



IMAS Summary

Background

Since the European Union and all member states have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the European educational systems have to become inclusive. All children and young people should be able to rely on professional staff to enable their learning and participation in school. For children and young people with disabilities, non-teaching staff (learning support assistants, teaching assistants or similar) play a vital role in enabling them to successfully engage in every aspect of compulsory and post compulsory education.

Objectives

The project “Improving Assistance in Inclusive Educational Settings” (IMAS) focused on the education of children and young people with disabilities in Europe, with the aim of establishing a common framework for scrutinising how assistance is organised in schools. The main objectives of the project were to understand the contribution of assistance services to inclusive education for children and young people with disabilities, to develop recommendations for the further development of these services and (if necessary) to enhance them through the project activities.

Partnership

Chance B (Austria, Coordinator) is a social service provider operating in the Eastern part of Styria, offering support to every person who needs it to live well in the region.

CSIE - Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (UK) is a national charity that works to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in education.

TENENET o.z. (Slovakia) was established as a social and psychological advisory centre helping disabled clients, children in social need and youth with behavior problems.

ARCIL (Portugal) provides a wide range of services in the rehabilitation field for children, young people and adults with disability or other special needs. **Vision - Agency for social development (Bulgaria)** is a legal entity with non-profit purpose which works in public benefit. The organisation is specialised as a service provider in the area of culture and social development.

EASPD - European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities is a non-profit European umbrella organization and currently representing over 12,000 social and health services for persons with disabilities.

University of Graz, Department of Inclusive education, with expertise in the fields of inclusive education, empirical educational research and evaluation of projects carried out the scientific monitoring as well as the evaluation of the project.

Main Activities

At the beginning of the project the partners systematically surveyed the current state of assistance services in their countries (Status Quo Report). These surveys yielded an overview of the different systems. They also enabled partners to formulate recommendations for the role of learning and support assistants in inclusive education on a European level.

Another main activity was a five-day training event involving assistants, teachers, education experts, parents and former pupils from the countries of all project organisations. The participants of this training discussed the recommendations, shared experiences and worked on scrutinising processes of inclusive education in their national context and developing a set of improvement suggestions as relevant.

Subsequently all partners developed a set of recommendations specific to their country, based on the general recommendations already developed at European level.

At the end of the project all partners organised and held stakeholder meetings to disseminate the national recommendations among decision makers in the education system and at all levels of policy and administration.

All project activities were based on a participative, practical approach and involved as many assistants, pupils and stakeholders as possible.

Results and impact attained

- Description of the current status of assistance services in each partner country
- Summary in a Status-Quo Report covering all partner countries
- Recommendations for the role of learning and support assistants in inclusive education, at European level
- Recommendations for the role of learning and support assistants in inclusive education at national level for each participating country
- Training Activity Workshop Design
- 23 participants at the training activity
- 157 participants at the stakeholder meetings
- Dissemination of the project results through different channels

Longer-term benefits

This project has set an important first step to draw attention to assistance services at European and National level, on the understanding that these play an important role in developing a more inclusive education system consistent with the requirements of the UNCRPD. The project has clearly demonstrated that there are no clear and consistent frameworks for availability, quality and responsibilities of learning and support assistants in schools and other educational settings. The project has also shown that in some regions of Europe the possibility of making assistance services routinely available to children with disabilities does not exist.

It is anticipated that the recommendations developed during this project will provide orientation for decision makers and assist them in further developing assistance services in their countries, in ways which are consistent with the requirements of the UNCRPD.



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