation for inclusive education:

- **Improving the classical teaching system.** The system (lectures and accompanying exercises) could be improved through a variety of means including guest lectures and cooperation with experts who work directly with disabled students, meetings on the topic of inclusion, ensuring cooperation with teachers who have had positive experiences, analysis of examples of good practice, acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to develop individual education plans, presentation of video recordings of lessons from inclusive classes in regular schools, recordings of activities and teaching methods used in special schools, cooperation with special schools, cooperation with the NGO sector and cooperation with seminar leaders.
- **Setting up inclusive teams.** Using an interdisciplinary approach based on teams of teachers from various scientific fields who are interested in inclusion could be a first step in developing the culture and practice of inclusion in faculties, especially in view of the fact that research indicates that interdisciplinary teaming in faculties results in improvements in curriculum quality, with faculty members

reporting benefits to the integrated curriculum, a greater emphasis on inclusion and diversity and a curriculum that builds expectations for inclusive services (Miller and Stayton, 2006, pp. 56-68).

- **Changes in practices.** These could include the following: introducing more hours of obligatory practical classes (as suggested by a school teacher in the e-survey); practical knowledge acquisition in inclusive classes and groups at centres for neglected children, welfare centres and institutions providing care to children with disabilities; ensuring cooperation between teachers in the field and teacher educators; providing assistance to education groups, classes and various institutions and associations, including mentoring and written reports; volunteering for inclusive educational groups and classes in the role of pedagogical assistant; creating model schools; and training in the organisation of extracurricular activities (organising free activities and achieving cooperation with parents).
- **Changes in curricula.** According to the replies of the interviewees advocating medical discourse, the curriculum should include more classes on special psychology, the teaching methods used in special schools and special courses on defectology. According to another view—in this case advocating social discourse—changes should include the improvement of subject methodologies and the introduction of course content about inclusion into all or most subjects (methodological, pedagogical-psychological and general subjects), including the development of individual education plans. There is also a third group of opinions, according to which it is necessary to include optional modules starting from the first year of studies to foster greater competence in the skills needed to work with special needs students.

As can be seen, a number of recommendations for future action came from the respondents themselves. Overall recommendations are addressed in section 6.

## 5.2 In-service training

In-service teacher training is obligatory in Serbia since 2003 under the provisions of the LoF. According to the Rulebook for Teacher Professional Development (2005), teachers are obliged to complete at least 100 hours (over five years) of public tender-based accredited professional education programmes chosen from the catalogue of the Institute for the Improvement of Education. Teachers are obliged to participate in 60 hours from the list of obligatory programmes and in up to 40 hours from the list of elective programmes.

The LoF introduced a number of innovations relating to professional development, including the definition of professional development as a priority for a three-year period. Another innovation was that the law requires school boards in every educational institution to draw up a plan for the professional development of teachers. In addition, the LoF provides for the possibility of the local community establishing a centre for the professional development of teachers (Article 37) and stipulates that the licence of a teacher who does not participate in professional development programmes can be suspended. It also established a plan for monitoring the effects of professional development (Ministry of Education, Information on the LoF, 2009).

According to the report on Information on Development Programmes, the aim of the Ministry of Education is to establish a comprehensive system of professional development for teachers and thus to fully regulate and standardise this area of education and make continuous professional development accessible. In 2002, the Ministry of Education started working towards those goals with the technical and financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (Information on Development Programmes, 2009).

INSET programmes are accredited through the prescribed procedure described on the official Institute for the Improvement of Education website. They have been accredited since 2003 through an annual procedure in accordance with the aforementioned rulebook. A catalogue provides information on the competition, the

accreditation procedure, the list of accreditation board members (80 experts and 32 Institute for the Improvement of Education employees) and the programme beneficiaries and a summary of the content of the different programmes.

INSET programme providers can be academic institutions (faculties and research institutes), NGOs, the Ministry of Education, teacher associations, schools, teachers, preschool teachers or individuals (supported by an appropriate institution). INSET programmes are accredited by the Institute for the Improvement of Education's independent professional committee, which evaluates the programmes using a specially developed methodology and in accordance with established criteria. On this basis, INSET programmes are accredited or refused. To meet the required criteria, a programme's elements must be mutually interconnected and adjusted and the programme must contribute to improving educational practices. The conditions for successful implementation of a programme are defined, but the conditions do not oblige the provider to follow up on the subsequent implementation of the knowledge and skills acquired during the programme by the participants or to analyse the results of the application of the programme on the basis of the written reports of participants. It could be concluded that the criteria are easy for the providers to fulfil and that there are consequently many applicants and accredited programmes.

Teachers earn a certificate when they participate in INSET programmes. This document can be submitted with their application for a licence or for promotion. The LoF allows teachers to hold a permanent licence (which may be revoked if the holder violates LoF regulations or suspended if the teacher fails to participate in the 100 hours of in-service training required over a five-year period). However, in our opinion, perhaps a more rigorous solution would be the introduction of licence renewal after five years of teaching, under the hypothesis that such a system would contribute to the professionalisation of teachers.

The costs of participating in INSET programmes are covered by the budget allocated to municipalities for education, by the national budget in the case of INSET programmes of national importance, by international donor agencies or by the schools or teachers themselves.

Teachers can choose any programme from the catalogue in accordance with their interests and professional development plans, while the school director and governing board prioritise requests and secure funding for the school's priority areas (Kovács-Cerović, 2006, p. 510).

This freedom to choose any programme does result in occasional abuse, as some teachers choose programmes on the basis of duration or other irrelevant criteria. As one school psychologist stated: "It is not rare to see subject teachers choose programmes that have nothing to do with their subject. For example, in my school, a teacher of mathematics and another teacher attended a seminar on performing corrective gymnastics at school because they were friends and they wanted to go together, to whatever programme."

There are three inclusion-relevant sections in the catalogue referring to children with special needs, national minorities and gifted children. A review of the offering over the last three school years shows that the number of accredited training programmes for educators in the sections on special needs and national minorities has increased. An analysis of the catalogue for the 2009/2010 school year provides the following data: out of the 840 programmes on offer, 5.1% (43 programmes) were in the special needs section, 2.3% (20 programmes) were in the national minorities section and 0.6% (5 programmes) dealt with the topic of working with students gifted in mathematics. It is reasonable to believe that all of the nearly 200 programmes in the pre-school education and upbringing section are promoting values of quality education for all, even if they do not mention terms like 'special needs', 'gifted' or 'minority' in their titles. It is important to note that many of the programmes in sections other than special needs may also touch lightly on inclusive education.

The competences covered in the 2009/2010 catalogue as defined by the stated goals for the 43 programmes listed in the special needs section are as follows: effective learning and functional thinking by all students; working with gifted students; knowledge of minimal cerebral dysfunction, dyslexia, dysphasia and epilepsy; consequences and support activities relating to attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder; understanding students with learning difficulties and developing the skills and abilities to support them; the new level of competence needed for the new role of the teacher in inclusive surroundings; Belgrade's re-educative method; specific adolescent behavioural disorders; school and staff efficiency in inclusive education; understanding dysgraphia and dyscalculia; understanding the inclusive educational model; sensitisation, acceptance and integration of students with special needs; needs assessment and developing individual support plans and individual education plans for children with special needs; developing an open curriculum and democratisation of the institution; sensitisation of teachers and professional school staff to achieve acceptance of all students (with and without disabilities); permanently changing the inclusive culture, policy and practice of the school; preparation, planning, implementation and evaluation of the school's inclusive programme; using information technology in the education of children with special needs; mentorship using information technology to support the education of gifted students; identifying students with special needs; competences relating to the functional association of special and regular schools through a service centre for special schools; multilevel teaching of the Serbian language and literature in accordance with Bloom's learning taxonomy; skills in treating behavioural disorders; school competences for education for all for students with developmental difficulties from marginalised and vulnerable groups; skill in identifying individual differences and the causes of learning failures; improvement of the educational environment and support for gifted students; use of rhythm and music to enhance the development of students with special needs; special education teachers in regular schools; and identifying and supporting gifted students.

The competences in the catalogue for 2009/2010 as defined in the goals cited for the 20 programmes listed in national minorities section are as follows: mother tongue communication skills and teaching; use of Slovak language textbooks in minority and non-minority settings; enhancement of anti-bias and diversity-accepting attitudes; enhancement of the inter- and multicultural capacities of the school; mother-tongue teaching competence in Hungarian; understanding the new textbook concept and the general teaching competences in Hungarian; sensitivity to the needs of minority and marginalised children and families; competences relating to language use and acceptance of the languages of others in a multicultural setting; school team capacities of Roma assistants and teachers to include Roma children at the school; Romani language and literature subject teaching competences; enhancement of learning conditions, social participation and equity; competences relating to the inclusion of marginalised (Roma) children; and empowerment of anti-discriminatory capacities.

The programmes in other sections also offer communication competences and interactive teaching techniques. The pre-school education and upbringing section includes a group of eight programmes that deal with cooperation with parents (catalogue for 2009/2010, pp. 401-404), which are all closely linked to the development of an inclusive community within the school. This section covers a number of valuable goals relating to the accommodation of individual needs.

The beneficiaries of programmes targeting specific groups are mostly students with special needs. There are ten programmes for gifted students out of a total of 840 in the 2009/2010 catalogue. Aspects of working with Roma students and other ethnic minorities (Hungarian, Slovak and Romanian) are covered by 20 programmes (2.3%). Programmes dealing with Roma children address a number of educational issues: education for social justice; education for overcoming prejudices; development of tolerance and appreciation of diversity; advancement of educational practice based on a child-centred methodology and on interactive teaching methods and an individualised approach to teaching; educational support for Roma students in school and the methodology of remedial classes as a form of compensatory education.

Apart from these accredited programmes, since 2001 the Ministry of Education has organised numerous specific awareness-raising seminars for participants from pre-school, elementary and secondary schools in the special and regular education system. The main topics were children with special needs and the development of an inclusive approach to education. The programme comprised a series of seminars on the subject of the education of children with special needs and the new school. Although the seminars were not obligatory, they were attended by a few thousand participants (Inclusive Education, 2008).

A teacher can participate in programme implementation with the support of a school or personally on a private basis. Besides the requirements for licensing and promotion, during the school year a teacher can take three days off work to participate in training programmes. There are no special incentives for teachers to choose programmes relevant to inclusion. During the 2008/2009 school year, 49,330 teachers participated in 1,501 programmes, with an average of 32.85 participants per training group; 0.24% (116 participants) attended programmes in the national minorities section and 9.46% (4,669 participants) attended programmes in the special needs section (Database of Completed In-Service Teacher Training Programmes for 2008).

According to trainers, in the course of the INSET programme, the training structure is of special significance for the development of the inclusive competences of participants. For example, a good anti-bias training first states the problem and raises participant awareness that discrimination exists. In the second phase, the topic is the importance of developing empathy towards those suffering discrimination and the importance of providing them with opportunities to talk about their experiences. The third part deals with developing a network of the allies who would provide assistance to the discriminated person.

Inclusive competences are also fostered by influencing teacher attitudes, by external evaluation (including mentoring and monitoring) and by participation in interactions with the representatives of parents or the members of a target community or group. The majority of the interviewees agreed that horizontal or peer learning is the most effective method of learning for the teachers in INSET programmes.

In-service teacher trainers cite the following programme topics as specifically relevant to the development of inclusive competences: developing an individual education plan; tolerance, diversity and respect for differences; prejudices and stereotypes; monitoring student progress; teacher activity evaluation; interaction with parents; the legal framework of inclusion; programmes for parent support, peer-support and parent groups; social preparation of students; human and children's rights; cooperative learning; interactive teaching; teacher teamwork in schools and kindergartens. These topics broadly reflect the competences trainers identified as crucial for inclusive education (see section 4.2)

In-service teacher trainers, NGO representatives and school directors (who either took part in focus groups or were interviewed) identified the following INSET programmes as especially useful for the development of inclusion competences (respondent comments in parentheses):

- Support to Teachers in Developing Individual Education Plans, a programme developed by the NGO Velikimali (programmes "that encourage teachers in inclusive practice" and "that deal with creating individual education plans")
- Neither Black nor White, a programme created by the NGO Centre for Interactive Pedagogy ("provides equal chances in education and supports creating an inclusive atmosphere in schools related to teaching techniques that should be applied during classes, but with a special focus on minorities.")
- Team Work at School ("Methods of interconnecting the content of various school subjects by applying interdisciplinary approach in practice.")

- Reading and Writing to Critical Thinking (“Practical instruction about how to apply different and new teaching methods.”)
- Roma Children and School, a programme created by the NGO Inclusion Support Network (“Deals with overcoming prejudices towards Roma children, with special emphasis on perceiving and understanding children’s basic psychological needs.”)
- Active Learning, a programme created by the Institute for Psychology (“Obtaining practical knowledge and skills for making student active during classes by going through set of processes and activities in the similar way that students will do.”)

Our interviewees gave the following examples of projects which contributed to inclusive education: Index of Inclusion (Institute for the Evaluation of Education Quality and Save the Children), Inclusion of Roma Pupils at secondary schools in the province of Vojvodina (Provincial Secretariat and the Roma Education Fund), Inclusion Policy to Practice (Serbian Association of Teachers and the Ministry of Education), Most Inclusive School Competition (Fund for an Open Society), and Guide for Inclusive Education (Fund for an Open Society).

The best examples of good practice at regular schools given by the interviewees include:

- Sonja Marinković primary school (Novi Sad), who has long experience in the development of inclusive education and inreaching out to relevant actors, i.e. parents, professionals, representatives of local authorities
- Jovan Popović primary school (Inđija), which has for years been active in supporting visually impaired students
- Milan Petrović special needs school (Novi Sad), which is developing a resource centre to support the professional development of employees at regular schools
- The Svetozar Markovic grammar school (Novi Sad), which has an exceptionally high percentage of gifted students and students with development disabilities
- The Isidora Sekulić and Vasa Živković primary schools (Pančevo), where teachers have carried out inclusive educational practice for many years and developed their own INSET programmes.

The interviewees also had a number of criticisms of the accreditation system for the INSET programmes and the entire teacher professional development system, illustrated by the following comment: “The whole system of professional education has got many faults, it remains the obligation of schools, but the system does not provide much to everyone, money is the problem.” The most frequent objections advanced by the interviewees (illustrative comments are in parentheses) include:

- The insufficient duration of the programme
- The high number of accredited programmes that do not limit the number of teachers participating in a particular course (the catalogue includes programmes accredited for 1,000 participants)
- The lack of external evaluation and monitoring, i.e. the fact that application of the contents acquired during the programme is not obligatory (“Programme implementation should be monitored, as money is paid to cover participation in programmes but the state does not know what it gets in return. This has become a money-laundering racket because there is no control.”)

- Defects in the composition of accreditation commissions (“There are no people with actual experience in the commissions, there should be some representatives from target groups as commission members.”)
- Incompetence of commission members, which results in certain quality programmes being denied accreditation (“There are certainly some good programmes that are not accredited, our programme has been rejected with the explanation that we are not professional. There is nobody to complain to, the procedure is such that a complaint may be sent to nobody, you get the same answer as the first one.”)

In addition to the criticisms regarding in-service teacher training, we must also note the opinions of some of our respondents regarding how such training could be improved. Although these opinions are offered as desirable solutions for improving the in-service preparation of teachers for inclusive education, it seems that they are actually pointing in the direction of separating education professionals into groups that know how to deal with special needs students and groups that do not. Solutions include (illustrative respondent comments in parentheses):

- The introduction of specialisation or postgraduate studies, for teachers who wish to specialise in teaching students with special educational needs, after completion of initial studies at teacher education faculties and after one year of practical experience in teaching special needs students (“The argument behind this suggestion is that the process of professional development must not be based only on developing positive attitudes towards inclusion, as each teacher should acquire knowledge about methods of transferring various contents on different levels for different students.”)
- Additional training of subject teachers in the University of Belgrade Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation (directed towards “learning about the specificities of certain difficulties and the methods for teaching such students.”)
- Additional training for teacher educators by professors from the University of Belgrade Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation or defectologists (who “know how to teach these students because they have this kind of teaching practice, know the field that other professionals do not know and the strong and weak aspects of teaching these students.”)
- The introduction of special optional modules (“to complement basic initial studies from the first year of training with a view to improving teacher skills for working with students with special educational needs and additional support needs.”)

The opinions quoted illustrate widespread beliefs among teachers concerning the specific knowledge and skills in defectology (and not attitudes) required for teaching students with barriers to learning and social participation, which they believe a mainstream teacher does not possess. They believe that such skills and knowledge are exclusively the preserve of defectologists, e.g. those trained at the University of Belgrade Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation. These beliefs lie at the roots of teacher perceptions that they are not prepared for inclusion and even fear it. Moreover, these beliefs indicate that teachers are unaware of the fact that the ‘logical division’ (based on the existence of the science of defectology and teacher education studies) between professionals trained for teaching special needs students (defectologists) and professionals trained for teaching ‘normal’ students (‘ordinary’ teachers) is based on the power of labelling, which is “central to the processes involved in social categorisation and stratification. At its core is the belief in the idea of a ‘normal human being’. Labels [name] certain individuals and groups as ‘other’ while conferring on the labellers (frequently professionals such as doctors, psychologists, therapists) the power to name. Thus, the humanitarian

explanation of special education as being concerned with doing good is intrinsically bound up with the creation of deviants and their social exclusion through labelling mechanisms.” (Armstrong, 2003, pp. 72-73).

Instead of using the concept of labelling and all that it entails, it seems that it would be better if teachers would recognise and accept the values of lifelong learning in terms of continuous and active self-involvement in identifying the solutions needed for inclusive practice and discovering different resources for knowledge acquisition. This should not exclude the experience and knowledge of defectologists, since those can be considered a valuable resource, as was shown by the examples given of good practice in some mainstream and special schools in Vojvodina. Those examples cited support from special schools as resource centres, with defectologists working in resource centres and delivering support to mainstream schools as one possible way of fulfilling the teacher needs to acquire competences for inclusive education.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications and recommendations are organised according to stakeholder groups:

- Policy-makers on a national and local level, who may possibly shape the entire context of teacher preparation for inclusive education
- Providers of pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development on the institutional and individual level
- Teachers

### 6.1. Policy makers

#### IMPLICATIONS

The new LoF (2009) has eliminated the legal framework that allowed regular schools to remain inaccessible and pursue discriminatory policies with respect to children's right to education. The LoF set up the mechanisms which should support the inclusion process in the Serbian educational system. Gradual introduction of inclusive education is ensured through the closing and transitional provisions of the law, leaving the period of 2 years for the approval of the necessary regulations that will implement the principles, objectives and tasks set out in the LoF. Through the planning and realisation of a number of programmes and projects, the Ministry of Education is ensuring the mechanisms that may overcome many of the existing obstacles to the inclusion of students who need additional support for learning and social participation, and the necessary support for all relevant actors in the inclusion process within educational system and institutions. To ensure that implementation of the new law is as complete as possible, attention should be paid to inadequate information, lack of security, feelings of incompetence, concern about the achievement of educational objectives and tasks, as well as the existing prejudices of teachers and other stakeholders. These may be seen as the reflection of the beginning of the 'cultural reconstruction' of the whole educational system, which is the basis of the accomplishment of the inclusion process. These changes received little, if any, attention from the media and the wider public. In light of the fear of change found among certain stakeholders identified in the course of this study, it is essential to address the lack of information and proper understanding of this reform process in order to ensure successful implementation of the legal provisions and to ensure adequate monitoring of its effect. The recommendations for future action are addressed to a number of policy-makers at the system level. While they are grouped according to jurisdictions, cooperation between different levels and departments will be essential.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

- Disseminate relevant information (through programmes, projects, training courses, examples of good practice from inclusive schools, etc) to school management, school boards, local school authorities and local public authorities
- Disseminate all relevant information on the LoF and the planned mechanisms for its implementation to higher education institutions responsible for pre-service teacher education in order to support wider and deeper reforms in higher education curricula in the area of teacher education

- Work on creating a positive atmosphere among all stakeholders and partners to facilitate the enforcement of the LoF using public information transmitted by way of the media, professional associations, parent's associations, etc.
- Support the completion of the national standards for teacher competences
- Support the establishment of practice schools (training centres) for supervised teaching practice in cooperation with the INSET system and teacher education institutions.
- Adjust the financing mechanism, especially with respect to transfers to the local governments, in order to ensure adequate access to INSET in all areas.
- Support further research on strategies for overcoming prejudice in relevant stakeholders, on teacher perspectives and perceptions of inclusion and on how competences for inclusion can be effectively developed in future teachers.
- Create special provision for increasing the number of Roma teachers and assistants through affirmative action programmes, special training and ongoing support for their work in schools.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CENTRE FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES (AS PART OF THE INSTITUTE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION)**

- Support the completion of the national standards for teacher competences
- Develop new criteria for the accreditation of in-service programmes, including the obligation for providers to follow up and evaluate implementation of content after programmes have been completed, a restriction on the number of programme participants to a maximum of 30 people and an increase in the duration of programmes (24 hours minimum)
- Re-evaluate the composition of accreditation commissions with a view to ensuring maximum expertise and professionalism, and include teacher representatives in these commissions.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

- Ensure adequate financial support for in-service professional development of teachers
- Support the development and work of local and regional resource centres for teachers
- Support cooperation between schools and healthcare and social services agencies to ensure a holistic approach to inclusive education.

## **6.2 Pre-service and in-service training providers**

### **6.2.1 Pre-service training providers**

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

In general, pre-service courses for teachers display a number of failings and the lack of preparation for inclusion is only one of the aspects reflecting the generally outdated nature of the curriculum and the lack of a link between studies, practice and actual teaching problems. Future teachers mostly acquire theoretical knowledge and receive no instruction as to how to apply such knowledge in practice and they also have little

opportunity to acquire practical experience in classrooms with students. They are trained as if the schools were mono-ethnic institutions with a homogeneous classroom makeup. As a result, many student teachers complete their studies without knowing how to work with real children from different backgrounds or with special educational and additional support needs. Pre-service teacher education institutions should listen to the opinions of their students and teacher trainers to gain a better understanding of their sense of lack of preparation as well as their fears and prejudices regarding non-mainstream children.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

- Gradually establish systematic cooperation with the Ministry of Education and NGOs providing INSET programmes
- Change and supplement the curriculum to introduce more emphasis on content about inclusion in all subject didactics and psychological-pedagogical subjects, exclude subjects with medical discourse and introduce new courses to address the issue of working with students from deprived surroundings
- Improve the possibilities for teaching practice as a continuing process throughout the whole school year, organise and support student volunteering and assistance, including mentoring and report writing, and foster cooperation with schools having good inclusion practices
- Reform entrance examinations by prioritising the assessment of candidate motivation and discuss and adapt intake policy to include student teachers with special needs
- Link curriculum reform with in-service training, especially in terms of the obligatory 36 ECTS credits. This could potentially be organised in cooperation with providers of INSET programmes through mutual recognition of credits
- Introduce participant and overall evaluation, with the national standards that relate to promotion of equity and inclusion in schools as a reference framework.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS**

- Increase cooperation with INSET programme providers, the Ministry of Education and NGOs
- Set up inclusion teams composed of teacher educators with interdisciplinary basic skills who are motivated to introduce inclusion in the curriculum for pre-service teacher education
- Establish cooperation with experienced teachers who have good results in inclusion practices, involve guest experts and professionals with practical knowledge and arrange meetings, discussions and films
- Research student teacher attitudes towards inclusion in terms of their perceptions and practical experiences
- Adopt positive attitudes towards inclusion by undergoing additional training about the basics of inclusive education (legislation, history, terminology, outcomes, etc).

#### **6.2.2 In-service training providers**

##### **IMPLICATIONS**

The combination of a low number of programme hours, a high number of participants (over 30) and the lack of monitoring of the application of acquired knowledge render some INSET programmes ineffective. In-service

teacher trainers and providers should be aware of the opinions of teachers and programme participants who are dissatisfied with the quality of the courses offered, particularly in terms of the poor transfer of knowledge to practice. There is also a lack of support for teachers who opt to improve their competences through INSET and there is often a lack of appropriate incentives.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSET PROVIDERS**

- Enable participant evaluation and evaluate courses against the national standards relating to the promotion of equity and inclusion in schools
- Integrate in-service programmes into systems that link schools, teacher evaluation and self-evaluation
- Establish a system to monitor the application of newly acquired knowledge and skills through reports and assessment of participant production in teaching practice and through exchanges between participants about their experiences
- Apply experiential and peer-learning as efficient learning strategies.
- Include parent representatives and members of the inclusion target group in the programme.

## **6.3 Teachers and schools**

### **IMPLICATIONS**

Owing to many pressures, it seems that teachers do not sufficiently meet the educational needs of all their students. At the same time, they are faced with numerous expectations and are expected to be resistant to prejudice, to consider teaching students with special and additional needs a professional challenge, to be able to use inclusive, individualised and child-centred approaches, to support students in overcoming barriers to learning and participation, to cooperate with other teachers, parents and the community and, finally, to truly accept the values that underlie all of these expectations. Many teachers are probably not capable of, and/or are not motivated to, meet all these expectations so they often feel angry, frustrated and insecure and therefore resist or are non-supportive of the current changes in legislation. Since teachers—as crucial actors in the process of inclusion—ought to enjoy all kinds of additional support and incentives (a need recognised by the teachers themselves), we present these recommendations not only for teachers but also for schools and school principals.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS**

- Understand and accept full responsibility for teaching and for the educational outcomes of every student in their class by deliberately and meticulously developing the role of empathetic ally for every student that experiences barriers to learning and social participation
- Understand and accept the complexity of teaching in the increasing diversity of today's classrooms as an integral part of the chosen career and also the privilege of being a part of the life and upbringing of students
- Recognise the social and cultural dimensions of education by respecting differences, opposing discrimination and inequality and being aware of prejudices

- Build confidence in professional strengths and capabilities instead of relying only on the skills and knowledge of other specialists and be aware of the consequences of the process of labelling that leads to the marginalisation and social exclusion of some children
- Recognise the role of lifelong learning as an integral and necessary part of the profession, as a tool for establishing and developing inclusive practices in the classroom and as a tool for profound insight into a student's potential and the ways to create a positive social and emotional context for learning and social participation
- Develop openness and willingness for new learning by actively experimenting and discovering new teaching methods (including for gifted students) and seek solutions for practical problems in a committed and active way
- Be a critical and autonomous creator of teaching practices based on knowledge and a critical attitude towards curriculum and textbooks
- Recognise the significance and potential of teamwork and peer learning, cooperate with the school principal, school psychologist and/or pedagogue, subject teachers and the local community, accept parents as partners, obtain support from other school staff for the inclusive approach and try to find a colleague to learn from
- Join professional associations linked to inclusive education.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

- Develop plans for in-service professional development in line with school development plans, especially when competences related to inclusive education are particular needed
- Develop sustainable incentive systems for teachers who are especially active in the field of in-service professional development, particularly in the area of inclusive education (e.g. an annual awards for the most inclusive teacher)
- Provide support for teachers in terms of additional support staff at schools (e.g. pedagogues) and a wider network of local services in the area of healthcare and social affairs.

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- University of Niš: <http://www.ni.ac.rs>

## ANNEX 1 | GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Pre-service teacher education.* Education that teacher candidates are requested to undergo in order to qualify for employment in teaching, including both programmes specifically designed for future teachers and programmes in which students study a disciplinary area that is an equivalent of a school subject.

*In-service teacher training.* Education and training activities engaged in by primary and secondary school teachers and heads, following their initial professional certification, and intended mainly or exclusively to improve their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can educate students more effectively.

*Pre-school education.* Education in pre-school institutions or schools that precede primary education and serves as a preparation for mainstream education.

*Primary education.* Education in primary schools, including a lower cycle in which classes are taught in all subject areas by a class teacher, and an upper cycle in which different teachers teach different subject areas.

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

*Teacher.* General term for those qualified to teach at any level of school, including pre-school teachers, primary class 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 education and who provides training for practising teachers in primary and secondary schools.

*Student teacher.* A student studying at a pre-service institution that prepares primary class or subject teachers and academic and vocational secondary school teachers.

*Probation teacher.* A teacher who is qualified academically but who does not yet have enough teaching practice to be granted a full license to teach.

*Mentor teacher.* A teacher who is qualified, promoted or assigned to monitor student teachers when they visit schools for practical experience.

*Additional support needs.* The need of children and young people for extra support in order to be able to benefit from school education at any time and for any reason (e. g., very able students, students whose education is disrupted by illness or by being a refugee, students with a chaotic home life, bilingual learners, etc).

*Special education needs.* The needs of students 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 | SERBIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The educational system in Serbia has four levels.

1. **Pre-school**  
Pre-school education accommodates children aged between 3 and 7 in nurseries (ages 0-3), pre-primary (ages 3-7) and preparatory pre-school for children in their last pre-school year (ages 6-7). It is voluntary except for the obligatory pre-school (preparatory) programme for 6 year olds, lasting at least six months.
2. **Primary**  
Primary education is mandatory for children from 6.5 or 7 years of age until they turn 16 (when the student repeats grades) for a period of eight years. It is divided into 2 educational cycles as follows: grades 1 to 4 (grade school) and grades 5 to 8 (courses and subjects). Selection is introduced upon enrolment to secondary and tertiary education by way of enrolment exams and/or school grade averages (after the final year of compulsory education students must pass external examinations in order to enrol in secondary school).
3. **Secondary**  
Secondary education is provided through four-year general secondary education (in gymnasiums) and four-year vocational schools. There are two types of vocational schools: four-year courses for both the university and employment tracks and three-year vocational schools that lead exclusively to employment.
4. **Tertiary**  
Tertiary education is provided by higher education institutions, such as universities (including art colleges), academies of applied sciences and vocational education colleges. The Law on Higher Education (2005) introduced the ECTS system as well as accreditation of institutions and programmes for studies at the bachelor, master and doctoral levels.

When it comes to the education of students who belong to vulnerable groups, the situation is rather diverse.

**Children with developmental disabilities** are mainly educated in special schools, but they can be educated in special classes in regular schools or in regular school classes with additional support. Special schools are specialised in the education of students with mental, physical and/or sensory disabilities, and referral to the special school is based on the decision of Commission for the Classification of Children with Disabilities. Development groups in pre-school institutions exclusively include students with disabilities placed there by the commission. There are also developmental groups that include students who have been placed on the basis of a decision made by preschool education staff and not by the commission. Special secondary schools for students with development disabilities educate only students classified as having the same type of disability up to a given level of disability. These decisions are made by the commissions. The Institute for the Improvement of Education reports that there are 74 special schools in Serbia (49 for primary education and 25 for secondary education), which accommodate just over 7,400 students (approximately 5,700 in primary education and 1,700 in secondary education). Separate classes for students with development disabilities attending regular schools exist in 82 primary schools and six secondary schools. There is evidence that 7%-10% of children with development disabilities are entirely outside of the education system (UNICEF, 2001).

**Children belonging to linguistic minorities** are provided, at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels, with overall instruction in Albanian, Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, Ruthenian, or Croatian. Optional mother

tongue instruction is provided in Bulgarian and Romani. This right is guaranteed by several legislative documents, both in the area of human and minority rights and in the area of education.

**Roma children** represent the most disadvantaged and excluded group. Only about 2% of children of the relevant age attend pre-school education and fewer than 40% get even primary education. Between 70% and 90% of Roma children who enrol in primary schools abandon their studies at some point, most of them at the point of transferring from class-based to subject-based instruction. Girls tend to drop out more than boys. Segregation in education is particularly visible in the case of Roma children, who tend to be allocated to separate Roma classes or transferred to special schools for students with intellectual disabilities (there are special schools in which 80% of the students are Roma (UNICEF, 2001)). In adult education, Roma children aged under 15 years are placed in schools for adult learners with an abridged curriculum. Data from the Serbian Living Standards Measurement Survey from 2007 show that over 35% of Roma living in registered settlements have not completed primary education. Given that there is a large, although not accurately determined, population of Roma living outside registered settlements, the percentage of Roma without even primary education is most probably much higher. Within the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Action Plan for the Advancement of Education for the Roma, a number of education measures have focused on affirmative action for enrolment into primary, secondary and tertiary education, the provision of Roma teaching assistants, special projects focusing on the education of adult Roma, etc. However, most of these activities were uncoordinated and have been affected by systemic obstacles, including a lack of proper monitoring of outcomes.

## 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
	Attends to students' cognitive development, and to their social-emotional and moral growth	
<b>Understanding and respect of diversity</b> (gender, socio-economic groups, ability/disability, culture, language, religion, learning styles)	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	
	Recognises that knowledge is value-laden, constructed by the learner and reciprocal	Learns languages
<b>Commitment to values of social inclusion</b>	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	
	Treats all children with respect, affirms their worth and dignity	
	Believes in educability of every child	Conducts research to advance understanding of education's contribution to social inclusion
	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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