

Improving Assistance in Inclusive Educational Settings - Status Quo

	Austria	Portugal	Bulgaria	Slovakia	England
Financial Framework of the service	In Styria 60% of the service is financed by the state community and 40% by the respective Municipality. Every federal state in Austria has a different financial system.	The human resources are financed by the Ministry of Education and by the Municipality of Lousã	Funded by the Social Programme of the Municipality of Varna	Financing of assistants is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. Or the service is a private initiative of parents, and they pay personally the assistants.	Each school has its own budget and learning supporters' salaries are paid from it. For pupils who have an Education and Health Care Plan sometimes additional funds are allocated for learning support, but the threshold is high: schools have to find the first £6,000 per pupil per year from their own budget.
Organisation/Admin of the service	Social service providers (such as Chance B) or the municipality employs assistants	Ministry of Education ARCIL Municipality of Lousã	Agency for Social Development "Vision"	Schools or private initiatives of parents of children with disabilities	There is no national service for providing learning supporters. Schools are responsible for their own recruitment.
Cooperation of the assistant with other staff	Assistants cooperate with teachers, headmasters, parents, therapists and sometimes with educational support. The quality of the cooperation with them varies from case to case. In some schools they become part of the teaching staff in other schools they are only tolerated.	According to the SEN service coordinator, the assistants collaborate with other members of the staff as requested by the teachers and specialists in the school. There is a positive and effective cooperation with teachers/specialists but it would be important to have more time to articulate with other professionals and that their opinion should be more considered.	strong cooperation with teachers and parents	Assistants cooperate with teachers, special pedagogues, psychologist, speech therapist, terrain social worker, other supported school personnel, community centres, centres of early intervention, medical doctors, community of children with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, educational consultants, director and management of school, other pupils from the class and surrounded classes, volunteers at school and other supported staff at school, NGOs and supported service providers for children with disabilities and their families.	This varies enormously from area to area and from school to school. In a nutshell, some schools value their learning supporters more, while in others they are perceived to be quite low in the organizational hierarchy.
Target group of the assistants	children with all forms of disabilities (behavioural syndromes, physical or sensory impairment,...) in special needs schools and in mainstream schools age: the compulsory schooling age (6-max. 16 years)	Assistants from AEL and CML working with all children in school (not specifically with children with SEN). Assistants from ARCIL are placed specifically in specialized units, within Mainstream School, to work with children with multiple disability and autism spectrum disorders.	children with special educational needs going to mainstream schools and kindergartens in the Municipality of Varna; age: 3 years until high school graduation (max. 20 years)	children with special educational needs (with any kind of health impairments, with disabilities, long-term sick, with development disorders, with behavioural disorders, from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and children with talent.	pupils identified as needing additional learning support
Qualification requirements	No official qualification requirements One exception: If the child has to catheterize or probe, the assistant needs a special qualification (graduate nurse). Informal qualification requirements depend on the social service provider. At Chance B the qualification of the assistant has to guarantee that he/she can work well with the respective child.	Official requirements: compulsory school level, according to the age of the individual (4th, 9th or 12th grade) Selection criteria: 1) curricular analysis 2) years of experience 3) experience in the field of special needs and inclusion 4) specific training in the field of special needs and inclusion	1) second and/or tertiary education degree in Psychology, Pedagogics or Social Work 2) motivation to work with children with special educational needs 3) empathy and skills to work in the social sector	conditions to be assistant teachers: 1) the legal capacity 2) age over 18 years 3) professional competence and pedagogical competence 4) command of the state language 5) healthy status (medical fitness) 6) integrity (with no entry in the criminal record) Qualifications of "pedagogical assistant": A) Higher education of BSc. degree at study program in certain fields (e.g. study of pre-school and elementary education) B) Completed secondary education 1. in the field of education aimed at teaching and tutoring 2. complete secondary education and completion of pedagogical competence 3. complete secondary education and specialized education teacher assistants in the Methodological Centre	Individual schools can decide what, if any, qualifications to specify when recruiting. Most learning supporters would have GCSEs and A-levels, some also have a vocational qualification, for example a City & Guilds qualification. Since 2003 there has been an advanced qualification for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA). Qualified HLTAs have greater responsibilities, for example are allowed to teach a class on their own to cover for planned absences or teacher planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.
Legal status	There are two paragraphs for school assistance in the Styrian law. One is to be found in the "Pflichtschulerhaltungsgesetz" (§35a) and the other in the "Styrian Disability Law" (§7). They are both regulating care and support. The Law in other federal States in Austria is different.	One Law defines the contractual status, career and remuneration for operational, technical specialized professionals within the public sector. (CML and AEL are part of this.) Within ARCIL, the legislation from the third sector /nor for profit organizations/charities is applied (General Labour Law) and collective contractual referential for different professions.	The service is not legally regulated and not form part of the state-funded social services. The programme describing its provision is partially based on the Methodology for the delivery of the community-based service "Social Assistant". This Methodology has been put together in according with the Law of Social Assistance. There is still no Law on Social Services in Bulgaria.	At §3 of the Education Act there isn't even notice about inclusive education in the defined basic principles of education in Slovak Republic there. Nevertheless, there is legislation on education but still hadn't the necessary measures that would ensure a fully saturate the needs of practice for the adoption of such a major change such as inclusive education of individuals with disabilities. In a paragraph of the Education Act - school assistant is defined only for elementary school, not for kindergartens or high school, secondary education system.	Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, with accompanying statutory guidance (see Code of Practice, above).

Aims and tasks - official	There are no official guidelines as to assistants' precise tasks. In the law is only defined that they have to care for and support the child and that they are not allowed to do educational work.	The guideline defining the role and tasks are very broad and general, both in the public sector and in the private sector. 1) supporting the teacher and/or specialists planning and implementing educational activities with the students, including students with special needs. (supporting all children) 2) cleaning materials and rooms 3) maintaining spaces and equipment in good conditions 4) ensuring safety of the students 5) supporting the students in daily life activities 6) assisting on the transportation 7) controlling the arrival/departure 8) supporting teachers and other professionals in administrative tasks 9) supporting teachers and other professionals in administrative tasks 10) report to the teachers or coordinator	1) supporting disabled children to participate in the educational activities 2) supporting children with disabilities to get involved in local community activities 3) establishing a close relationship with parents, teachers, other social service specialists and interested stakeholders in order to provide a comprehensive support to the disabled children	School assistants helps to over-come social of health barriers for a pupil; the job is determined by the school director. Main activities are: 1. In the educational process: a) to interact with the teacher/teaching staff b) to facilitate the adaption of the child with SEN in the school environment c) to co-organize activities for a child during the educational process d) to conduct pedagogical supervision during breaks 2. In the leisure-time activities organized by the school: the direct line or assistance in leisure time activities 3. In cooperation with the family: a) Communication with parents b) to be familiar with the state of health of the child and his family environment 4. In the field of educational activities - participation in educational events designed for teacher assistants	Assistants are expected to help specific pupils access the curriculum and reach their learning goals.
Aims and tasks - practical	In the field the assistants are doing educational work. They are doing everything the child needs: 1) supporting requirements of daily life (e.g. picking them up from the bus, helping, taking off clothes, ...) 2) supporting primary care (e.g. going to the toilet, meal, ...), 3) supporting educational needs, 4) supporting therapeutic measures, 5) establishing a relationship with parents and the teacher, 6) meetings with the class teacher	1) helping students with arriving to/leaving school (ex: picking up from the bus station) 2) surveillance of the students 3) transportation of materials and equipment 4) maintenance of materials and equipment 5) supporting students in the mainstream classroom or in the specialized unit 6) supporting students in the recess 7) supporting students in the hygiene 8) supporting students with administration of medication 9) monitoring of specific activities 10) monitoring in moments of relaxation 11) implementation of specific therapeutic/ educational activities in the routine	The assistants perform their tasks and do fulfil the above listed responsibilities in practice.	The assistants perform their tasks and do fulfil the above listed responsibilities in practice.	It is widespread practice for teachers to wash their hands off these pupils' learning and delegate all responsibility to the learning supporter. Even in schools which include pupils with significant learning difficulties, there are differences of opinion as to whose responsibility it is to differentiate the curriculum and prepare resources.
Access to information	All information comes from the parents. Which particular information these are depends on what the parents want to share with the assistants. The assistants have no right to see the school's data of the child.	Access to operational information for the daily activities with children with special needs (not to the Individual folder of the students). School assistants provided by ARCIL: Access to the information provided by the teachers and the specialists in the Mainstream School. If it is justifiable that the assistants access confidential information, there are guidelines defining which information they should access and informing about the importance of ensuring the confidentiality of specific information.	Access to all relevant documents describing the child's condition: medical documents, an assessment of its needs etc.	Based on an employment contract, the work content - direct and indirect activities with a student . School assistant should be aware of all devices available to the student, but also he/she is involved in the production process of the others learning devices - it is too late, if it finds to lack in teaching process, that some learning device is already missing. Any leak of sensitive information about pupil, which are school assistant receiving during his/her work with pupil, may be prevent by the signing of a confidentiality.	Varies from school to school but, on the whole, assistants are granted access to information about the children they support.
Hierarchy	The formal superior of the assistants is the head of the service. Informally, however, they mainly have to report to the pedagogues (teacher, headmaster).	Municipality of Lousã - Coordinator of the Education Sector (reporting to the President of the Municipality) Ministry of Education - Responsible for the School Assistants (reporting to the Director of School Grouping) ARCIL - coordinator of the Centre of Resources of Inclusive Education (reporting to the Director of Rehabilitation) The school assistants that work directly with children with PESN in specialized units report, informally, to the SEN or Mainstream Teachers responsible for the students.	Assistants have to report their work to the Social Service Specialist in charge of the service and to the President of Agency for Social Development "Vision".	The assistant is part of advisory bodies - member of pedagogical board of school and member of methodological association of school. The role of assistants is not a precise defined ant this lack of legal statement represents, among other things, the feeling of teacher that school assistants controls his/her work, and this may cause rejection of school assistants by teachers.	In most schools the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or Inclusion Manager is the learning supporters' line manager. Also in most schools the SENCO or Inclusion Manager is a member of the Senior Leadership Team and often have the head teacher as their line manager.
Status	The status of the assistants can be very different - it reaches from "tolerated" to "deeply esteemed". It depends on school, teaching staff and the headmaster.	The assistants are recognized as assets for the Inclusion of children with special needs. The work they perform, however, not always is valued as it should because the complexity and demands of their tasks are not evident at first sights, for those without experience and/or knowledge in the field.	The Assistants are often excluded form the team meetings and they are not really regarded as full members of educational personnel.	The role of school assistant is not a precise defined and this lack of legal statement represents, among other things, the feeling of teacher that school assistant controls his/her work, and this may cause rejection of school assistants by teachers.	The status varies from school to school. In some cases they are respected as much as other staff but more frequently they tend to be looked down on as lower in the hierarchy.

Responsibilities formal	Official the assistants have to help the child to an educating and schooling. There are no official quality standards throughout Austria.	see "Aims and Tasks of Supporters" The assistants are responsible for supporting all children in the school not only the students with special needs.	1) to accompany the children during classes 2) to take part in the team of specialists who make a pedagogical and psychological assessment of the educational institution of the child 3) to support the children during the planning and implementation of their study courses 4) to report any problems to the school/kindergarten director	see "Aims and Tasks"	1) Personal and professional conduct 2) Knowledge and understanding: sufficient knowledge and skills to help teachers support pupils in achieving their maximum potential 3) Teaching and learning: support the teacher in ensuring the best possible outcomes for all pupils. 4) Working with others: work with other professionals, parents, carers and outside agencies as well as with pupils themselves
Responsibilities informal	Responsibilities: The assistants are doing everything the child needs. The social service provider has to ensure the quality of its service.	see "Aims and Tasks of Supporters"	The school/kindergarten principals sometimes engage the Assistants in activities which are out of their scope of work and which nor the Social Service Specialist nor the President of Agency "Vision" have agreed on.	The work of assistants is far from being just a help for children with disabilities during lesson in their work in class. And this help takes many forms, depending on the needs of each pupil and also a particular subject. The school assistant is assigned to concrete teacher and not to particular pupil.	1) Help with schoolwork under the supervision of the teacher 2) Prepare learning materials 3) Help children understand instructions 4) Carry out a child's care plan 5) Encourage children to communicate 6) Give information and help to teachers 7) Support children during social activities and outings 8) Help children during therapy sessions 9) Look after children's physical needs 10) Keep records
Continuing professional development	In the field of school assistance there are no opportunities for career development. If the assistant is a pedagogue he/she has the possibility to become a teacher. Also, the assistant can build a career in other fields of the organisation. Chance B offers the whole assistance team advanced education on special topics two days per year. Further trainings have to be paid by the assistants themselves	School assistants with a contractual situation as service providers or with a contract with a defined term have no career progression. School assistants with a contract as permanent workers have career progression; presently, career progression is "frozen" due to the financial situation of the country and employer organizations. Assistants themselves identifies interesting training/courses and requests permission to participate from ARCIL, CML or AEL. ARCIL organize free professional training within the Mainstream school for the assistants, teachers, etc. There is a public training centre serving the Mainstream School which provides specific training on the topic of Disability and Inclusion, occasionally.	Each social assistant who is interested could gain further experience within the structure of the Agency Vision. The assistants are not engaged with any particular trainings and don't have an opportunity to gain further knowledge in their particular field of work.	Methodological Pedagogical Centre provides training of different levels. But there is no guarantee of the quality of such training.	There is no longer any government funding for support staff training. Learning Supporters' professional development is up to their school and their (seriously depleted) budget.
Support for assistants	Full Support by the Head of the Service. If it is necessary, the head of the service can also organize formal supervision. And the assistants network with other colleagues to discuss their problems. Once a month a regular's table takes place.	Assistants can ask for help from: - the SEN teacher responsible for the student - the specialists visiting the school and working with the student - the mainstream teacher responsible for the student Over the time, the work of the assistants is controlled/managed by the SEN teacher.	Full support by the Social Service Specialist in charge of the service as well as by other staff of the Agency if needed. Support groups with a Psychologist are organised twice per year. There is a need of organising information meetings, trainings, seminars etc. in order to provide a greater support to the assistants.	There are some trainings and methodological workshops on the various theme of inclusive education, organised mostly by state Methodological Centres, a few organised by Ministry of Education, very few from Universities (mostly pedagogical sciences), but there are not so often (1-2times per year, lasting 1-5 days), but they are focused to the background of inclusive education, legislative and very basic information and mostly nothing new for the practice. Some of better methodological and practical developmental courses on these issues we can learn from seminars and workshops organised by NGOs.	There is no national structure, this, too, is at the discretion of the school.
Job security and career progressive	The job security is very low because of the 1:1 support. School assistance is mostly a temporary job.	Progression of careers within the public and private organizations is "frozen" due to the financial crisis of the country and to financial difficulties of the employer organizations. In terms of job security, the General Labour Legislation regulates the conditions in which contractual situations should be with/without a term or service provider, as well as the appropriate conditions to renew/end a contract within or before the defined term.	The level of job security is relatively high, however, the job position of a Social Assistant is not really attractive to young people due to the low salaries and the not particularly attractive working conditions.	When some of school assistants are developed for professionals with higher quality in school assistance to pupils with disabilities, they often leave in order to better rated job with higher salary and so the pupil with disabilities is hardly getting used to a new school assistant. There is still a problem for personal assistant to be with child with disabilities during lessons at school, because school directors are not very open to this alternative, although personal assistant is paid by parents.	There is very little job security. If you are an assistant you are a learning supporter employed to work with a particular pupil and that pupil leaves the school, you stand to lose your job. (1:1 model)

Profile of workforce	female, Austrian nationality, age between 35-45, no impairment, do this job for 2-3 years	female or male, Portuguese nationality, age between 25 and 65 years, no impairment, some are new to the job but the majority has experience. More recently people with Higher Education training in different fields (e.g. Education, Social Care) are working in this position. There are no restrictions related to having people with disability, from different nationalities or religion on the job. The context where we operate does not have many foreign people.	female, Bulgarian nationality, age between 25 and 55 years	female, no pedagogical practice before, no pedagogical qualification	female, British nationality, no impairment
Contractual situation	Fixed-term contracts (beginning of the school year until the end of the school year) 12-37 hours work per week	contract as permanent workers contract as a service provider contract without a defined term contract with a defined term labour market integration special contract	part-time and full-time labour contracts (4 or 8 hours work per day)	mostly part-time or full-time, mostly not permanent, only some concrete period (mostly for 1 year)	Assistants tend to be employed for a set number of hours to support the learning of specific pupils. This means there is no provision for them to have liaison meetings, plan or attend reviews of the pupils they support – many do this voluntarily.