

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

## **FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA COUNTRY REPORT**

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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
EFA	Education for All
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EURAC	European Academy Bozen/Bolzano
FOSIM	Foundation of Open Society Institute Macedonia
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
REF	Roma Education Fund
SEE	South Eastern Europe
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WB	World Bank

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted within the European Training Foundation (ETF) regional project on social inclusion through education and training in South Eastern Europe. The present report maps policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in order to analyse the initial training and in-service professional development available to teachers. The study is designed to explore various perspectives of the relevant actors and is built on qualitative data collected through interviews and focus groups, the analysis of documents and information from an online survey.

Legislation, policies and strategies addressing various aspects of social inclusion have been produced in the country over the past decade but there is no overarching policy on inclusive education. Many of the relevant documents are underpinned by the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement that effectively sets a broad agenda for increasing the participation of minorities in local and national governance. This especially concentrates on the ethnic Albanians who constitute more than 25 % of the population and also considers equity for other communities. In the absence of systemic solutions, good practice in teacher preparation and development for inclusive education has been largely the domain of non-governmental organisations and international donors. According to this analysis, the most significant exclusion processes and factors in education are the absence of a clear and generally accepted concept of inclusive education, inadequate academic training, insufficient practical experience, lack of motivation for professional development, physical divisions between students and inappropriate teacher-student ratios for effective work with students from vulnerable groups.

The field research conducted for this study suggests a broad consensus that both pre-service and in-service teacher preparation for inclusive education in the country are generally inadequate. Discussions with teachers revealed a dominant opinion that pre-service education gives them only general knowledge on the content to be transmitted to students, with all other competences (including but not limited to those related to inclusive education) developed more or less independently in the course of their working experience. Overall, current teaching practice in the country remains strongly influenced by out-dated pre-service training models structured around subject teaching and a concept of the average student that does not take diversity into account.

This study further reports unsatisfactory coverage of issues related to inclusion by in-service teacher professional development within the country. In-service training is mainly delivered through a series of projects, many of which are organised by or in collaboration with various NGOs. The project-based approach does not lend itself to a sustainable system. Furthermore, we find that there are uneven levels of in-service training across the country, with less training available to teachers in remote schools. These problems are compounded by a lack of coordination between in-service training providers and educational institutions such as universities and schools, meaning there is no clear definition of the type of development teachers really require.

Given the long national history of multicultural coexistence, on-going ethnic segregation in education and the exclusion of some vulnerable groups from the educational process, there is a profound need for a systemic approach to the issues of inclusive education. This paper asserts that inclusion should be inculcated at the most fundamental level as an overarching philosophy of education in recognition of the right to education itself. A higher level of understanding and cooperation is needed among policy makers and universities for this goal to be achieved. Pre-service teacher education programmes form the most appropriate starting point for systematic introduction of the issue throughout the country and the issue of inclusion should be represented on all curricula.

A number of measures to accelerate progress toward social inclusion through action by system-level decision makers, teacher educators, teachers and others are proposed on the basis of evidence acquired during this study.



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

COUNTRY REPORT FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

## 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

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<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.

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

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



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**

A predominantly qualitative research strategy was adopted throughout the study to answer questions about the relevance of policies and practice, their impacts and unintended effects. The qualitative approach allowed for access to data in the natural setting with the researchers as the key instrument for data collection. Qualitative research is descriptive and concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes. It involved inductive data analysis of participant perspectives, thoughts, assumptions and views expressed in their own words.

Data in this country was gathered through:

- Collection and qualitative analysis of texts and documents collected through desk research
- Focus group discussions
- Individual interviews

#### **3.3.1 Desk Research Phase**

Desk research served as the background to the subsequent field research. It draws on a comprehensive overview of contemporary research in inclusive education, in particular in relation to teacher roles and competences needed to support inclusiveness, EU policy and legislative documents and national documents. It thus provided input to the development of country missions and to the qualitative part of the research.

The desk research covers 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 aims to explain the overall policy and legislative context in which teacher preparation and inclusive education are embedded. It focuses on the system of education, human and minority rights, inclusion and exclusion in education.

The analysis of policies and practices for pre-service teacher preparation aims at providing information on legislation and regulation of pre-service teacher preparation programmes. It focuses on the elements related to competences for inclusive education in the process of obtaining a formal degree in teaching, the organisation and management of pre-service programmes, programme design, arrangements for mentoring of students during school practice, the recruitment process, professional standards and promotion process.

The analysis of policies and practices for in-service teacher education and continuing professional development considers the general standing of the teaching profession in a country including: the recruitment process; professional standards and the promotion process; and the regulation and offer of in-service development practice programmes relevant to the development of teacher competences for inclusive education. It focuses on: description of the practices; the proportion of inclusive education input within each programme; information on course providers, programme content and the profile and number of participants (where available) plus the application procedures for such programmes; and other incentives aimed at encouraging teachers to develop their competence through in-service programmes in general and programmes on inclusive education practices in particular.

The desk research involved a review of various primary documents, although there was some critical use of secondary sources. The materials reviewed in the desk research include: relevant legislative or sub-legal documents; national and government strategies on inclusion or education, with particular focus on the role of teachers and teacher education; policies or regulations related to teachers; catalogues or similar descriptions of in-service programmes; and any other relevant analysis carried out by other organisations or individuals (i.e. secondary sources).

The desk research was undertaken by country team members between July and September 2009. Most of the documents used and analysed in the study were available on the internet. The others were provided in cooperation with the Bureau for the Development of Education.

### **3.3.2 Field Research Phase**

Field research is at the heart of the qualitative research approach used in the study, and this provided researchers with the opportunity to discuss current programmes and trends in pre-service and in-service teacher development for inclusive education with primary and secondary teachers, school principals, NGO activists and teacher educators. It also allowed for dialogue on country-specific needs, the barriers to inclusive education and expectations of it, particularly from the perspective of professional teacher training. The country mission included a variety of target groups and appropriate tools to reach the intended outcome.

The country mission concentrated on reaching three key target groups, namely: teacher educators and trainers in (1) pre-service and (2) in-service programmes; teachers; parents and community members.

The in-field research was complemented by an e-survey which targeted teacher educators in teacher education programmes (preparation programmes for class teachers, subject teachers and in-service teacher trainers). The timing of the e-survey raised an issue as the school year had not started; hence participants were not as involved as they would have been at a later point in the school year.

The teacher educators and trainers were asked about: whether competences for inclusive education occupy a specific area in teacher training programmes; the degree of mainstreaming of inclusion issues throughout the programmes; teacher perception of the effectiveness of existing teacher training programmes in developing inclusive education; respondent perceptions of the competences necessary for inclusive education.

Thus, information relevant to the development of pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes was collected from teacher educators, teachers and student teachers. Where necessary, information-rich individual teacher educators and trainers were interviewed to add in-depth information and to elaborate on issues relevant to teacher education and training. The field research included focus groups of experienced teachers in inclusive education from throughout the country. These focus groups covered a variety of settings and issues relevant to inclusive education and specifically addressed: participant perception of the competences needed for inclusive education; perception of the effectiveness of preparation for inclusive practices in education (pre-service, in-service); application of inclusive practices (the kind of things an inclusive teacher does in and out of the classroom); beliefs about students, knowledge, learning and educability

These focus groups were organised on the premise that teachers with hands-on experience are in a position to evaluate pre-service and in-service training and the importance of teacher beliefs in shaping practice and performance. Participants were chosen for focus groups on the criteria of providing the most diverse sample possible with teachers from various ethnic backgrounds, urban and rural schools, and different parts of the country. Teachers were generally willing to participate in focus group discussions, but there were some bureaucratic difficulties as Ministry and local government approval was sometimes required once principals gave permission for activities in the schools.

Other focus groups with parents and community members discussed the following issues: perceptions of the teacher competences needed for inclusion; the role of teachers in promoting inclusiveness; information on practices and issues involved in cooperation with schools (e.g. student well-being, discipline, school achievement, particular educational needs); how teachers (and their inclusive practices) affect students in particular and society in general; and the extent to which parents and community members can influence decisions made at school level.

The focus groups with parents and community members allowed these stakeholders to elaborate their views on the concept of inclusive education. The rationale for consulting them was that they may be able to provide support or pressure for or against inclusion (e.g. parents demanding that their child should not be educated with Roma children, or members of the community complaining that the stairs at their local school mean a local child with cerebral palsy is forced to attend a residential special school 200km away). It was difficult to involve parents from socially deprived groups, like Roma, or parents from rural areas, who rarely participate in school activities and are more inhibited in this context. The ordinary practice in this situation is to provide incentives for their participation, but this was not a policy adopted in this study.

The secondary target groups for the field research were: school principals and school support services (e.g. pedagogues, psychologists); local government representatives, system level policy decision makers, student teachers; and NGOs and representatives of donors (providing additional training opportunities in inclusive education and opportunities for teaching and experiential learning in pilot inclusive education programmes).

- The student teachers were surveyed in an online e-survey, but the secondary target groups were mainly interviewed either face to face, on the telephone or by email. Selected individuals were targeted to provide information and their views on the relevance of teacher competences in ensuring inclusive education practices. Additionally, they provided insights into how they see their own roles in: ensuring the development of teacher competences for inclusive education; support of teacher training in inclusive practices; and developing means of further enhancing teacher competences for inclusive education. The participation of local government representatives and system level policy makers was hard to secure as they often excused themselves as being unable to participate in research due to pressure of time.

School principals and school support services were interviewed to discuss how they see their roles in supporting teachers in developing competences for inclusion and inclusive practices. Local government representatives were interviewed to provide insights into issues of relevance for inclusive education provided at the local level. They were also asked about any support they provide (or know they are unable to provide) for inclusive education and the role they assign to teachers in implementing inclusive education in their local environment. Meanwhile, system level policy makers are key stakeholders in ensuring national policies on inclusive education and positioning of the role of teachers and teacher competences within such policies. They were thus interviewed to discuss established policies, desired policies in the area, and the means for implementing such policies. The students were e-surveyed to discuss their views, beliefs and dispositions on inclusive education and the need for inclusive education competences in their training as future teachers. NGOs and donors were interviewed on their views of current provision of teacher education for inclusive education in the country, but, more importantly, on the support they provide to help teachers develop inclusive competences and practices, both through formal courses and experiential learning on pilot programmes. Although these respondents were ostensibly the easiest to reach, they also seemed the most cautious and many of them asked for the interviews not to be recorded.

### **3.4. Participants**

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents, targeting information-rich individuals from relevant stakeholder groups and ensuring a variety of perspectives. Four focus groups were conducted with teachers and two with parents and community representatives. Participants came from different ethnic backgrounds and taught students of various ethnicities. Two focus groups with teachers were conducted in Debar, a town in the west of the country with a majority of Albanian students alongside Macedonian, Turkish and Roma communities. Another focus group covered teachers from schools in rural areas west of Skopje, and another, those from the rural areas east of Skopje. A parent focus group was held in Suto Orizari – a Roma settlement in the Skopje area, and another mixed meeting occurred in Debar. There were interviews with local authority representatives; seven with members of school management; 10 with teacher educators; five student teachers; four higher-level policy makers; and six NGO representatives. Participants came from different parts of the country, with various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (most Macedonian and Albanian, and some Turkish and Roma). In addition, 11 teachers, nine teacher educators and 15 student teachers responded to the e-survey.

## 4. OVERALL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

### 4.1 Context

The past decade has seen new legislation, policies and strategies addressing various aspects of social inclusion, but there has been no overarching policy on inclusive education. Inclusion is widely perceived as a very important issue due to the inherent diversity of the country. According to the last Census: 64.2 % of the population in the country are ethnic Macedonian; 25.2 % ethnic Albanian; 3.8 % ethnic Turk; 2.7 % Roma; 1.8 % Serbian; 0.8 % Bosnian and 0.5 % Vlach. Any community constituting 20 % or more of the population of a municipality has the right to all levels of education in their mother tongue or first language. In recent years there has been a significant trend toward increasingly segregated education on ethnic and linguistic lines. This trend is most emphatic in terms of segregation between Macedonian, Albanian and Roma communities. However, in the case of the Roma community, the reasons why all Roma students are placed in the same class are different, as will be discussed later. Annex 2 provides further information on the education system in the country.

In the absence of systemic solutions, several projects for inclusive education are worthy of mention. A co-funding arrangement between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Roma Education Fund, and participating local governments has led to the growth of a project entitled Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Pre-Schools. This has supported the inclusion of Roma children in pre-school education in 20 municipalities since 2005. The UNICEF Lifestart programme also operates at the pre-school education level, and has established Centres for Early Child Development in 20 municipalities since 1997. At the primary education level, the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia (FOSIM) runs a Roma Education Initiative that supports intercultural education in seven primary schools located in three cities, and the larger Equal Educational Opportunities for Romani Children scheme that has provided supplementary instruction and school supplies to approximately 1 700 pupils and teacher training in 10 primary schools in nine municipalities since 2007. Finally, at secondary education level, from 2005 to 2009 FOSIM implemented the Alliance for the Inclusion of Roma in Education that provided financial and school-based mentoring for 657 Roma secondary school students.

These projects are presumably unsustainable in the absence of increased financial commitments from local and state authorities. There has been some improvement in this regard, with participating municipalities providing a higher level of co-financing for Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Pre-Schools and the Ministry of Education for the first time participating in funding the Alliance for the Inclusion of Roma in Education in the 2009-2010 school year. Also, the publication of the policy paper Steps Towards an Integrated Education System by the Ministry of Education and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in October 2009 was potentially significant. This document initiates a government strategy to promote opportunities for interethnic interaction in education through curricular and extra-curricular activities for students receiving instruction in languages of the communities, different than the own language. The paper includes a chapter that promotes in-service teacher training on intercultural education as a way of preparing teachers to address sensitive questions and promote tolerance.

Many of the relevant documents are underpinned by the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement, which effectively sets a broad agenda for increasing the participation of ethnic Albanians in local and national governance and also considers equity for other communities.

Beyond the legislation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, education in general is covered by the 2002 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction, the 2007 National Action Plan for Gender Equality, the 2009

Child Protection Programme, and the 2009 Social Protection Programme. The National Strategy for Poverty Reduction touches on the education issue in three separate chapters and treats inadequate education as both a cause and effect of poverty, and the National Action Plan for Gender Equality calls for textbook reform and measures to reverse the predominance of one gender over another in certain professions. The programmes on child and social protection give less specific mentions to education.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement calls for mother tongue provision of primary and secondary education and state funding for university education in languages spoken by at least 20 % of the population, and the education of minorities is also covered by the 2004 'Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia'. In 2009, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy introduced a conditional cash transfer to improve access to the newly compulsory secondary education for families receiving social assistance. At university level there are ethnic quotas to promote the enrolment of minorities. The education of students with special needs is covered by the 2007 National Strategy on Deinstitutionalisation of the Social Protection System.

The National Strategy for the Development of Education covers the 2005-2015 period and addresses numerous issues of inclusion, including: non-discrimination; improved physical access to schools through provision of transport; increasing participation in education through awareness-raising in ethnic communities; expanding coverage of pre-school education; and extending compulsory primary education from eight to nine years. Implementation of the strategy is now underway and some elements of inclusion foreseen in the legislation are coming on-line, such as: financial support for families receiving social benefits who keep their children in school; the provision of transport for students from outlying areas; and compulsory secondary education. The Programme of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2006-2010 goes a step further, demanding compulsory secondary education and provision of textbooks. Meanwhile, the issues of inclusion and equity (including democracy, non-discrimination, respect for individual differences, cultural diversity and the integration of pupils with special needs) are addressed in a separate chapter of the 2007 Concept of Nine-Year Primary Education. At the secondary level, the Ministry of Education has made provision for elective activities on the themes of Civic Culture (in grammar schools/gymnasiums) and A Culture of Protection, Peace, and Tolerance (in both grammar and vocational schools). The National Action Plan on Education for the Decade of Roma Inclusion emphasises access to scholarships and tutoring for Roma, and also calls for the legal obligation of supplementary instruction to be delivered.

Legislation on inclusion mentions education in general terms in the Constitution, the Law on Child Protection of 2000, and the Law on Social Protection of 2006. The Constitution presents the universal right to education and states that primary education is compulsory and free of charge (Article 44), the Law on Child Protection, meanwhile, concentrates on pre-school education. The Law on Social Protection stipulates that children living outside their biological family due to developmental or behavioural problems will be provided primary and secondary education. Anti-discrimination legislation is currently being prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The 2008 Law to promote and protect the rights of communities that form less than 20% of the population of the country lists primary, secondary and higher education as areas where community rights apply (Article 3) and guarantees members of all communities the right to education in their own language at all levels in accordance with the law (Article 5). In similar fashion, the Law on the use of a language spoken by at least 20% of citizens in the country and in the units of local government (also of 2008) mentions national education as an area where a minority language can be used and provides details of the use of languages at all levels of education (Article 2 and Section 14, respectively).

Provisions on inclusion are also given a place in the legal framework on education. The Law on Primary Education devotes considerable attention to issues of inclusion, including universality, non-discrimination, cultural diversity, minority-language instruction, integrating pupils with special educational needs, supplementary instruction, and free transport for pupils living more than two kilometres from the nearest primary school (or those with special educational needs). The Law on Secondary Education also prohibits discrimination and guarantees minority-language instruction (Articles 3-4), with the 2007 Law on Modification and Amendment of the Law on Secondary Education making secondary education compulsory and free of charge (Article 1). Legislation applying to these levels of education also prohibits the display of religious and political party symbols in schools.

Overall, legislation and policies are developed in a way that increases opportunities to provide for the diverse needs of students. However, the realities of teaching and learning here show a large gap between policy and practice. Within the general education system there are separate public schools or separate classes in public schools for students with disabilities or who are members of linguistic minorities. Children and young people who are not in parental care are educated in separate schools (but not separate classes within existing schools) administered by the state. National legislation also allows for the establishment of private schools, both secular and religious. Although education is one of the areas covered by the ongoing decentralisation process in the country, progress has been uneven to date.

The populations that most frequently suffer exclusion in the education system include children from rural areas (especially members of ethnic minorities and girls), Roma and refugees. Ethnic Albanian and ethnic Turkish girls are particularly vulnerable in rural areas, as they may be taken out of school when they reach adolescence in an attempt to preserve their virginity. This phenomenon can also be observed amongst the Roma, who generally live in urban settings. Although reliable figures are not available, it is likely that Roma from Kosovo<sup>37</sup> also account for most refugees in the country. It is in any case clear that Roma refugee children, most of whom live in the Roma-majority municipality of Šuto Orizari in the capital, frequently attend refugee-only classes, sometimes in separate buildings from non-Roma students.

## 4.2 Teacher competences for inclusive education

Inclusive education seems to be generally understood among education professionals and the wider public in the country as education for students with special needs. This is largely as a result of project activities over past years that spread this perception in the public sphere and the question of teacher competences and teacher training for inclusive education is understood mainly on the basis of this assumption. This perspective is being further strengthened by current projects to provide more inclusive education for students with special needs.

Participants in the discussions made no mention of the wider competences for inclusion stated in the theoretical framework of this study, such as: maintaining high expectations regardless of student background; understanding the social and cultural dimensions of education and the contribution of education to developing cohesive societies; guiding and supporting all learners; working effectively with support staff; recognising how teacher assumptions influence teaching and relationships with various students; and recognising that knowledge is value-laden, constructed by the learner and reciprocal (see Annex 3). The respondents seemed unaware of the factors of exclusion and possible ways of combating them through education. In the opinion of

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<sup>37</sup> As defined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.



the authors, there is great need to raise teacher awareness of the social and cultural dimensions of education and to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own values and competences for inclusion.

Although there is a long history of multicultural life in the country, awareness and discussion of improved inclusive education in a context of social and cultural diversity is somehow overlooked.

The missing concepts include: helping all students develop into fully participating members of society; understanding the factors that create cohesion and exclusion in society; understanding the social and cultural dimensions of education; and understanding the contribution of education to developing cohesive societies. While teachers generally claimed to possess and practice these competences, the discussions overall suggested that these dimensions of inclusion are most often lacking.

Teacher perceptions of whether or not they possess these competences vary, with some teachers confident that they possess and apply these consistently throughout their work. Others were more self-critical:

*"I DO NOT FEEL COMPETENT AND ABLE TO WORK WITH STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, NOR WITH THOSE WITH SPECIAL DEMANDS." (TEACHER)*

*"WE ARE WORKING WITH SO MANY STUDENTS, EVERY ONE OF WHOM NEEDS A DIFFERENT APPROACH; SOMETHING I COULDN'T ACHIEVE." (TEACHER)*

Thus, although teachers generally perceived themselves as more than competent to deliver inclusive education (except for the education of students with special needs), analysis of the perceptions of participants from the other target groups raise the probability of a need for improvement in these aspects of practice.

### **4.3 Barriers to inclusive education**

Desk research and interviews with the various target groups of the project allowed the authors to clearly identify a number of barriers towards more inclusive education:

*Physical divisions between children.* One of the main challenges to inclusive education in the specific national ethno-political context is the division of students according to language of instruction, which for the most part corresponds to ethnic divisions. Beyond divisions by language of instruction, some schools have established separate classes for Roma students. In other cases, Roma students are channelled into special schools where they are disproportionately represented, while children with mental and physical disabilities may be unable to attend any school. This division along lines of ethnicity and language is most likely the strongest threat to developing a cohesive society.

*Lack of understanding.* There appears to be no clear and generally accepted concept of inclusive education as providing all students with equal opportunities to develop their capacities. In fact, the understanding of inclusion most frequently demonstrated by teaching staff and teacher educators simply cited the integration of students with special needs into the education process. This lack of understanding is compounded by: widespread prejudices and stereotypes in society at large; a lack of continuity in policy as a result of frequent changes of government and administration; insufficient consultation by policy makers with experts in the field; and a disconnect between reforms in compulsory education on the one hand and the content of teacher education curricula on the other.

*"WHEN THE SYSTEM IS NO GOOD, PROJECTS ARE FUTILE" (REPRESENTATIVE OF DONOR ORGANISATION).*

Analysis of teacher responses in this study shows the existence of stereotypes and prejudices toward the educational potential of children from vulnerable groups. Prejudices are also discernable in the responses of other education-related participants in the study, such as representatives of Ministries, local governments and teacher educators. This perspective has a destructive impact on inclusion as a whole, and the lack of awareness among teachers means they will not accept their responsibility for inclusion of all students both within classroom activities and out-of-classroom education. This obviously has an impact on educational practice, for although most teachers will declare their support for the inclusion of all groups, and will state that they believe in the educability of every child, in practice a small caveat is added: 'believe in the educability of every child, within the framework of their capacities,' with the intrinsic implication that those capacities will be limited. Thus, although inclusion seems to be doing well in the country on a declarative level, the actual evidence shows a different story in practice.

*Inadequate academic training.* Teacher educators lack widespread awareness of the need to provide quality education for all, whereby pre-service teacher education often does not provide the skills for inclusive education frequently cited by teachers, student teachers and teacher educators. The teacher training system tends to be didactic and authoritarian in practice (if not also in theory), such that there is little opportunity for learning interactive teaching methods by example. All in all, there are few mechanisms in place to change views like that expressed by a future teacher in Skopje who stated that there is no point encouraging people with disabilities and native speakers of ethnic languages to become teachers:

"...BECAUSE THEY WILL FIND IT REALLY DIFFICULT TO DELIVER INSTRUCTION."

*Insufficient practical experience.* Although teaching practice is an obligatory part of pre-service training, it is often handled formally due to the lack of interest from schools and teachers. As one representative of a donor organisation in Skopje explained:

"THE STUDENTS CONSIDER IT IRRELEVANT [...] OR JUST NOT INTERESTING."

The teachers, meanwhile, said they are forced to starting work underskilled, having only taught a few classes.

*Lack of motivation for professional development.* The data collected on existing teacher preparation in this study (presented in section 5) suggests that pre-service education does not generally equip teachers with adequate skills for inclusive education. Also, there are few incentives for teachers to acquire such skills in the course of their career, with neither sanctions for discriminatory behaviour nor rewards for teachers who strive for professional development. Finally, teachers see their status as continuously decreasing, with their working conditions suffering accordingly. Training and practice in inclusive education are not criteria for professional improvement. Although there is legislation on the continuing professional development of teachers, implementation is not fully effective.

*Low teacher-student ratios.* Full classrooms coupled with the absence of legislative provisions for teaching assistants in schools has led teachers to believe their capacity is often overstretched to the point where it is unlikely that the individualised attention necessary to provide quality education for all students would be possible even if teachers had adequate competences in inclusive education.

Many aspects of the barriers for inclusion are linked to the fact that there is no real selection process or competition for teaching jobs (as explained in section 5.2). This is mainly an outcome of the changing status of the teaching profession in society over recent past decades as a result of social changes, and economic and political factors.

## 5. MAPPING TEACHER PREPARATION FOR INCLUSION

This section explores how teachers are prepared and supported to develop competences for inclusive education. It considers the extent to which current policies and practices of pre-service and in-service preparation provide opportunities for teachers to reflect upon the issues involved with education in a context of diversity and develop relevant competences in practice. The section also explores what incentives exist that could contribute to general teacher satisfaction and motivation to learn and develop new skills, such as status in society and salaries. Pre-service preparation policies, organisation and content are considered first, followed by in-service training and professional development opportunities. Evidence from both strains is used to formulate the recommendations for improving overall policies and practices for teacher preparation presented in the following section.

### 5.1 Pre-service

Teachers are educated at Universities, through attendance of study programs. Every study program of every University must be accredited by the Board For Accreditation. This Board For Accreditation is an official body composed of representatives from Universities and from the Government. Teachers and all the other staff of primary and secondary schools in the country are employed by local government, except for the 'state schools', which are in fact special schools for students with learning difficulties and special needs, and schools for talented students of special interest to the state in areas such as physical education, music, ballet and art. Teaching practices and policies are centrally regulated in legislation valid throughout the country. Teachers in primary and secondary education have the legal status of 'public servants' (except for those teachers in a very few private schools). The teacher recruitment procedure is through a public call for staff. In primary schools, the school principal makes the final decision following a proposal by the school board. In secondary schools, the public concourse or announcement leads to a proposal by the concourse commission before the school principal makes the final decision. All employees should pass the exam for public servants after one year of work on probation as part of the recruitment process. There are no particular quotas explicitly stated for teachers from specific backgrounds. Paragraph 4.2 of the Ohrid Framework Agreement states that public administration employers should implement measures to assure the equitable representation of communities in all central and local public bodies. Members of some communities are satisfactorily represented in the education system, but some smaller communities are underrepresented.

The prevailing understanding of inclusive education within the country is as education exclusively for students with special needs. The main reason for this is the many projects over recent years that spread this perception in the public sphere. This is important for the study as a whole, as this perception colours the nature of discussions in focus group and individual interviews. Although the broader understanding of inclusive education used in this study was always explained at the beginning of the discussions, the previous experience and understanding of respondents combined with their lack of experiences related to the wider definition, generally resulted in discussions turning to students with special needs. The level of awareness seems particularly low among teachers from remote schools and schools in rural areas, where a significant number of teachers have views on inclusive education represented by the following statements:

*"EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS ON CONTENT AND THEMES WE DIDN'T HAVE COVER WHEN WE TRAINED" (TEACHER)*

*"EDUCATION TO IMPROVE TEACHING METHODS IN SUBJECTS WE ARE TEACHING" (TEACHER)*

These rare responses show examples of misunderstanding of inclusive education as somehow involving technical education issues. The teachers seem to understand teacher training for inclusive education as an add-on element for existing study programmes. However, it is interesting to note that some teachers are already aware that inclusive education is also about the way we teach all subjects.

Teachers express the feeling that their profession is less respected than in the past and in comparison with other public service professions employing higher education graduates. Even their own perception of the teaching profession is confused these days. While many still view the profession as noble, rewarding, and prestigious, two decades of transition and socio-economic stratification have led to the increasing perception that it is not worth the effort and not valued by society. This is to a large extent associated with the student teacher selection process in that teaching no longer attracts the best students, and most candidates for educational faculties have below average secondary school grades.

There is, in fact, no meaningful selection of student teachers for teaching courses as the only entry requirement is successful completion of secondary school. This, coupled with the large enrolment quotas, means 'selection' as such does not really take place.

A bachelor's degree is a requirement for employment as a teacher and yet all the teacher faculties in the country currently have 4-year study curricula. For the time being, having a master's (5-years study program) confers no advantage in terms of employability.

There are different institutions for the education of class and subject teachers. Pre-school and class teachers from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade (5<sup>th</sup> grade in the nine-year primary education cycle) are trained at the Pedagogical Faculty (Faculty of Education). There are no essential selection criteria for class teachers at the Pedagogical Faculty. Meanwhile, the curricula for subject teachers are mostly the same as the regular curricula for the various fields of study, although some students may choose to complete the optional 'teachers' programme' of Psychology, Pedagogy and Teaching Method. There are no entry requirements for this programme at any Faculty.

In the classroom, teachers using regular pedagogical methods have a choice of 2-3 textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education and they are allowed to use additional materials where appropriate to the programme. Teachers are expected to follow the programme produced by the Bureau for Development of Education and are mostly given no opportunity to adjust the curricula. Meanwhile, student assessment is mainly down to the individual teacher although an external examination is being implemented from 2009 to evaluate the teacher assessments.

The field research conducted for this study suggests a broad consensus that pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive education in the country is generally inadequate. Most participant responses did not reflect much of the set of teacher competences for teaching practice in a context of social and cultural diversity given in section 3.3. Discussions with teachers revealed a dominant opinion that pre-service education gives them only general knowledge about the content to be transmitted to students, with all other competences (including but not limited to those related to inclusive education) developed more or less independently in the course of their working experience. This view was shared by almost all pre-service teacher educators participating in this research. Pre-service teacher educators assessed existing teacher education programmes as providing in sufficient coverage to issues of inclusive education and expressed an awareness of the need for curriculum reform in this regard. However, their ideas on the details of the required reforms were less well developed and little consensus has been created by the continuous reforms undertaken by the Ministry of Education over the past two decades.

Student teachers expressed views of pre-service training similar to those of teachers and pre-service teacher educators. They observed that the study curricula are overloaded with subject-related information and that they were given no help to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for inclusive education. They also noted there was little effort made to provide them with contact with real teaching practice. In fact, the existing teacher training model means many students do not even consider themselves future teachers, as all students (except for those class teachers at education faculties) share the same curricula for scientific study of the field. Where students do not view themselves as teachers, they could hardly have a relevant outlook on the issue of teacher training. It also means that teachers were frequently not psychologically prepared for their role as a teacher. In the current situation, that training actually starts when they start work as a teacher, and is based on personal experience in inconsistent conditions.

In keeping with the other observations on the lack of pre-service preparation for inclusive education, members of school management pointed to the lack of requirements in relation to teacher training on inclusion within hiring procedures. The role and tools available to managers in this context are significantly shaped by high level regulations which impose many constraints on the process in practice. Finally, parents also assessed the level of teacher preparation negatively. This assessment is based on their dissatisfaction with how the educational needs of their children are met, as well as their perceptions that there are inadequate opportunities for parental participation in the life of the school:

*“WE ORDINARY PEOPLE ARE NOT REALLY ASKED WHAT WE THINK ABOUT THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN” (PARENT).*

At the most fundamental level, teacher attitudes on rights point to the inadequacy of pre-service preparation for inclusive education, but their understanding of these rights and non-discrimination emerged as a field of conflicting views: teachers often stated that students today have more than enough rights, while pre-service teacher educators took the view that teachers lack sufficient education in this area. Parents often expressed the view that the rights of children are sometimes violated, including the right to equal opportunities for achieving educational goals, or the right to be safe and protected from physical violence by other children.

As participants in the educational process are not well informed about the philosophy of inclusive education and related competences, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the relevant competences are widely misunderstood. Most of the teachers stated that they possess the competence to tailor teaching strategies to the individual needs of the student and to use various forms of assessment to help students learn and to improve instruction, but their explanations of how they implement this shows they simply lower assessment criteria rather than adapt their approach. One of the consequences of this widespread practice is that many students with special educational needs advance from one grade to the next until they reach a level where they lack the skills they need to continue. At that point, they become frustrated and their feelings of inadequacy dramatically impact on their self-esteem and self-image. This practice is also extremely problematic from the standpoint of teachers in the later years of primary education, who find themselves faced with a seemingly insoluble problem:

*“WHAT CAN I DO WHEN I GET A STUDENT IN FIFTH GRADE WHO DOESN'T KNOW TO READ AND WRITE? TEACHERS IN LOWER PRIMARY CLASSES PASS THEM UP THE GRADES OUT OF COMPASSION, BUT HOW CAN I TEACH THEM ALONGSIDE 30 OTHER FIFTH GRADERS?” (TEACHER).*

Perhaps even more problematic is the situation on the 'adaptation of curricula to individual pupils'. Although many teachers expressed the view that this is a competence they possess and practice, system-level decision makers indicated that such adaptation is rarely possible due to rigid regulations governing the content to be

taught. As a result, adaptation can only really be expressed in the selection of additional topics to be taught in the classroom.

Another misunderstanding is seen in regard to 'being able to use various forms of assessment to help students learn and improve instruction'. In practice, this competence is mostly reduced to substituting symbols for numbers in descriptive assessment.<sup>38</sup> Thus, for example, ☺, ☹, and ☹ are widely understood to stand for the numerical grades 5, 3 and 1 (respectively). Additional evidence of insufficient competence in this area comes from statements such as the following:

*"THERE ARE SUBJECTS LIKE MATHEMATICS, WHERE DIFFERENT FORMS OF ASSESSMENT COULD NOT BE USED, AND THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE OR TWO MODELS OF ASSESSMENT."* (TEACHER)

Similar problems arise in relation to other key competences for inclusive education. For example, teachers generally expressed the belief that they are 'able to maintain high expectations regardless of student background' and to 'believe in the educability of every student' as well as being 'able to improve the competences of all students'. At the same time, however, views such as this expressed by a teacher from Debar were relatively common:

*"WE HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF THEM, BUT, OF COURSE, WITHIN THE REACH OF THEIR POSSIBILITIES."*

Predictably, discussion of the competence 'to be able to recognise pupils' special needs and provide for them or seek help' occupied the most time in both interviews and focus groups, providing a useful illustration of the degree to which teachers are prepared to respect differences and encourage maximum performance from every student, regardless of ability, personal characteristics or social and cultural background.

Most of the teachers said they are not educated and trained to work with students with special needs, often in the context of disclaiming responsibility for the education of such students:

*"WE DON'T GET INFORMATION THROUGH THE ENROLMENT PROCEDURE AND NOBODY WARNS US THAT A PARTICULAR STUDENT HAS SPECIAL NEEDS, SO WE ARE PUT IN A SITUATION WHERE WE DISCOVER THAT AS WE WORK. BUT PARENTS SHOULD WARN US."* (TEACHER)

*"I ALSO HAVE THAT KIND OF PUPIL IN THE CLASS, AND IT DISTURBS US IN TEACHING AND LEARNING. I'M REALLY SORRY FOR THAT STUDENT, BUT THE DIRECTOR SHOULD SOLVE THIS PROBLEM."* (TEACHER)

*"THOSE STUDENTS ARE AGGRESSIVE AND THEY DISTURB THE OTHER STUDENTS. I HAVE ONE IN MY CLASS, BUT FORTUNATELY THAT FAMILY MOVED."* (TEACHER)

Beyond the specific competences needed for inclusive education, another area which demonstrates the inadequacy of pre-service preparation for inclusive education in general is the division of labour between teachers and school-based professional staff. Teachers and professional staff are not generally aware of the implicit possibilities and potential of provision by expert professional staff. Although most teachers described their cooperation with pedagogues, psychologists and special needs advisory staff in positive terms, their view of this cooperation (a view also generally shared by members of the professional staff themselves) amounts to the continuation of long-standing practices of separating students with special needs from other students. Thus, when teachers come to the conclusion that they have a problem with a student, the student in question is removed from the classroom for the supposed benefit of both the individual and the students remaining in the

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<sup>38</sup> In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, descriptive assessment is used exclusively for pupils in grades one to four.

classroom. The professional staff generally work with children in separate offices where they conduct an assessment of the child, try to correct the problem and provide the teacher with some suggestions on how to treat the student. In other words: the problem is assessed as particular to the child and not to any deficiencies in the quality of the learning environment. Even when done with the best of intentions, this physical separation of students with special needs from other students reinforces stereotypes about the role of the professional staff, and students experience these encounters as punishment and suffer from stigmatisation as a result of the ensuing labelling.

This stigmatisation associated with school-based support staff also extends outside the school environment. Some teachers reported that many parents are unwilling to accept that their child needs additional help:

*"WE DON'T HAVE SUPPORT FROM THE PARENTS THEMSELVES. THEY DON'T WANT TO TELL US THAT THEIR CHILD IS DIFFERENT. WE MUST TAKE THAT INTO ACCOUNT AND SEND THEM TO THE SUPPORT STAFF. BUT, AFTER THAT, THE STUDENT WILL SPEAK ABOUT IT AT HOME AND THEN THE PARENTS COME HERE WITH SERIOUS ACCUSATIONS, STATING THAT WE TEACHERS MUST NOT DO THIS, AND THAT WE ARE NOT IN THE POSITION TO SEEK HELP FROM A PSYCHOLOGIST FOR THEIR CHILD, BECAUSE THEIR CHILD DOES NOT NEED A PSYCHOLOGIST."* (TEACHER)

This kind of insoluble situation contributes to many teachers developing the attitude that the only appropriate place for many students with different or special needs is in a specialised institution.

Notwithstanding the serious deficiencies described above, in-service trainers and system-level decision makers participating in the field research for this study noted improvements in some competences for inclusive education. In 'using various forms of assessment to help students learn and improve instruction,' for example, significant advances were attributed to reforms implemented through a programme on formative assessment. Other competences in which interlocutors noted improvement were: 'recognising and respecting cultural and individual differences' and 'understanding the different values held by students and their families.' It is likely these improvements were the outcome of an increased emphasis on multiculturalism in society as a whole. However, it is important to note that while national society is culturally diverse, coexistence between the various ethnic communities is largely parallel.

At the system level, there is currently no strategic plan to develop the wider view of inclusiveness in education. Local initiatives toward inclusion or supported practice in schools are rare and not sustained over time.

There is superficial cooperation between NGOs and state institutions but this level of cooperation does not realise the potential it could and should achieve. Most NGO support is dedicated to limited support for Roma students and students with special needs.

## **5.2 In-service**

There are currently several modes of provision of in-service programmes for teachers and school staff in the country. The first involves a systemic approach, usually organised by the Bureau for the Development of Education - a governmental institution under the Ministry of Education and Science - designed to reach all the schools of the country and ensure they are all provided with the same materials and instructions. However, the role of the Bureau is usually heavily linked to current curricula issues, so there is little space for introducing different topics, especially those related to inclusion.

Over the last two decades the national education system has benefitted from contributions from a considerable number of domestic and international organisations in the in-service professional development of teachers. These non-governmental and international initiatives have the advantage that they can tailor

training on various issues to the needs of a given school or community, helping the teachers improve appropriate competences in their real-life setting. Inclusive education topics related addressed by non-governmental initiatives for in-service teacher training in the country include: intercultural education, education for social justice, school improvement and diversity, and interactive teaching methodologies.

The in-service teacher training organised and administered by non-governmental initiatives is generally of a very good quality, but this mode of in-service training has the major disadvantages of inconsistency and the inability to provide systemic solutions. More specifically, most of these opportunities for professional development have been provided for a limited numbers of schools and teachers, themselves failing to be inclusive at the system level. Moreover, where selective in-service training is accompanied by lack of dissemination, there may be resulting frustration on the part of teachers not included in the training:

*"THERE HAS BEEN TRAINING ONLY FOR THOSE TEACHERS WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT." (TEACHER)*

In recent years, the Bureau for the Development of Education accredited a set of innovative programmes for in-service training within the framework of the Education Modernisation Project.<sup>39</sup> In 2009, a new professional development programme was implemented<sup>40</sup> to improve mathematics and literacy instruction in the country. The programme was developed as a result of the underperformance of national students in international maths and literacy tests. One positive aspect of the project has been the involvement of 15 staff members from the Bureau for the Development of Education who attended training to provide support for teachers across the country. Mentor-teachers are rolling out a programme to support other teachers during the 2009-10 school year.

Another mentor-teacher style programme is anticipated in the UNICEF Life Skills Education project that is currently two-years into its plan to provide training for teachers and professional services in participating schools. However, similar earlier experiences of progressive mentor-based schemes were not entirely successful and such attempts to reach as many teachers as possible may be jeopardised by the lack of professional recognition given to those teachers who attend in-service training. As a result, teachers are not as well motivated toward these 'extra duties' as could be desired.

Teacher views of in-service training vary depending on their place of residence. Teachers from smaller towns, cities and suburbs are barely aware that in-service training exists, and they are not really aware of what is good or bad about it, or the impacts it may have. They are even less aware of how in-service training is related to inclusive practices. Many of the teachers participating in the field research conducted for this study stated that very little training is available and not all teachers get a chance to participate.

*"IN OUR SCHOOL THERE ARE TEACHERS WHO HAVE NEVER HAD TRAINING OF ANY NATURE WHATSOEVER." (TEACHER)*

*"I HAVE BEEN WORKING FOR TWENTY YEARS AND I HAVE NEVER BEEN GIVEN TRAINING." (TEACHER)*

Generally, those teachers who have participated in in-service training perceive the training programmes as useful, although in the focus group discussions they were not always able to link those training programmes with any particular values or competences they may have developed as a result. This link seems to be most visible in the case of the Education Modernisation Project and the UNICEF Child Friendly Schools project.

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<sup>39</sup> The Education Modernisation Project was implemented in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from 2004-2009, with financial support from the World Bank

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.ykai.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=111:programme-trains-macedonian-teachers-in-effective-child-friendly-education-methods&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=50](http://www.ykai.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111:programme-trains-macedonian-teachers-in-effective-child-friendly-education-methods&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=50) (accessed 9.11.2008)



While teachers cited the Education Modernisation Project as good practice on the grounds that it helped them define goals better and plan different approaches for students in accordance with their abilities, Child Friendly Schools is reported to have helped teachers develop competences related to inclusive education, gender equity, multiculturalism and formative assessment, all of which are the main objectives of project activities.

*"IN OUR CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOL WE DO A LOT WITH THE MULTICULTURALISM IN OUR SCHOOL." (TEACHER)*

Some teachers are less convinced of the benefits of participation in in-service training. They perceive this as a burden, as an extra requirement they are simply not ready to accept. The reason most commonly cited in explaining this view is the absence of personal gain from the training beyond additional knowledge and competences:

*"WORKING OR NOT WORKING, IT IS ALL THE SAME, WE ALL GET THE SAME SALARY, AND THE SAME TREATMENT." (TEACHER)*

According to school managers (including school psychologists and pedagogues) contacted in this study, teachers are not properly prepared for inclusive education during their pre-service education. The need for in-service training is evident from the fact that the hiring of new teachers includes no requirements for training in inclusive education for either classroom or subject teachers. Subject teachers have even fewer opportunities for experiencing the individualised approach to students during teaching practice, as they are presented with a different class for each practice session. During pre-service education, teacher preparation is structured to work with the hypothetical average student, with the expectation that this will cover all students. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see that many of the statements from school managers say that inclusion and the individualised approach are present in many school documents, including the annual programmes, development programmes and statutes.

*"OUR SCHOOL PROMOTES THE EQUAL INCLUSION OF ALL THE STUDENTS." (SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHER)*

*"ALL STUDENTS ARE EQUALLY ACCEPTED REGARDLESS OF THEIR ETHNICITY, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OR SOCIAL STATUS." (PSYCHOLOGIST)*

In general, school managers are keen on in-service development opportunities in external projects and they willingly volunteer their schools. At the same time, the schools themselves offer help in the form of professional literature, including books, magazines and internet content. Other forms of internally organised in-service development opportunities mentioned by school managers included internal workshops, meetings within professional teacher groups (those teaching the same or similar subjects), demonstration classes and the mentoring of new teachers. According to school managers, all these activities help build teacher capacities for inclusive education.

School managers picked out good and helpful practices for the development of competences for inclusion in ongoing projects such as Child Friendly Schools (with its special focus on the inclusion process), projects dedicated to the inclusion of Roma students in education, and the Step by Step project by the NGO of the same name. They put equal stress on the importance of professional teacher groups and the sharing of experiences within these groups. The inclusion of students from vulnerable sectors (e.g. children of single parents, from different ethnic communities or with different social status) is also perceived as a good example of professional development practice that encourages competences and positive attitudes towards inclusion. As for students with special needs and talents, school managers observe there is currently no practice for working with either category of students.

*"THE TALENTED STUDENTS ARE NOT BEING IDENTIFIED AT ALL, AND THEY ARE NOT TREATED ADEQUATELY BY THE TEACHERS."*  
(SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHER)

The school managers presented the following ideas for the improvement of in-service training for teacher competences for inclusive education:

- On-going communication between teachers from different schools
- Professional meetings with counsellors from the Bureau for the Development of Education
- Professional literature with information and analysis of relevant experiences in other countries
- Incentives for participation in in-service training
- Assessment survey on teacher training needs
- Teacher evaluation before and after training, and
- Assessment of success in professional development

Parents in focus groups expressed general dissatisfaction with the way teachers teach.

*"THEY SHOULD TEACH IN A MORE INTERACTIVE WAY."* (PARENT)

*"THEY USED TO EXPLAIN THE LESSONS MUCH MORE; NOWADAYS I HAVE TO DO MORE FOR MY CHILD AT HOME BY MYSELF."* (PARENT)

*"THEY JUST TELL THE CHILDREN THINGS. STUDENTS ARE NOT ASKED WHAT THEY HAVE OR HAVE NOT UNDERSTOOD."*  
(PARENT)

Parents also expressed concerns about the way the teachers view their own role, reporting cases of intolerance, students being excluded from the class because they have no textbook, and frequent teacher absences that impact negatively on the class understanding of the subject matter.

Another issue identified as a problem by parents is the continuous exclusion and segregation of Roma students, in spite of the many declarations and measures produced by the authorities. As was reported in Debar<sup>41</sup> and confirmed by other authors, there are cases where classes have been made up exclusively of Roma students separate from classes effectively reserved for ethnic Macedonian or ethnic Albanian students. In keeping with these observations, some parents pointed to a trend among ethnic Macedonian students to leave institutions perceived as Roma schools (i.e. attended by Roma students) to enrol in ethnically homogeneous schools attended exclusively by ethnic Macedonians.

*"THEY PUT ALL THE ROMA STUDENTS IN ONE CLASSROOM AND THERE ARE NO ROMA IN THE OTHERS, WHY?"* (PARENT)

Representatives of NGOs and donor organisations identified a considerable number of projects with the focus on providing in-service training and professional development for teachers. Despite the volume of relevant projects, however, respondents in this category pointed to numerous obstacles to promoting inclusive education through in-service training and professional development for teachers. These obstacles, mostly on the system level, are discussed in section 4.4.

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<sup>41</sup> Small city in the western part of the country, in which Roma children attend classes delivered in either in Albanian or Macedonian languages.

In-service teacher educators and trainers cite several characteristics of in-service training that help teachers develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions for inclusive education. Prominent among these is the need to take an individualised approach in work with students, coupled with careful and ongoing monitoring of their achievements, interests and abilities. Training about stereotypes and prejudices towards all vulnerable groups are also reported to provide good ground for better inclusive practices.

*“IF THE TEACHERS KNOW THE ETHNIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDENTS, IT WILL HELP THEM IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES TO ENABLE STUDENTS TO REACH THEIR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL.” (IN-SERVICE TRAINER)*

On the other hand, prejudices toward vulnerable groups, the lack of internalised responsibility toward the educational process on the part of teachers, along with the ‘average student’ approach in education are perceived as the main barriers to the development of teacher competences for inclusion.

The role of local government is seen more often as a supportive task than one of initiating inclusive practices. Representatives of local government generally agreed that support from local government mostly consists of partnering various donors in improving the infrastructure of schools to make them more friendly places for all students. They place equal importance on the process of ensuring that all students attend school, with a special focus on Roma students who tend to be at greatest risk of exclusion. Local government representatives also cited coordination with the NGO sector in activities such as enrolling children not attending school and organising open discussions with parents of pre-school children in order to raise awareness about the importance of education.

In specific regard to in-service training, our local government respondents were able to mention two cases of direct local government involvement in promoting inclusive education. In the first case, the municipality of Štip planned to open a classroom for students with autism and sent a special needs teacher on specialist training in another city where such a classroom was already in operation, while the second involved an Albanian language course offered to teachers and interested citizens in the municipality of Gostivar.<sup>42</sup>

As an overall reflection, socio-political factors mean that education and schooling in the country is increasingly divided along ethnic lines. Students are progressively being separated into mono-ethnic classes on mono-ethnic timetables, and there are an ever greater number of mono-ethnic schools, contrary to the implied demands of inclusive education. This represents ever greater challenges for training teachers to deal with diversity in the classroom, on-going interaction with the wider school environment, and in making active contributions to education policy.

Teaching practice in the country is still strongly influenced by out-dated pre-service training models structured around teaching the average pupil. Persistent stereotypes and prejudices toward vulnerable groups also contribute to the inadequacy of pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive education, along with dissatisfaction with the changing status and increasing demands of the profession. These factors combine with rigid perceptions of the profession and the teacher’s role in society and result in many teachers becoming reluctant to change their attitudes and accept their personal responsibility for the teaching outcomes of every child and prefer to find excuses and transfer responsibility back to parents, support staff and central institutions.

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<sup>42</sup> The majority of the population in Gostivar is Albanian. Most of the schools are managed by Albanian principals and the Albanian language is the official language of the municipality.

In summary, there is no satisfactory strategy and programme in place to develop the missing competences for inclusive education in pre-service and in-service teacher training. In the absence of state-level standards for the teaching profession, the individual teacher is left to decide what they believe is good teaching practice (and what is good for the next generation) and how to achieve that in the classroom. The following teacher response clearly demonstrates low motivation due to poor satisfaction with their status, income, or even their role in the educational structure:

*“TEACHERS ARE NOT INVOLVED ENOUGH WITH ALL STUDENTS. MAYBE BECAUSE OF THE EDUCATION PROCESS ITSELF, WE TEACHERS ARE MARGINALISED, WE ARE NOT PAID ENOUGH TO WANT TO WORK MORE WITH ALL STUDENTS. OTHERWISE, EVERY TEACHER COULD WORK MORE WITH THOSE STUDENTS WHO NEED IT.” (TEACHER)*

If no improvement in teacher job satisfaction and social status is offered, it is unreasonable to expect teachers to change their working habits and make national education more inclusive. Adding more demands whilst providing no significant additional support will only lead to frustration and resistance. With this in mind, systemic cooperation is needed between the Ministry of Education (particularly the Bureau for the Development of Education), universities offering teacher training, and NGOs active in the field of education in order to improve teacher practice and the educational environment as a whole. This cooperation should produce both material and non-material incentives for appropriating and promulgating inclusive education at all levels, including policy makers and teacher educators involved in producing efficient strategies and programmes for better trained teachers.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The following implications and recommendations are provided by the authors of this study on the basis of data gathered and analysed during the research:

The society of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has multiculturalism at the core of its identity as various ethnic communities have coexisted here throughout history. This coexistence down the centuries has provided a background of the experience of diversity in everyday life that should welcome inclusion as an integral element of the national education system. However, specific vulnerable groups are still actively excluded from the education process by various factors related to access to education and the optimising of every child's learning.

This situation means there is a need for a systemic approach to inclusion-related issues at all levels of the educational process. Inclusion should be inculcated as an overarching philosophy of education at the most fundamental level in recognition of the right to education as a basic human right. Policy makers and universities must reach a higher level of understanding and cooperation for this to be achieved. All higher education should place inclusion firmly on the curriculum, and the best starting point would be the systematic introduction of the subject in all national pre-service teacher training programmes.

The measures prescribed in the remaining subsections of this study are proposed as the first steps in addressing the barriers to inclusion enumerated in section 4.4 and, more broadly, toward increasing levels of inclusion in the national education system.

### 6.1 Policy makers

There must be improved coordination between the Bureau for the Development of Education and Universities providing pre-service teacher training to redesign pre-service training and ensure that teacher educators have a clear understanding of inclusive education to underpin their teaching. The training providers must also be aware of up-to-date interactive teaching methodologies and multiple forms of assessment in order to ensure an adequate supply of good quality teaching staff. Furthermore, legislation should be developed on the training and employment of teaching assistants with a view to increasing individualised attention in the classroom by raising teacher-student ratios.

Access to education must be improved for members of vulnerable groups, for while this is one expected outcome of an inclusive education system, it also forms an important starting point. The presence of diversity in the education system is a great motivator for inclusive teaching policies and practices, it promotes integrated education and prevents segregation.

Teachers should be encouraged to take up in-service professional development opportunities through offers of financial and other benefits for the completion of relevant training.

Continuity in policy development can be encouraged through consistent and thorough monitoring of relevant projects by the Bureau for the Development of Education, independent of the frequent changes in government. The data gathered in this process can serve as an objective basis for decisions on scaling-up and systemising successful pilots to the national level. A purpose-specific training centre could be established to ensure that appropriate training is available independent of the government, thus making the move from a project-based system to a more sustainable format. The Ministry has called for just such a move and this would fulfil a need frequently cited by teachers.

Physical divisions between students must be reduced and the inclusiveness of the education system increased through the gradual transformation of special schools into resource centres. These centres can provide support for the integration of students with additional support needs into mainstream schools and help develop inclusive education practices in general.

## **6.2 Teacher trainers/educators**

### **6.2.1 Pre service**

A common interpretation of the concept of inclusive education should be agreed and disseminated widely at all levels of the education system.

Successful dissemination of a common understanding of inclusive education depends upon the appropriate initial preparation of teaching staff at the teacher training faculties. Once the desired level of awareness is achieved among pre-service educators, elements of inclusive education will begin to permeate the teacher education curricula.

Furthermore, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia requires innovation in teaching approaches. This should move away from the current almost exclusive emphasis on subject content toward a focus on skills, values and attitudes as embodied by the concept of competences. This change in emphasis will in turn require systematic training in order for pre-service teachers to develop the skills needed for effective development of student competences and to assume their new professional identities and roles.

Pre-service teacher educators should also ensure that student teachers have ample opportunities to learn through observing and doing. This should include, but not necessarily be limited to: supervised classroom teaching; individual or small group discussions with mentor-teachers; observation of fellow student teachers; hands-on work with disadvantaged students; and the modelling of inclusive teaching styles.

The roles and tasks of in-school professional staff should be redefined to provide for their presence, availability and active participation in classroom teaching. Where psychologists, pedagogues, special needs advisors and social workers are more closely involved with all children, barriers between children and support staff will fall and the impact of their work will become increasingly effective.

### **6.2.2 In-service**

There are no national incentives to encourage teachers to take part in in-service training (recommended in section 6.1 above). Incentives at the school level should link participation in accredited training with financial and other benefits. Systematic training on stereotypes and prejudices is key to the development of teacher competences for inclusive education and training in this area should be developmental and subject to follow-up monitoring.

Formal training sessions should be complemented by performance monitoring and the provision of support to help teachers apply the knowledge gained from training in their everyday work in the classroom. Furthermore, training programmes for in-service professional development should be designed to train mentor-teachers who can then ensure all teachers in all schools receive training in priority areas and learn to reflect on their practice.

Wherever possible, in-service training should be organised for mixed groups of teachers. The organisation of extracurricular activities with groups of mixed ethnicity, language and gender should be included as a

training topic. Teachers should be exposed to this type of valuable opportunities for learning in diverse groups through teacher exchanges or joint teacher professional development initiatives in the region.

### **6.3 Teachers**

At the level of the individual teacher, the most important factor for inclusive education is to develop intrinsic motivation for the choice of career path. A complete paradigm shift is needed in teacher views of their professional roles in society, their responsibility for the educational outcomes of all students and for encouraging student interest in educational activities both within and outside the classroom. This type of deep change also requires a great deal of work on attitudes within wider society.

Policy makers and trainers should ensure a common understanding of inclusive education is available and widely disseminated, and teachers who undergo appropriate training should be expected to adopt this understanding as their own and to put it into practice accordingly. Any narrower understanding of inclusion as pertinent only to students with disabilities promotes passivity on the part of teachers, allowing them to transfer responsibility for quality education onto specialist workers and institutions, and even back to the child's parents.

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## ANNEX 1 | GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Additional support needs* – the need of children and young people for extra support to benefit from school education at any time, 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.).

*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 in order for them to educate students more effectively.

*Mentor teacher* - a teacher who is qualified, promoted or assigned to monitor student teachers while they visit schools for practice.

*Pre-school education* - education in pre-school institutions or schools that precedes primary education and serves as preparation for this.

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

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

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

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

*Special educational needs* - include 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.

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

*Teacher* - overall term for those qualified to teach at any level of school, including pre-school teachers, primary class teachers, primary 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 practicing teachers in primary and secondary schools.

## **ANNEX 2 | BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY**

Primary education has been compulsory in the country for some time and secondary education gained compulsory status from 2008-2009. Up until 2006-2007, primary education was considered to last eight years and included students aged 7-14 years, but in the autumn of 2006 the compulsory school age range was extended down to include what had been the last year of optional pre-primary education. As a result, primary education now covers students between the ages of 6-14. All pupils in primary and secondary schools have been entitled to free textbooks since 2009.

Within primary education, the division between the lower primary class-based instruction and upper primary subject-based instruction often makes for a difficult transition between grade five and grade six when this change occurs. Common sources of difficulty in the transition period include: a more demanding curriculum; the possibility of repeating the year; and the need to adjust to a larger number of different teaching styles that distinguish subject-based instruction from class-based instruction. As a result, dropout rates are relatively high in the final year of class-based instruction and the first year of subject-based instruction.

Secondary education lasts three to four years and is generally attended by children between the ages of 14 and 18. The academically-oriented programmes of secondary education last four years, while vocational programmes may last either three or four years. Admission into secondary schools is determined on the basis of student achievement in primary education, with the state providing a matriculation examination, the *matura*, for all secondary education programmes leading on to higher education.

There are separate public schools or separate classes in existing public schools for students with disabilities and minority linguistic communities within the general education system and the state runs separate schools (but not separate classes within existing schools) for children and young people not in parental care. The legislation also allows for private schools, both secular and religious. Although education is included amongst the areas subject to the ongoing national decentralisation process, progress to date has been uneven.

## 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.

**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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