HEY!
TEACHERS,
DON'T LEAVE
THE KIDS ALONE.

RESEARCH
REPORT

IO1 Transnational Analysis

Erasmus + KA2 Strategic Partnership

School Education

Hey, Techers! Don't leave the kids alone

Research report

IO 1 Transnational Analysis

Table of Contents

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Overview of the Study

In order to develop activities aimed at the creation of a more integrated model of education, and to undertake activities supporting pupils with special educational needs, their families and teachers, it is necessary to determine and analyse the needs of all three target groups.

Definitions of Key Terms

Need – an internal feeling of deficiency, which activates perception, thinking and acting to transform the existing state perceived by an individual(s) as unsatisfactory in a specific sphere of functioning of a human being: biopsychical, social or cultural.
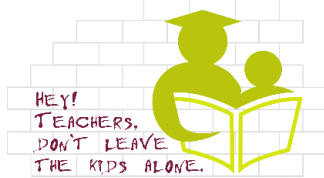
Child with special educational needs (child with SEN, SEN child)– a child with a spectrum of symptoms that make it difficult or impossible to function in terms of motor, sensory, cognitive, communication, emotional and social and/or mental skills, having an impact on the quality of life and the performance of social roles today and/or in the future. a child

Child without special educational needs (child without SEN) - a child without a spectrum of symptoms precluding or impeding physical, cognitive, emotional or social functioning

Inclusive education – a long process aimed at the development of the adaptation abilities of schools in the context of adjusting conditions to the pupils' needs regardless of how diverse they are. Inclusive schools should provide education to pupils with all kinds of disability, representing different social backgrounds.

Disability – each limitation or inability (resulting from disability) to lead an active life in a manner or scope considered typical of people. This concerns: the deaf and hard-of-hearing, the blind and visually impaired, and the physically and mentally disabled.

Social exclusion – a situation making it impossible or difficult for an individual or a group to legally perform their social roles, use the public goods and social infrastructure, and to gather resources and earn a living in a dignified manner, as a result of stigmatising and labelling certain categories of people, and imposing on them a certain perspective on the way they perceive themselves and their situation.

Research Objectives

The main aims of this needs analysis were:

- to identify the competencies and difficulties in the role of teachers following the objectives of inclusive education in their work;
- to determine the needs of children with special educational needs, and their families;
- to make an analysis of personal competencies and resources (including their effectiveness, methodology and the social support received), allowing for determination of areas in which activities could be undertaken in the second part of the project to stimulate effective cooperation between the three groups being studied (teachers, pupils and the pupils' families).

Research Methods

Firstly, to identify the opinions of teachers, parents and children/pupils on the difficulties and successes of inclusive education, 3 questionnaires were prepared based on a list of issues to be included in later focus group interviews.

Then, to extend knowledge of the needs of teachers, pupils and parents, the focus groups were arranged. Face-to-face conversations between people representing the three groups surveyed made it possible to specify and extend the hypotheses put forward, based on the previous questionnaires, and to formulate initial recommendations for specific activities during the next stage of the project.

Additionally, to create an in-depth analysis of the situation of inclusive education in each country, a literature overview was made.

The research was carried out in accordance with ethical standards. Before the research, all participants were presented with and explained the aim of the survey. They were also informed about the methods and conditions of the survey, and about the expected scientific benefits. Each person was aware of the possibility to resign at any time resign from taking part in the survey and should give a consent to participate in the project. The documents concerning teachers, parents and children were confidential, and the information obtained in relation to the conducted survey were only used for scientific purposes.

The knowledge acquired provided the basis for the development of the handbook, and the training and workshop curricula.

Individual Interviews
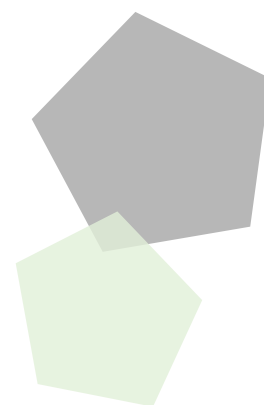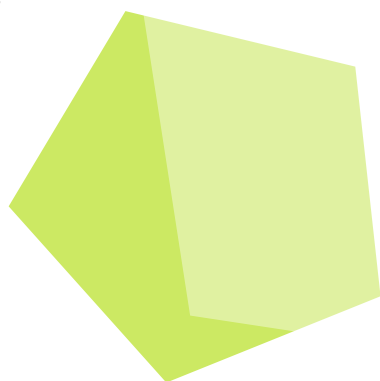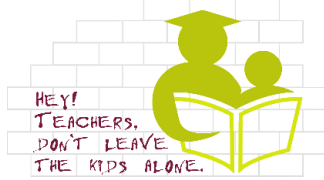
Course of the Interviews

All questionnaires include the main issues that need to be covered during interviews with all respondents. In the case of some of these issues, additional questions were provided to obtain more detailed information about the respondents and their life situation.

In the questionnaire for teachers employed in primary schools, these issues are classified into 4 main areas:

- Teachers' opinions about inclusive education;
- The readiness of the school environment to address the special educational needs of pupils;
- Teachers' qualifications for, competencies and difficulties with inclusive education;
- Teachers' relationships with the families of pupils with special educational needs.

In the questionnaire for pupils/children, the issues covered are part of the following areas:

- Relationships with teachers;
- Relationships with peers;
- The need for support, its forms and availability;
- Assessment of the level of social well-being.

In the questionnaire for parents of pupils/children, the issues covered are part of the following areas:

- Parents' opinions about inclusive education;
- Relationships with teachers;
- Relationships with children/pupils;
- The need for support, its forms and availability;
- Assessment of the level of social well-being.

Participants

In order to obtain information, it was necessary to establish cooperation with primary schools where teachers implemented the objectives of inclusive education into their work with pupils or (at least) use its elements. School employees, delegated by the headmaster, indicated pupils at risk of exclusion for both socioeconomic and health reasons and their parents.

Three groups of participants were included in the first part of the research:

- Primary school teachers;
- Primary schools pupils with special educational needs;
- Parents/Legal guardians of pupils with special educational needs.

According to basic assumptions the teachers were currently employed in primary schools, working within the current of inclusive education. Primary school pupils with special educational needs needed to be covered by inclusive education. The study included pupils aged 7-13 years who can refer to the idea and experiences connected with inclusive education in retrospect. The group of pupils surveyed included between 8 to 12 children: rejected for socio-economic reasons and health-related reasons (e.g. with disability, dyslexia, ADHD etc.) (2 girls and 2 boys). The last group consisted of parents of chosen pupils with special educational needs. Considering the fact that the survey was voluntary at least one parent of each child took part in the survey. It was not necessary for both parents to take part in the interview.

PARENTS

Country	No. of participants*				Age		
	All	M	F	U	Range	Mean	SD**
Cyprus	9	0	9	0	35-50	40.22	4.60
Italy	4	1	3	0	30-43	39.00	6.10
Lithuania	12	1	11	0	24-46	35.00	6.87
Poland	8	0	8	0	29-37	33.25	2.61
Slovenia	8	1	7	0	36-52	42.13	5.49
All	41	3	38	0	24-52	37.59	6.16

*M – Male, F – Female, U – Unknown; **SD – Standard deviation

As in the group of teachers, most of the parents were also female (92.7%). Only 7.3% were male. Analysis of marital status revealed that 26.8% were married, 65.9% were unmarried, and 7.3% did not answer the question.

TEACHERS

Country	No. of participants*				Age		
	All	M	F	U	Range	Mean	SD**
Cyprus	9	0	9	0	38-49	42.67	3.78
Italy	12	0	8	4	36-62	50.40	10.55
Lithuania	10	0	10	0	24-55	37.50	10.82
Poland	8	0	8	0	27-51	36.25	7.92
Slovenia	8	2	6	0	31-52	41.25	10.01
All	49	2	41	6	24-62	40.78	9.50

*M – Male, F – Female, U – Unknown; **SD – Standard deviation

Analysis of the teachers showed that 83.7% were female, 4.1% male and 12.2% unknown. Their average age was almost 41, and their work experience ranged from 3 to 40 years (M – 17.22; SD – 10.32). In terms of the differences in the school systems in the four countries, the subjects taught differed from being all subjects in Lithuania, Poland and Cyprus, through to variations in Maths, Science, Geography and Sport in Italy and Slovenia, to different combinations of mother tongues/second languages in Lithuania, Poland, Italy and Slovenia.

CHILDREN

Country	No. of participants*				Age		
	All	M	F	U	Range	Mean	SD**
Cyprus	9	5	4	0	9-12	10.56	1.33
Italy	8	4	4	0	10-12	10.44	0.73
Lithuania	12	6	6	0	7-11	8.92	1.16
Poland	8	4	4	0	9-12	10.25	1.28
Slovenia	8	5	3	0	10-13	12.00	1.20
All	45	21	24	0	7-13	10.30	1.52

*M – Male, F – Female, U – Unknown; **SD – Standard deviation

The ratio of boys (53.3%) to girls (46.7%) was almost equal. In all countries, children were approximately the same age, attending all the classes within the primary school.

Results

Opinions about inclusive education

Definition of inclusive education
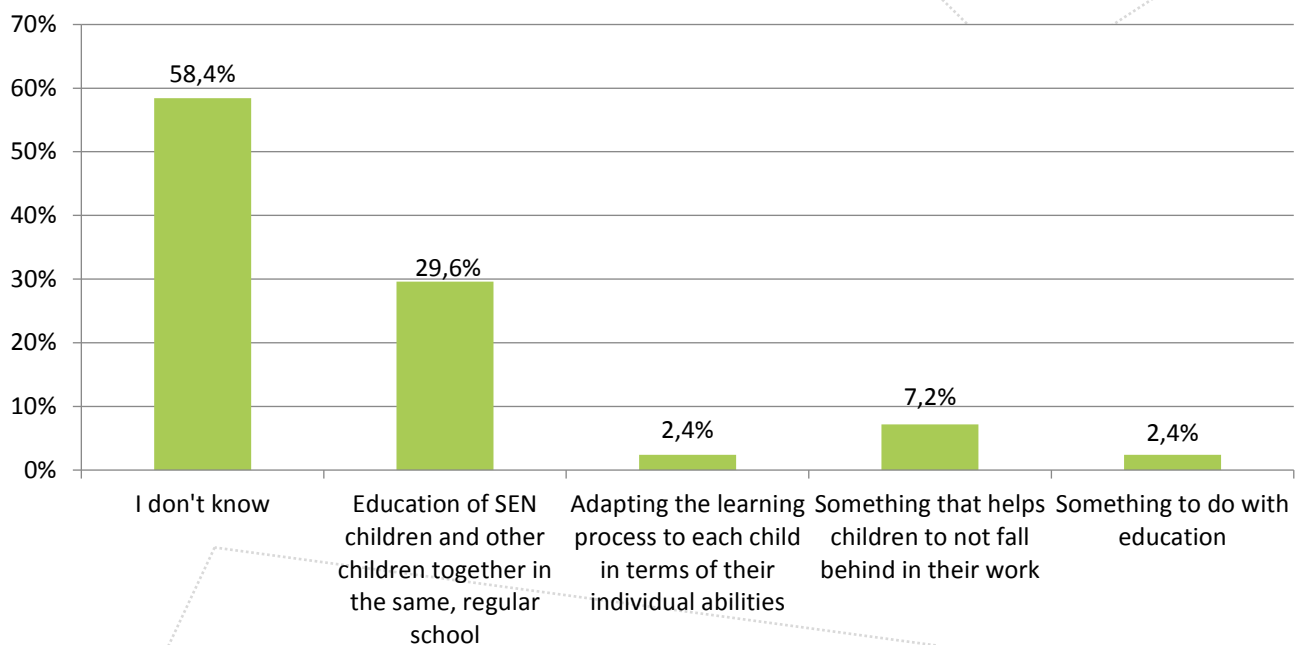
More than 50% of parents did not know the term "inclusive education". Most of the other parents thought it meant including children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)[1] (mainly the disabled) into the educational process without discrimination. Analysis of the results by country revealed that this definition was most often given by parents in Slovenia, whereas in Cyprus, Italy, Lithuania and Poland, most parents didn't know exactly what inclusive education was.

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[1] In this report, the abbreviation 'SEN' will be used instead of the complete phrasing.
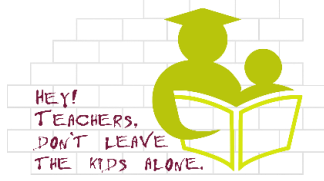
Do SEN children follow the same educational curriculum as their peers? ('inclusive education')
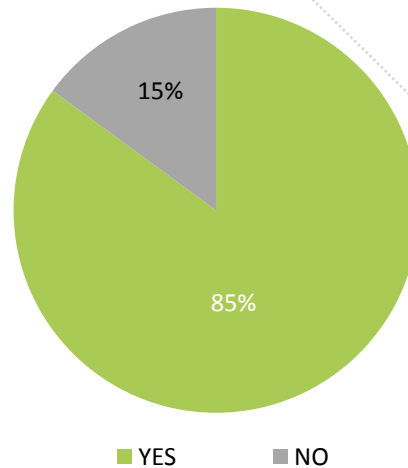
Most of the parents claimed that SEN children do indeed follow the same program as other children in their class. Only in Cyprus and Lithuania did the parents have a different opinion – in Cyprus 55.6% and in Lithuania 8.3% answered that there is a difference in the educational curriculum for SEN children.

Opinions on the statement that SEN children feel different from their peers in school
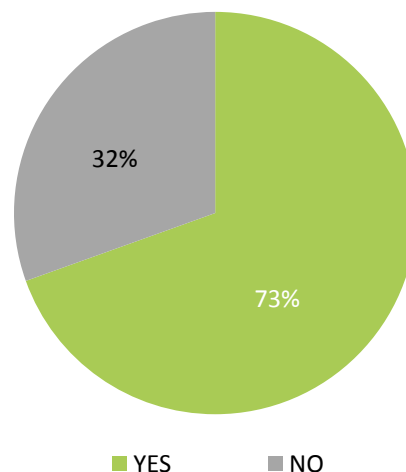
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Almost three quarters of parents thought that SEN children feel different to their peer group. As for the reasons why, the parents gave the following responses:

- A lack of training in society;
- Different learning hours in school;
- Difficulties with the learning process and following the curriculum;
- The lack of acceptance of differences within their peer group;
- Feeling not being fully understood;
- Not being able to participate in all class activities;
- Acceptance of bullying and teasing within their peer group;
- Labelling and devaluation of SEN children.

The explanations given by almost 1/3 of parents who thought that SEN children do *not* feel different, are as follows:

- Being and feeling equal;
- The lack of differentiation between young children;
- Acceptance and care in their peer group;
- Following the same curriculum;
- Involvement in school activities;
- Positive teacher attitudes.

Opinions on how SEN children overcome difficulties
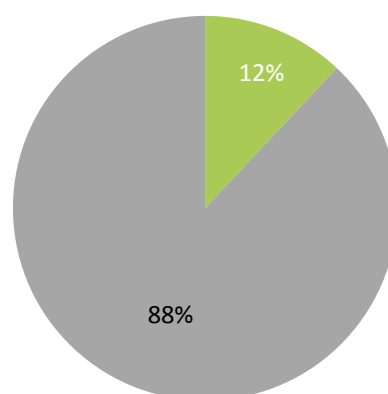
■ They try to overcome difficulties independently ■ They need help overcoming difficulties

Only 12.2% of parents stated that SEN children try to overcome their difficulties independently. They pointed out that this had often happened in social and educational areas, as well as in things that children are interested in during some after-school activities.

The parents who claimed that SEN children need help in overcoming difficulties thought that help was especially important in emotional and educational areas, when self-esteem or independence was at stake, or in terms of social contact and handling peer rejection.

Advantages of inclusive education

gaining self-confidence

preparation for the future life

fast development

better educational results

individual treatment

feeling equal and accepted

increasing the level of socialization

eliminating deficits

participating in additional activities

not being isolated
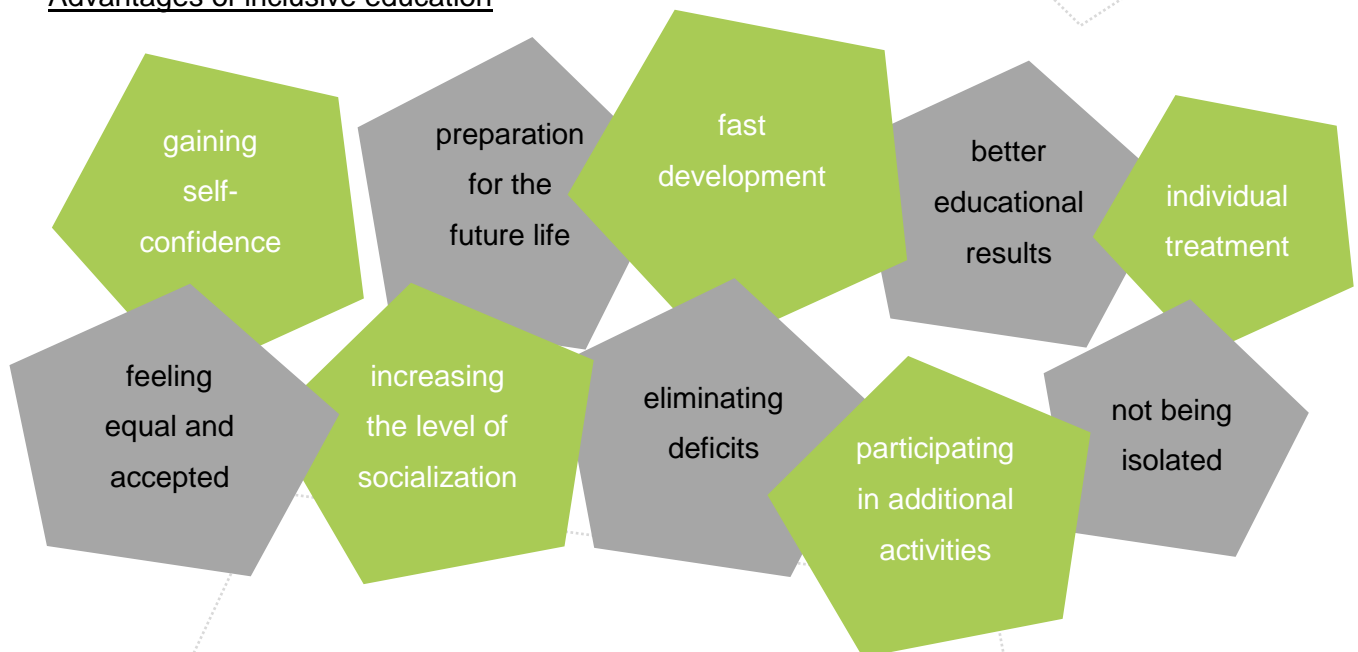
Parents pointed out that the main advantage of inclusive education is that all pupils feel equal and are not stigmatized. Additionally, SEN children are treated individually and could develop compensatory tools that would help them adapt to their peer group and feel both adequate and accepted. They also have the possibility of participating in different activities and acquiring knowledge – because of that, they can follow the same educational curriculum.

Disadvantages of inclusive education

increased teasing and bullying

additional work for teachers

insufficient teacher training

financial problems

not enough time for the children

architectonic barriers

inability to follow the program

negligence of healthy children

parents opposition

being isolated
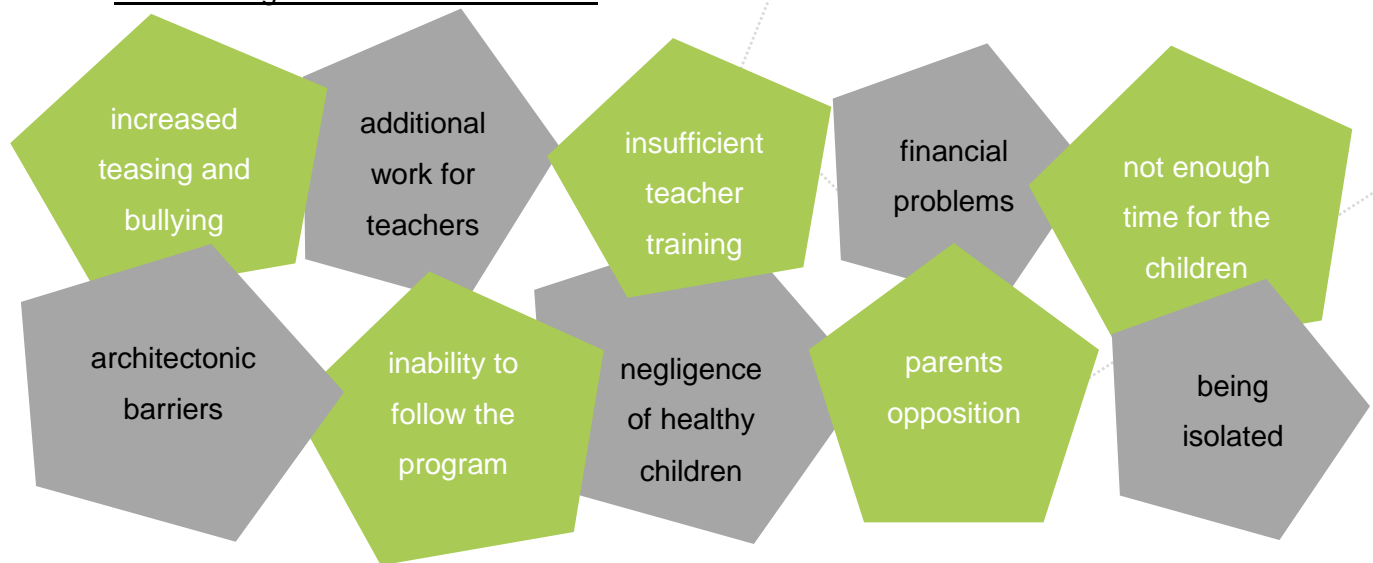
Parents felt that inclusive education may not solve a difficult educational situation, especially because of the financial problems in their country and the lack of appropriate training for teachers. Moreover, there is the possibility that teasing and bullying could occur more often, and that the level of tolerance within their peer group would drop.

Opinions on psychological and pedagogical help

Category	Percentage
sufficient*	24%
adequate	17%
insufficient	27%
no opinion	32%
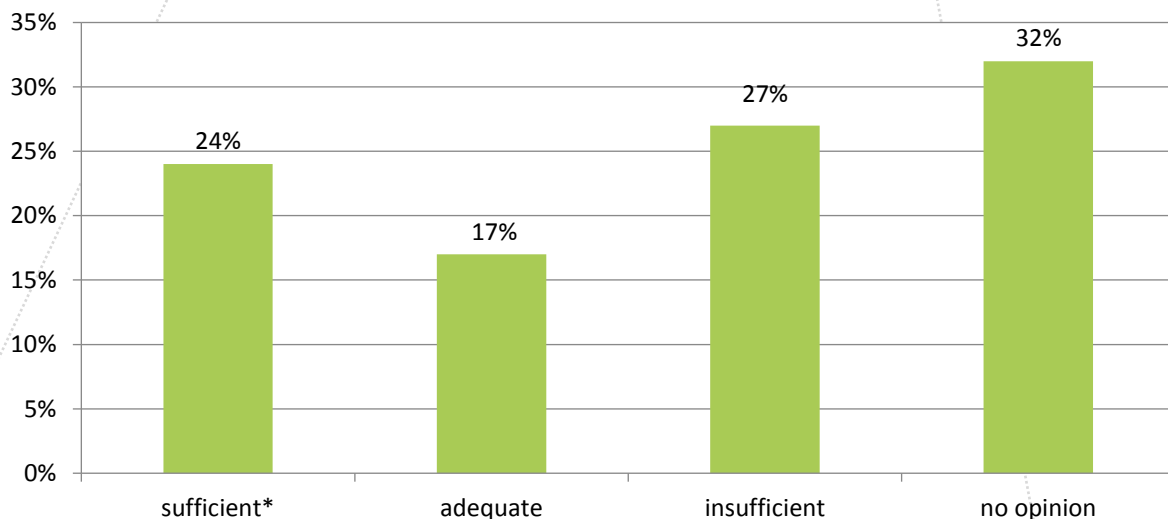
*data from 4 persons is missing

More than a quarter of parents (27%) claimed that help from psychologists and educational specialists was insufficient, whereas there were 24% fully satisfied with psychological and pedagogical help. In Slovenia, almost 62.5% of parents were pleased with the help offered, while in Cyprus and Italy about 50% were, and in Poland only 37.5%. In Lithuania most of parents (67%) did not have any opinion.

Cooperation between teachers and parents

Opinions on the cooperation between parents and teachers
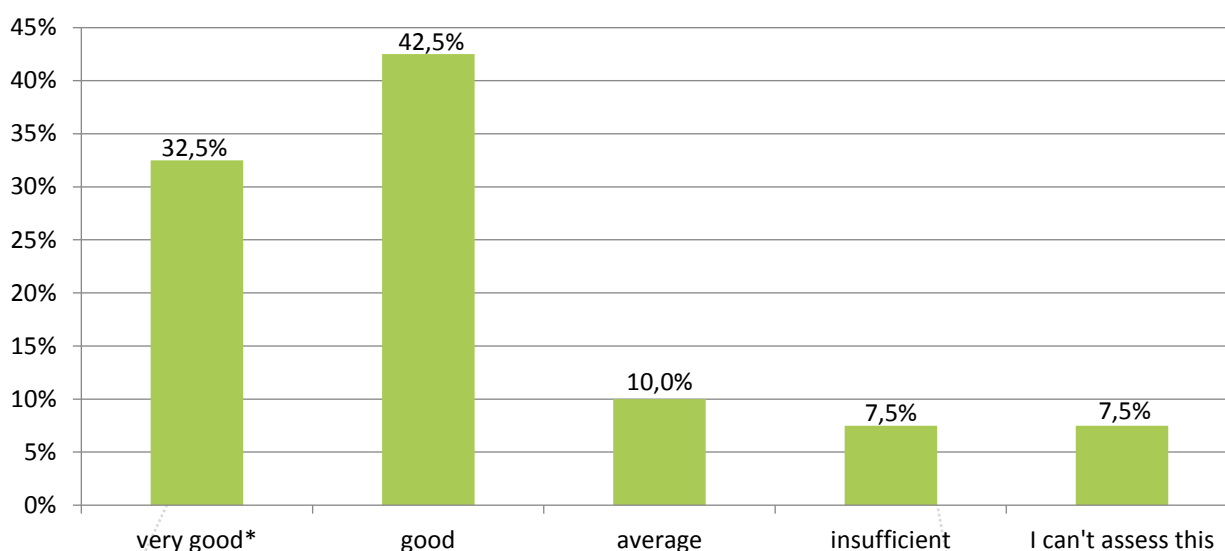
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75% of the parents assessed the cooperation with teachers as being good or very good. Only 6 parents stated that it was average or worse. Analysis of the results by country revealed that in Italy, all parents were satisfied with their collaboration with the teachers, whereas in Slovenia, Cyprus, Lithuania and Poland there were parents who felt dissatisfied with it.
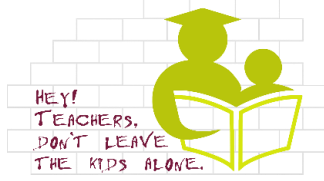
Opinions on the statement that teachers are trained to work with SEN children

■ YES　　■ NO
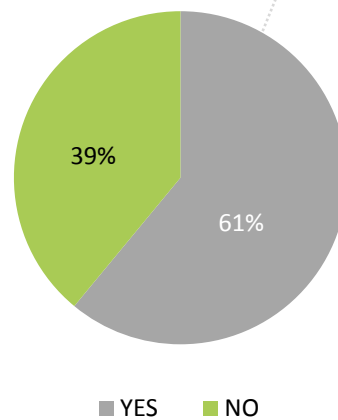
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Most of the parents (61%) thought that their teachers are qualified enough to work with SEN children. The reasons they gave for this opinion were that the teachers:

- know how to explain difficult issues to SEN children;
- adjust their classroom plan to meet the needs of the SEN children;
- follow the newest teaching methods;
- react to specific behaviour as quickly as possible;
- have appropriate competences;
- are willing to help;
- are patient;

However, more than one third felt that the level of their teachers' qualifications was not high. The reasons they gave for this opinion were that the teachers:

- had problems giving individual treatment, especially in big classes;
- did not recognise the special needs of children;
- had difficulties reacting appropriately to specific behaviours;
- thought that only their opinion was correct;
- did not take into account the parents' suggestions.

The different forms of cooperation between teachers and the parents of SEN children

Forms of contact	No. of parents	Percentage
Teachers run comprehensive rehabilitation programmes for their SEN pupils	18	44%
Teachers instruct parents on how to deal with difficult educational tasks	26	63%
Teachers talk about the possibilities and needs of SEN children	19	46%
Teachers inform parents about institutions that can help them	18	44%
Teachers inform parents about the rights of SEN children	20	49%
Teachers talk to parents about their responsibilities (such as performing medical procedures and the child's use of medication on school grounds)	17	42%
Teachers agree with the parents on the principles of cooperation and implementation of recommendations at home	22	54%

Almost half of the parents stated that their teachers do implement comprehensive rehabilitation programmes for their SEN children (44%), talking about their possibilities and needs (including informing the parents about the rights of SEN children).63% claimed that they give the parents some instruction in case of difficult educational situations. Additionally, some differences between countries were discovered – for comparison, the main forms of cooperation in each country are listed below.

CYPRUS

Comprehensive rehabilitation programmes

Instructing parents

Talking about possibilities

Informing about children's rights

Talking about parental responsibilities

Agreeing the principles of cooperation

Other: meeting with direct intervention teams

ITALY

Agreeing the principles of cooperation

LITHUANIA

Comprehensive rehabilitation programmes

Instructing parents

Talking about possibilities

Informing about helpful institutions

Informing about children's rights

Talking about parental responsibilities

Agreeing the principles of cooperation

direct intervention team meetings

POLAND

Comprehensive rehabilitation programmes

Instructing parents

Talking about possibilities

Informing about helpful institutions

Informing about children's rights

Talking about parental responsibilities

Agreeing the principles of cooperation

Other: meetings, suggesting penalties and rewards

SLOVENIA

Instructing parents

Agreeing upon the principles of cooperation

The benefits of cooperation between teachers and parents

The parents interviewed mentioned the following as benefits of their collaboration with their teachers:

- faster educational, social and psychological development of their SEN child;

- cooperation learning;

- appropriate recognition of their child's needs;

- better educational results;

- easier organisation of the teaching process;

- individual approach to pupils;

- quicker socialization of their SEN child;

- knowing the educational plan for their SEN child in advance;

- mutual help between parents and teachers;

- being able to have a more comprehensive influence on their SEN child in the classroom.

Difficulties in the cooperation between teachers and parents

The parents stated the following difficulties in their collaboration with their teachers:

- communication failures, for example differences in understanding a problem or delayed information about SEN children difficulties;

- problems with coordinating meetings because of other obligations, mainly differing work schedules;

- putting too much pressure on teachers;

- inappropriate and unrealistic teacher attitudes;

- forcing the child to learn;

- a lack of willingness and energy (on both sides);

- low ability to recognise children's problems.
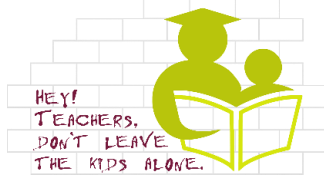
Are the results of teachers and parents working together visible?

25%

75%

■ YES ■ NO
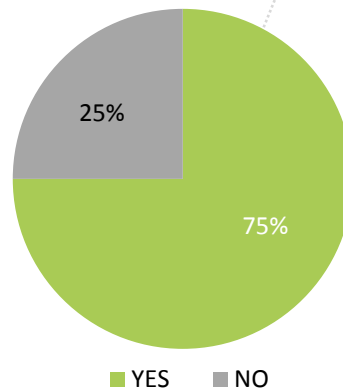
*data from 2 persons was missing

Three quarters of the parents claimed that they could see the results of their collaboration with their SEN child's teachers. The main effects perceived are:

- better behaviour of their SEN child;
- increased knowledge of their child's behaviour in different surroundings;
- increased trust between parents and teachers;
- improvement in parent-teacher-child communication;
- increased self-esteem of the SEN child;
- possibility of following their SEN child's progress;
- higher SEN children motivation to work and learn;
- increased teacher sensitivity to the SEN child's special needs.
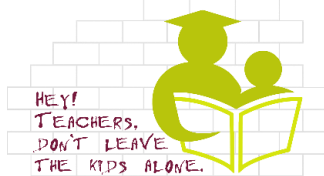
Opinions on the frequency of the conversation about child's opportunities and needs with teachers
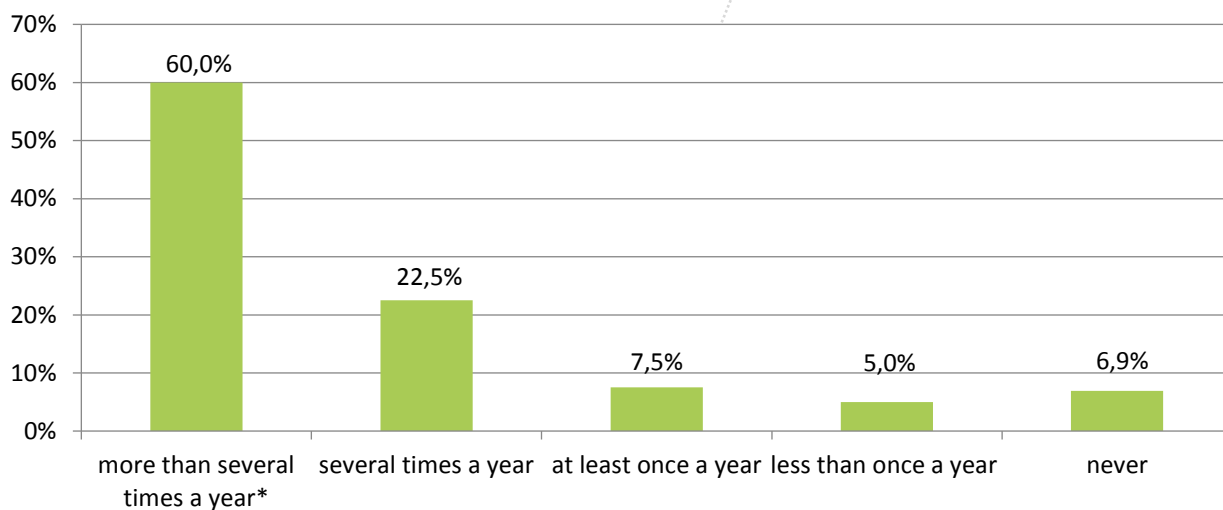
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Approximately 83% of parents answered that they talk with their SEN child's teachers about their child's functioning often – several times a year or more. 3 parents from Poland claimed that they had such a conversation less often – 1 parent said that it happened at least once a year, and 2 never.

Opinions on the extent of help offered by teachers to SEN children in difficult situations
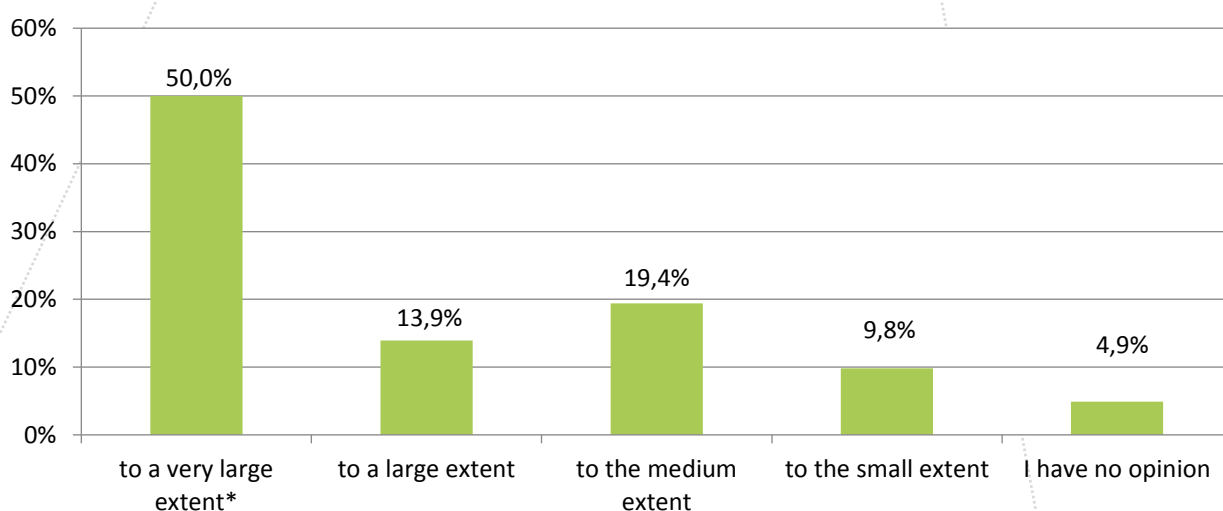
*data from 4 persons is missing

Almost 93% of the parents stated that the teachers do help their SEN child in various difficult situations. A half stated that the teachers support their children to a very great extent. Only 2 parents from Cyprus stated that the teachers did not help their SEN children in problematic moments.

<u>Do the teachers' have knowledge of the SEN child's family situation?</u>

■ YES ■ YES, but without details ■ NO
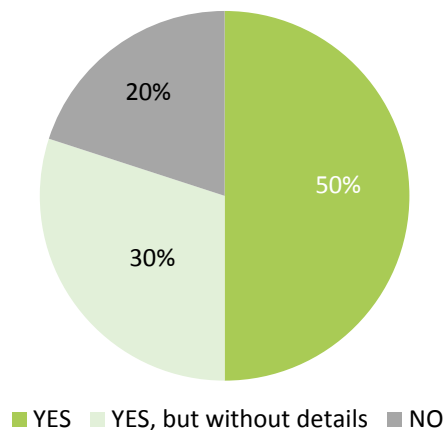
*data from 1 person was missing

Two thirds of parents revealed that the teacher is informed about their child's home situation, with more than a quarter claiming that the teacher knew only the general and most important issues. 2 parents from Lithuania, 1 from Slovenia and 1 from Cyprus mentioned that the teachers knew nothing about their SEN child's functioning and home life.

The SEN child in school

<u>Opinions on the child's desire to actually go to school</u>

■ POSITIVE ■ NEGATIVE
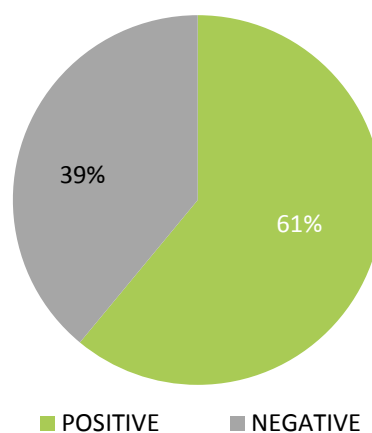
*data from 1 person was missing

More than a half of parents thought that their SEN child likes going to school, mainly because of the possibility of playing and spending time with their friends. As further explanation, parents also stated: being successful; having a good time; learning new things, and meeting new people. However, almost 40% of the parents stated that their child doesn't like going to school, mainly because they feel that they are under pressure, or are often teased by their peers. Additionally, SEN pupils have some learning difficulties, and as such school sometimes seems boring to them.

Opinions on the SEN child's attitude toward learning

POSITIVE, because the child:	**NEGATIVE**, because the child:
- likes learning new things; - wants to overcome difficulties; - learned that practise makes perfect; - feels more joy than frustration; - knows that learning is important; - is motivated.	- is not motivated enough; - doesn't like their lessons; - is bored; - feels like they don't have enough support; - has learning difficulties; - is bullied and teased by their peers.

Opinions on the SEN children's classroom behaviour

SEN Child's behaviour*	No. of YES answers	Percentage
My child takes an active part in the life of the class.	25	62.0%
My child has the satisfaction of being with their peer group.	33	80.4%
My child feels necessary in the class.	19	46.4%
My child is noticed by their peers.	28	68.2%
My child is invited by their peers to different events after school, such as birthdays.	27	65.9%
Peers willingly play with my child in team games.	32	78.0%

*depending on the question, data from 1 to 5 persons is missing

Almost two thirds of the parents thought that their children takes an active part in the life of their class. Usually, they stated that their classroom life was interesting for their SEN child, and that they wanted to socialize and contribute positively to their peer group. If there is a lack of participation, it is mainly because of shyness and problems with adapting quickly to situations in the classroom.

More than three quarters of parents claimed that their SEN child is satisfied with their peer relations, mainly because they have some friends with whom they can spend time. For the parents stating a situation of lower satisfaction, this usually occurred after being rejected by their peers.

Nearly half of the parents stated that their children felt included in the classroom, mostly because of their friends' positive attitude. However, almost 35% of the parents noted that their SEN child doesn't feel necessary. They stated that this is a consequence of negative relations with their peers, which include teasing, name-calling, laughing at them or just not listening and ignoring them.

Two thirds of the parents stated that their SEN child did feel valued by their friends. In explanation, they stated that this is because of their child's unique traits, untypical ideas and solutions to problems, and ability to easily entertain the group.

Approximately 65% of the parents stated that their SEN child is invited by their peers to different after-school events. Usually, this happens with their closest friends, who accept the child and like spending time with them.

Nearly 80% of the parents thought that their SEN child's peers willingly play with their child, mainly because they are successful, nice and/or sociable.

Opinions on their peers' attitude towards SEN children

60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

53,6% acceptance
19,5% indifference
10,3% ignoring
7,3% rejection
2,4% other
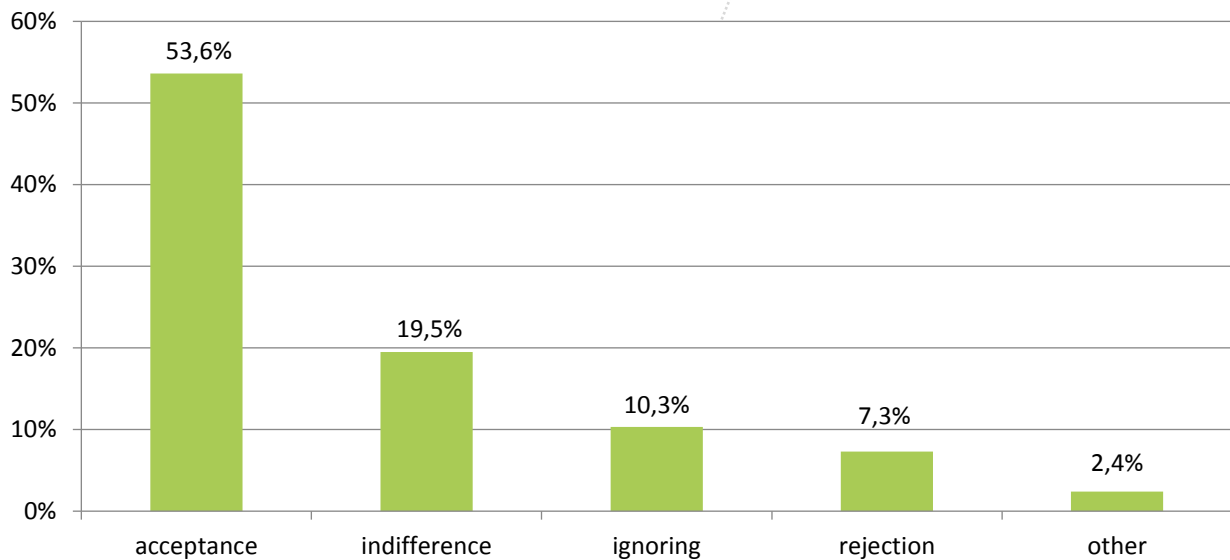
*data from 3 persons is missing

In terms of teacher attitudes as assessed by the parents, more than half of the parents agreed that the teachers' attitude toward their SEN child was accepting. Nearly one fifth felt that it was indifferent, and 1/10 claimed that their SEN child's teachers' attitude was actually negative.

70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

showing an interest: 24,3% / 43,2% / 32,5%
having the same expectations: 5,2% / 63,1% / 31,7%
having the same relationships: 44,7% / 21,0% / 34,3%

■ accepting of SEN children or treating them preferably than their healthy peers
■ treating both groups equitably
■ unaccepting of SEN children or treating them worse than their healthy peers
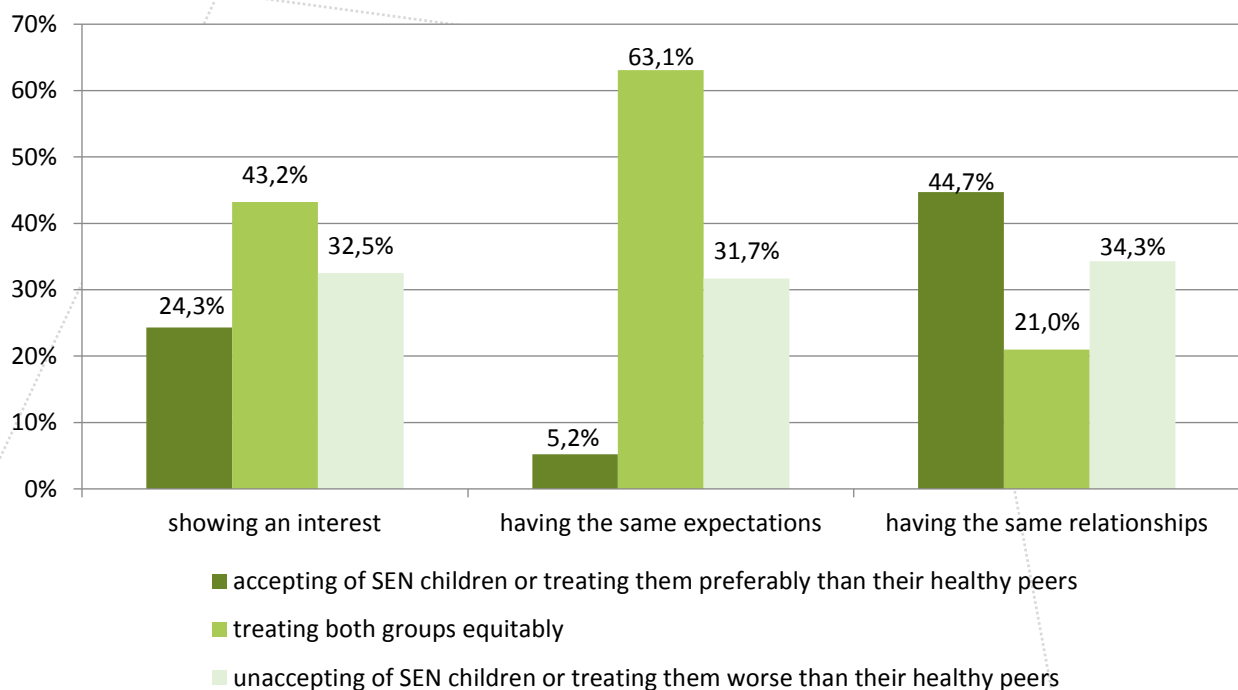
*depending on the question data from 2 to 4 persons is missing

Generally, the parents stated that their SEN children are treated similarly to their friends without SEN in the classroom. They thought that the teachers show as much interest in the SEN children as their peers. When analysing the teachers' expectations, though, the parents stated that they felt that the teachers required the same level of knowledge from the SEN children as from the other pupils. The only difference revealed was in terms of the teacher-pupil relationship, for which the parents stated that the teachers have better relations with the SEN children than with the other kids.

Opinions on additional classes/activities
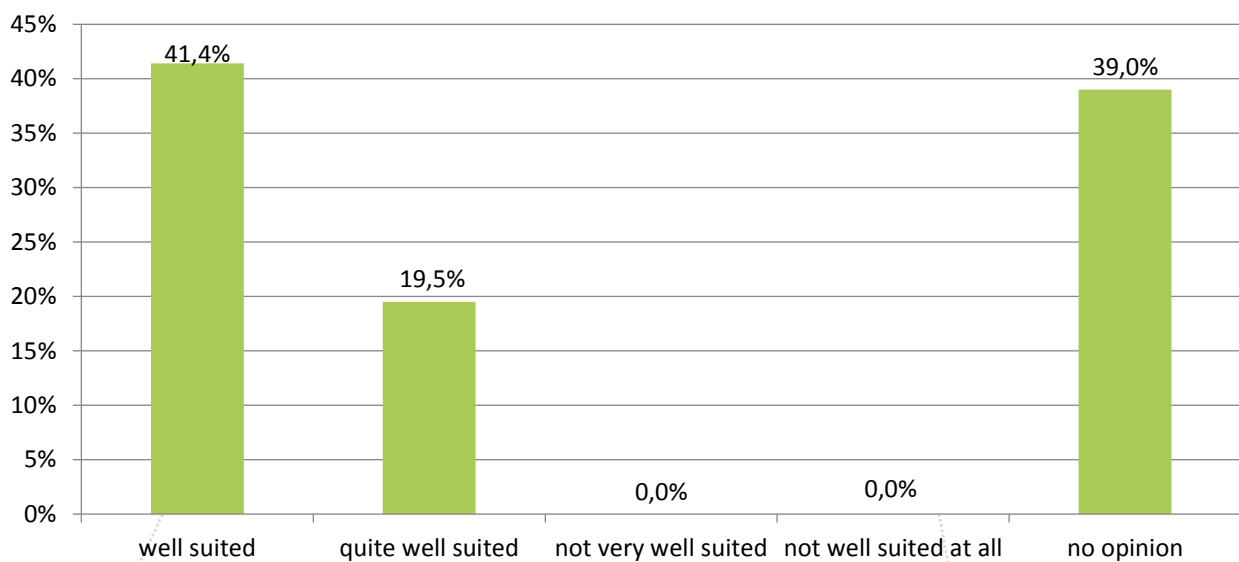
* data from 3 persons is missing

Most of the parents said that the additional classes and activities provided for the children in their SEN child's school are indeed adapted to SEN children's needs. Nobody claimed that they are not fully adapted, while almost 40% didn't have an opinion on this subject.

Welfare

<u>Feelings in recent months emerging from the debate on inclusive education</u>

■ Are you satisfied with the fact that your child is receiving an inclusive education?

■ Do you feel that inclusive education brings something important to society?

■ Do you feel that people are basically good?
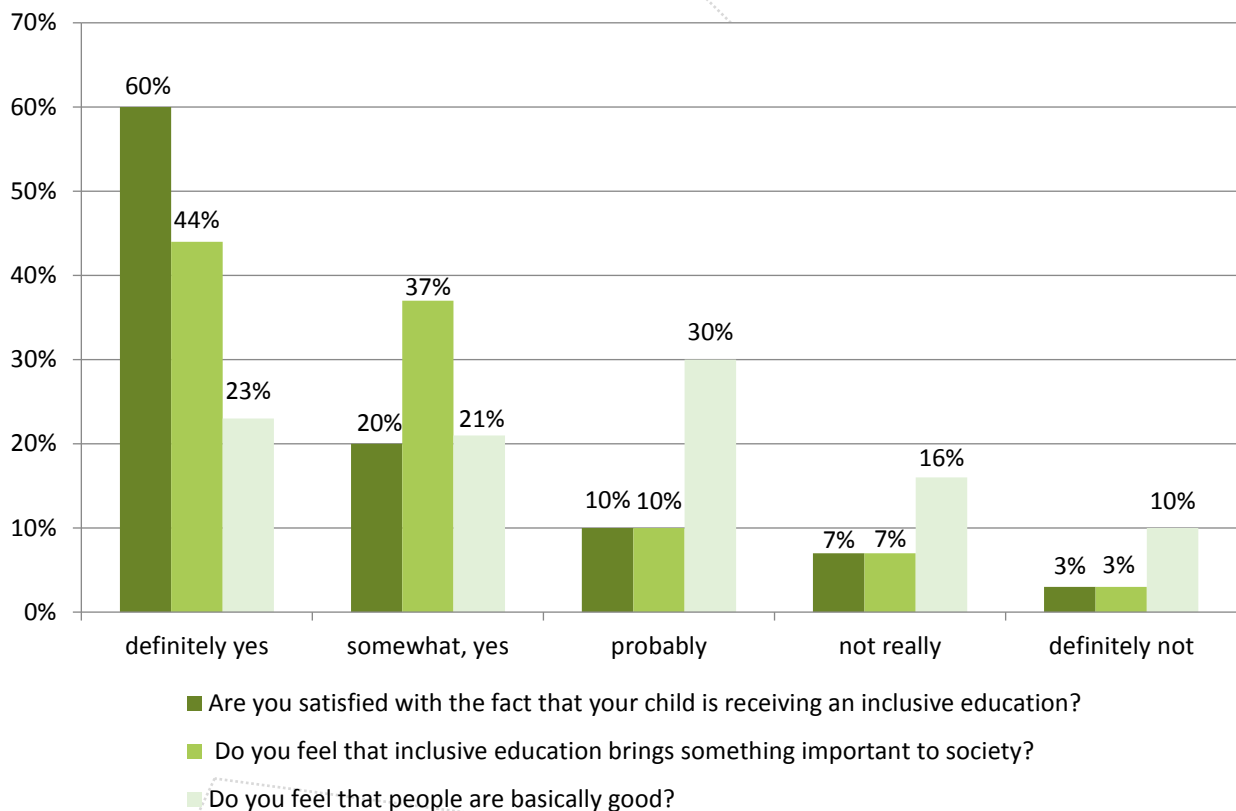
*depending on the question, data from 1 to 6 persons is missing

80% of parents reported that they feel satisfied with the fact that their children are part of an inclusive education curriculum. A few parents said that they were slightly satisfied, and 10% were unsatisfied. The parents also stated that inclusive education is important in terms of the situation and development of society. They also mentioned that in their opinion people are basically good, but this statement was fully confirmed only by half of them – other parents had some doubts.

- Do you feel that society is a good place - or is becoming a better place - to live in for all people (healthy and ill/disabled)?
- Do you feel as though you belong to a community (e.g. as a teacher, parent, therapist, etc)?

- Do you feel that the way that the way inclusive education is implemented in your country makes sense?
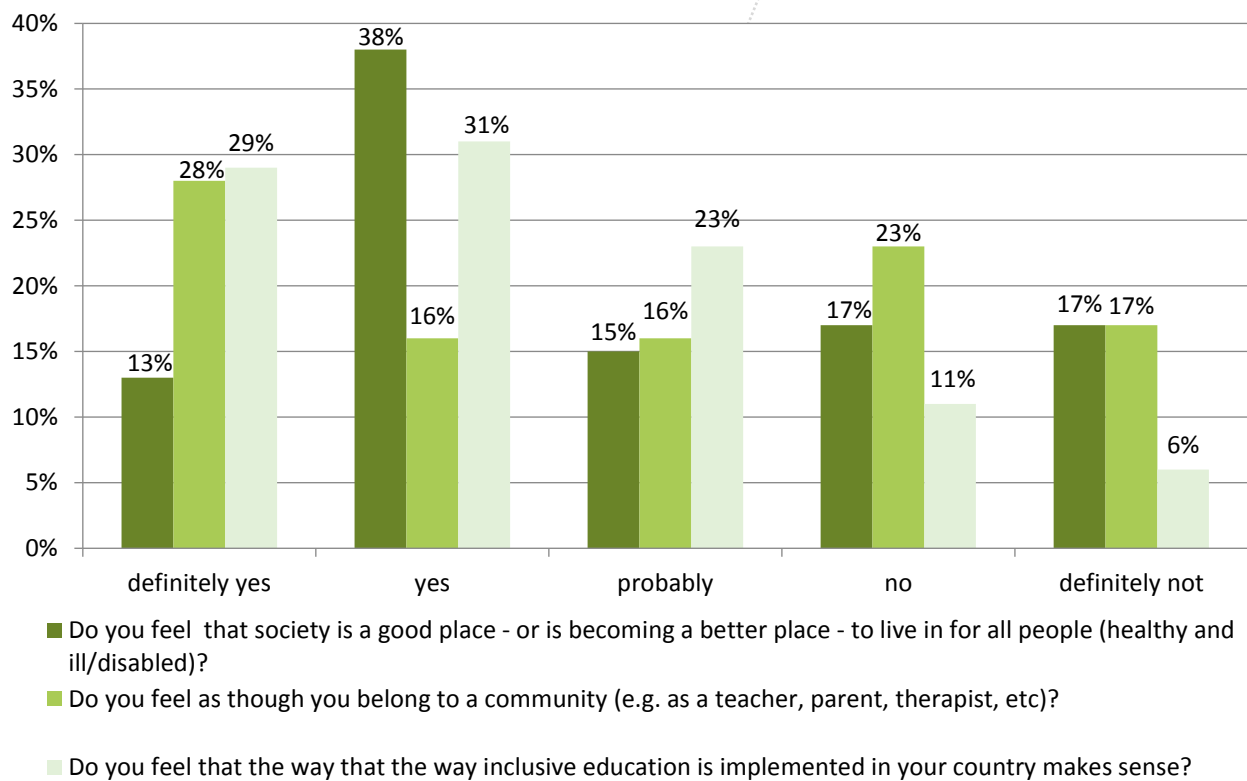
*depending on the question, data from 1 to 6 persons is missing

Most of the parents confirmed that society is, or has become, a good place to live in for all people, however, opinions still varied: 51% of parents agreed, 15% partially agreed, and 34% had a different view. Participants also rather stated that they do feel as though they belonged to a community, but there were also parents who didn't feel that kind of group support. Finally, almost 60% parents stated optimistically that the way inclusive education works in their countries does make some sense.

Relations with teachers

SEN children's opinions on their desire to go to school

■ like going   ■ sometimes like going, sometimes not   ■ don't like going
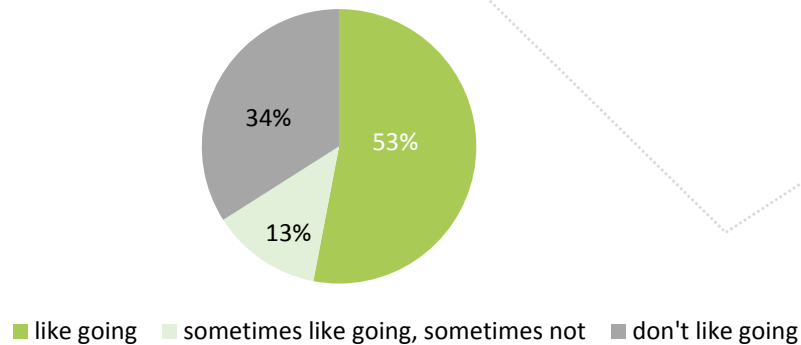
Most of the children like going to school, especially because they learn new things, attend classes they are really interested in and meet with friends. But more than one third of the pupils claimed that going to school is something they don't like, or even hate. Their explanations are that:

- school is boring and useless;
- learning is difficult and teachers' requirements are maladjusted to their possibilities;
- they have to wake up early;
- teachers easily get angry;
- their peers are unfriendly – they tease or bully and make fun of the SEN child.

SEN children's attitudes toward learning

■ accepting of SEN children or treating them preferably than their healthy peers

■ treating both groups equitably

■ unaccepting of SEN children or treating them worse than their healthy peers
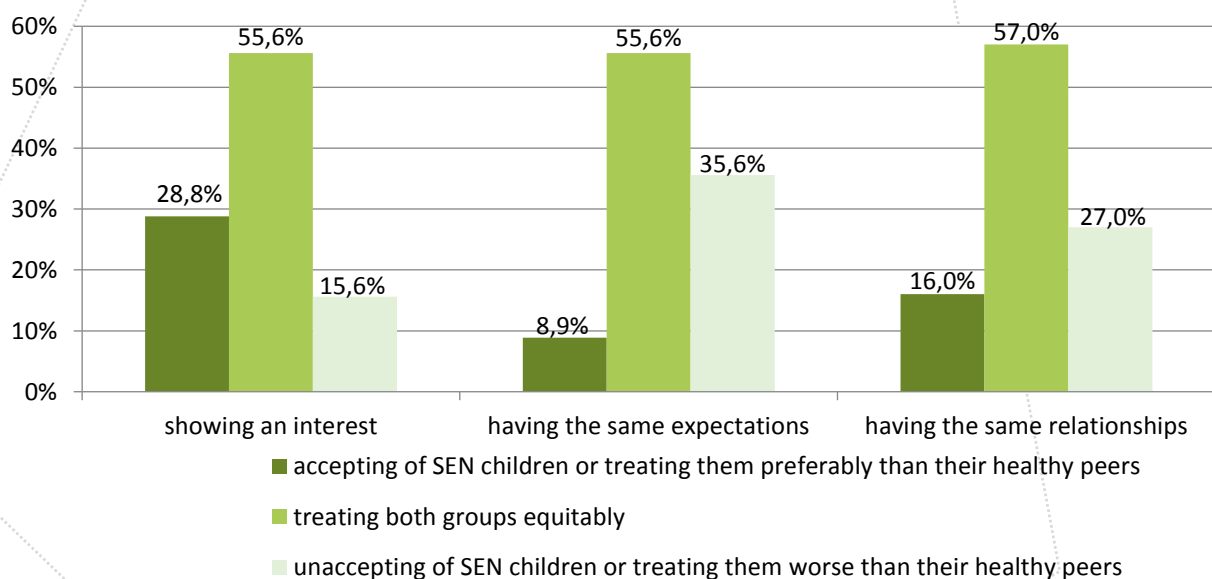
The SEN children we spoke to feel that they are treated by their teachers similarly to their friends. As before, there are 3 analysed areas here: their teachers' interest in them compared to their interest in the pupils without SEN; the teachers' expectations of the SEN child's knowledge, and the SEN children having as positive relationships with their teachers as the teachers do with their peers.

<u>Opinion on teachers' understanding and belief in their SEN pupils</u>
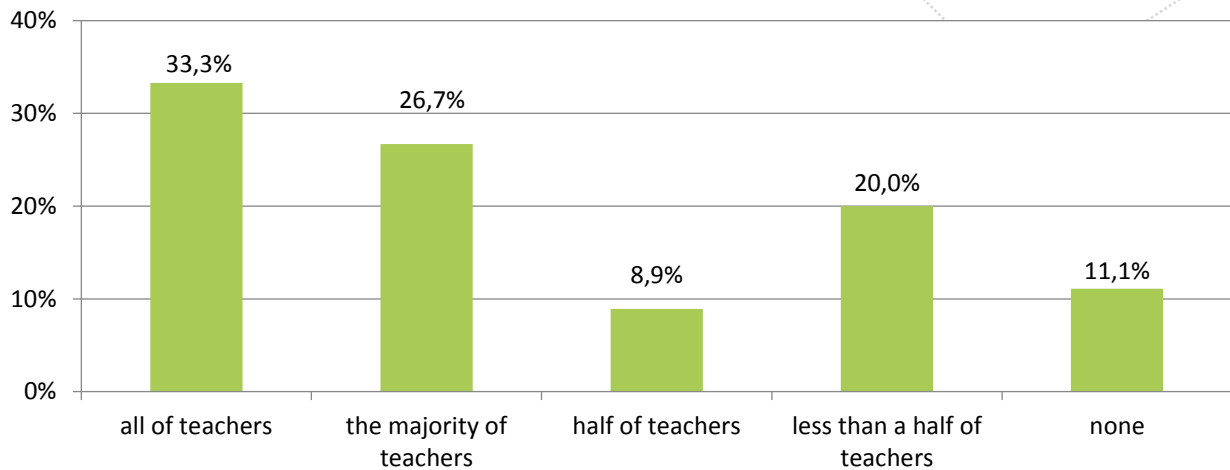
One third of the children stated that they could describe all of their teacher with the following statement: "My teacher gives me to understand that they believe in my abilities." There were also 14 pupils who confirmed that less than half of their teachers or none of them show them some understanding.

<u>Opinions on the help offered by teachers to SEN children in difficult situations</u>
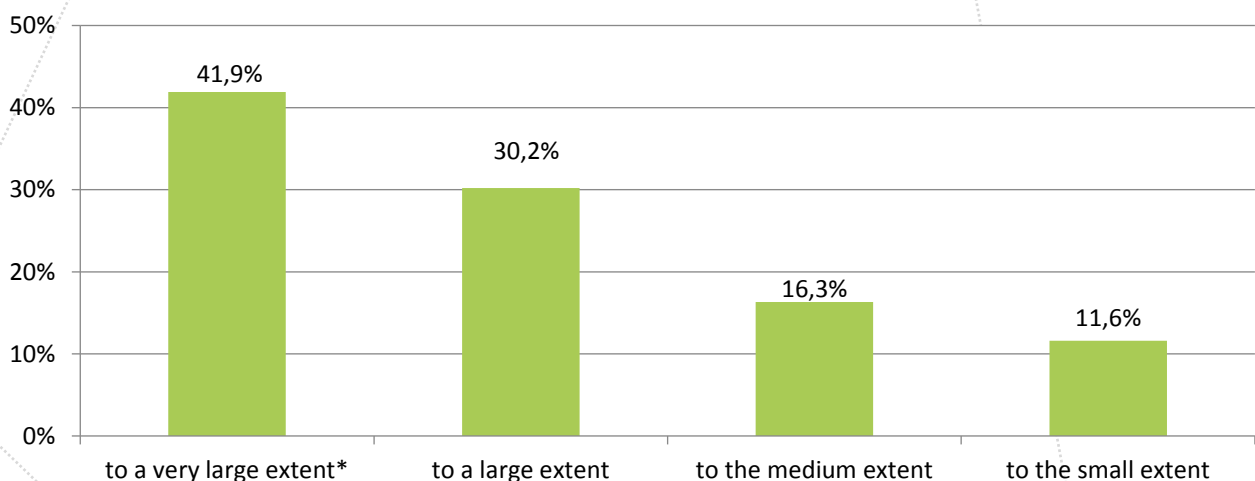
*data from 2 persons is missing

88% of pupils stated that their teachers are helpful and support them in difficult situations. Almost three quarters of them answered that the help was offered to a middling or great extent. Opinions stated in all countries were comparable.

Opinions on lessons with specialists
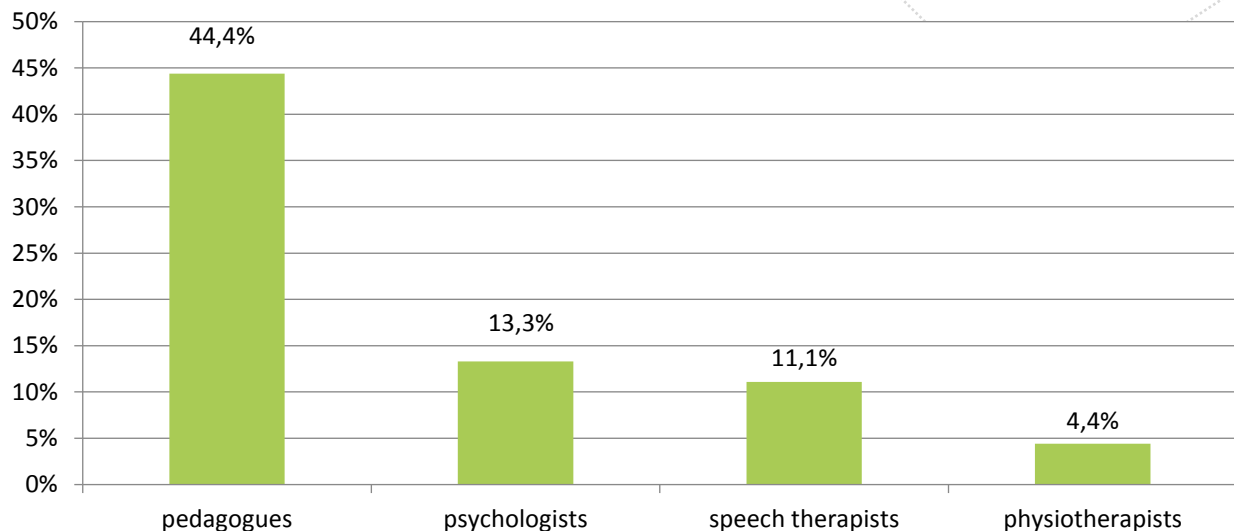
Almost two thirds of the SEN children have had lessons with a specialist at school. The most commonly-met are 'pedagogues', however more than a quarter of the pupils also mentioned meetings with other specialists, such as psychologists.

Relations with peers

How many friends do SEN pupils have?
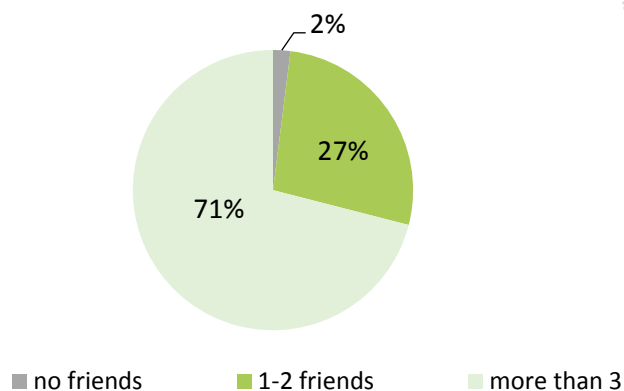
More than 70% of the SEN children surveyed stated that they have more than 3 friends. There was only one pupil who said that has no close friends in the classroom.

Opinions of SEN children on their peer relations
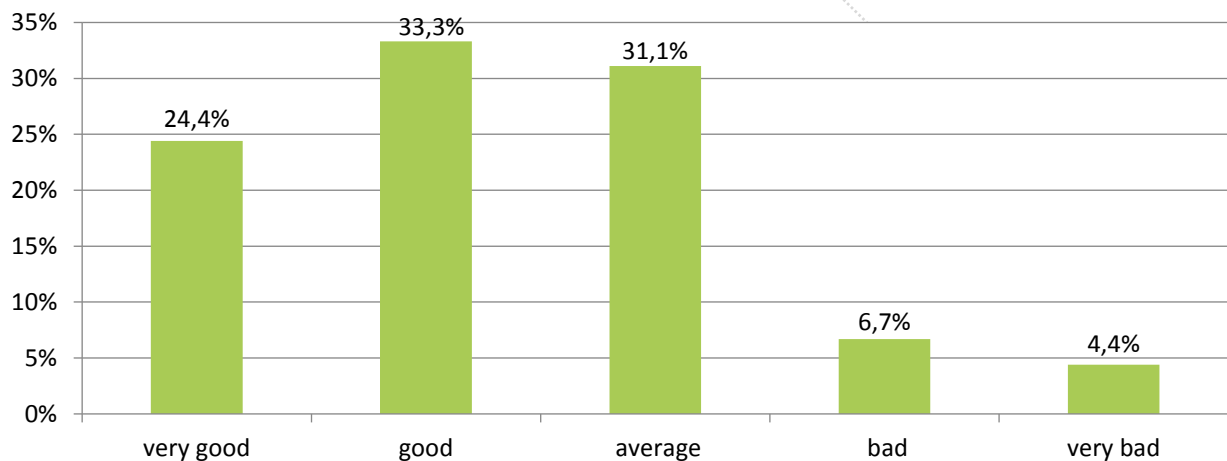
Almost 60% of the SEN children assessed their relations with their peers as being good or very good. The 3 pupils that claimed their relationships with their peers were bad were from Lithuania, Slovenia, Cyprus and Poland. In Italy, the children stated they have minimal average contact with their peers.

Opinions on classroom participation

Child's level of participation*	No. of YES answers	Percentage
I take an active part in the life of my class.	31	68.9%
I take satisfaction in being with my peer group.	35	77.8%
I feel necessary in my class.	29	64.4%
I am noticed by my peers.	33	73.3%
I am invited by my peers to different events after school, such as birthday parties.	33	73.3%
My peers willingly play with me in team games.	36	80.0%

*depending on the question, data from 1 to 6 persons is missing

Nearly 70% of the SEN children surveyed stated that they take an active part in the life of their class. They try to participate, because they like helping other classmates and their teachers. Additionally, the children pointed that as far as actual work goes, they do try to be good students and do raise their hands if they know the answer to a question. Lower in-class activity is connected mainly with being afraid of teasing and shouting.

77.8% of the SEN children stated that they feel satisfied being part of their peer group, especially because they enjoy spending time with friends and having fun with them. However, there were also pupils who felt uncomfortable in the classroom, mostly because of their peers' behaviour, such as teasing, hitting and arguing.

Two thirds of the SEN children claimed that they do feel necessary in their classroom – usually because their friends need them, but some also stated that this is because of their ability to mediate quarrels or invent games and different activities. In a few cases, the children felt useless, mainly because they had been rejected by their peers.

Almost three quarters felt noticed by their peers, for example by being chosen to work with them in different activities. However, they also pointed out that their opinion is often taken under the consideration. However, some children stated that they are noticed, but in a negative way as an object of jokes or mockery.

The same number of kids stated that they are usually invited to meet after school hours. They explain this by saying that such behaviour is typical and natural for friends.

80% of the SEN children stated that their peers often play with them in group games. This mainly happens when they are particularly agile or fit, or possess other capabilities. If they are not accepted by their classroom peer group, then the frequency of their shared play decreases.
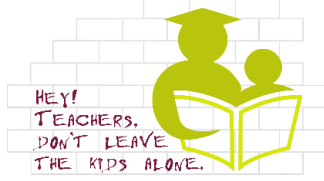
Positive aspects of the peer group

The SEN children surveyed also talked about the different positive aspects of being an accepted part of their classroom peer group:

- meeting and playing with friends;

- participating together in different activities;

- not feeling isolated or being rejected anybody

- benefiting from their peers' positive traits, such as being caring and helpful;

- their friends' ability to cheer them up in difficult situations;

- sharing common interests;

- their teachers and their attitudes;

Negative aspects of the peer group

The children also stated that there are some negative aspects of being part of their peer group:

- classmates swearing, being rude and unhelpful;

- shouting at each other and disturbing lessons;

- talking about the SEN child behind their back, making fun of them;

- asking stupid questions;

- exaltation of their peers;

- rejecting, ignoring and not accepting the child's ideas.

Do the SEN pupils ever ask for help?

26%

74%

■ YES ■ NO
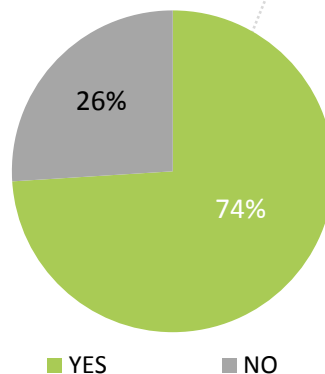
* data from 2 persons is missing

Nearly three quarters of pupils said that in difficult situations, they asked colleagues or friends for help. In Poland, no children answered differently than this, whereas in other countries there were children who stated that they had to look for support, or tried to deal with everything themselves.

Education

Opinions on additional learning aids

26%

74%

■ YES ■ NO
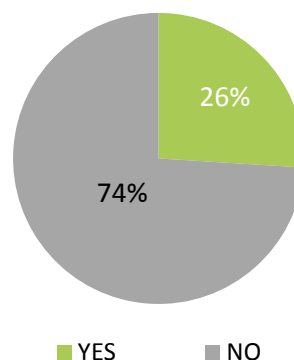
* data from 3 persons is missing

One third of pupils uses some additional didactic materials during lessons. These are mostly different copies of exercises that they can do at school or at home. Some children are allowed to use computers or calculators, grammar correction tools, refer to maths formulas or even take different exams than their peers without SEN.

Opinions on additional classes/activities
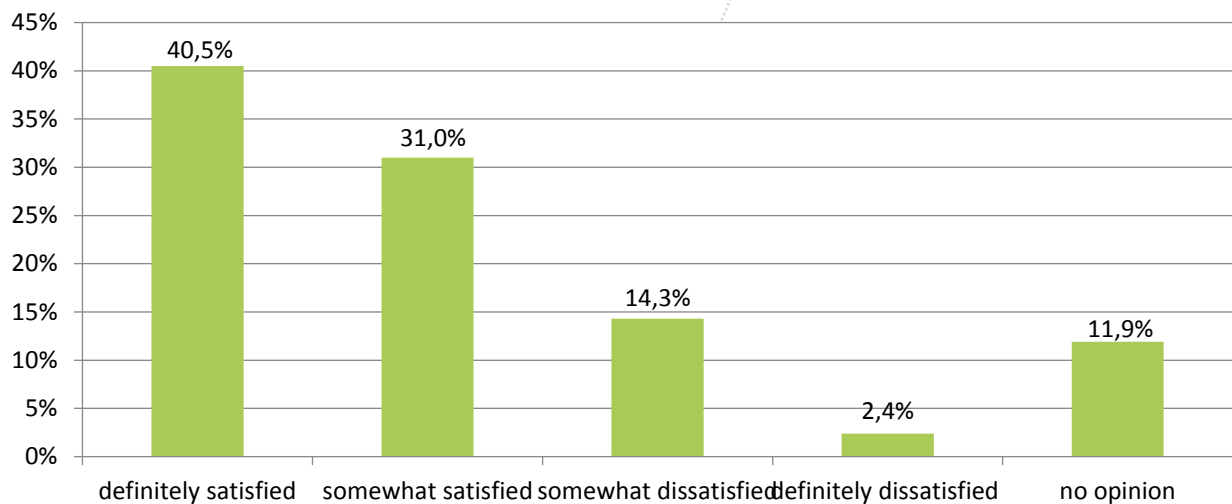
* data from 4 persons is missing

Most of the children stated that there are some interesting activities they can participate in. 7 pupils were not fully satisfied with the workshops and classes offered by their school. Analysis of the results by country reveals that only in Cyprus are there no children who are dissatisfied with their additional lessons/activities.
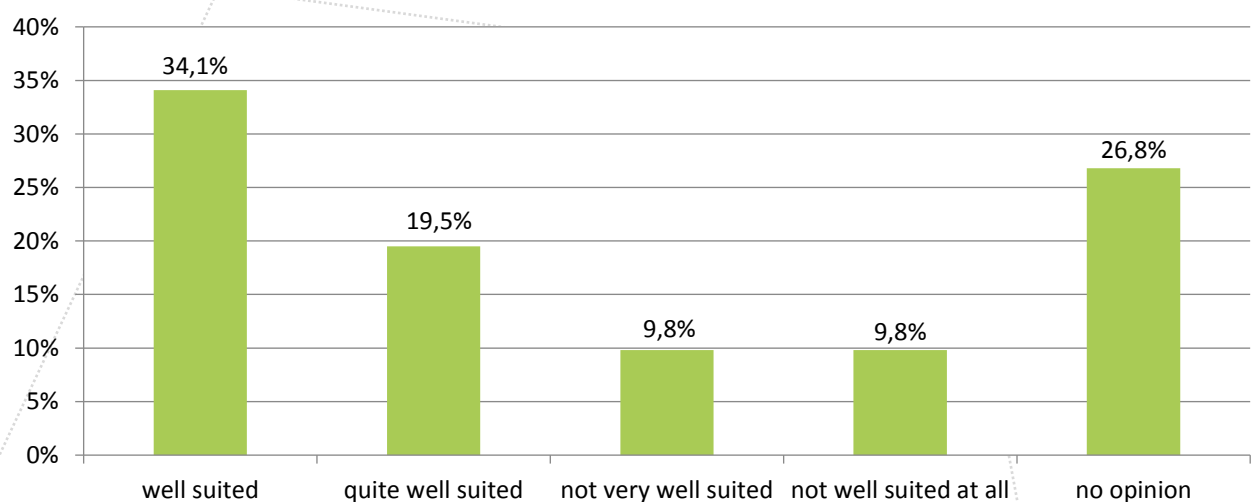
* data from 4 persons is missing

More than half of the SEN children stated that the additional activities at their school were well suited, or quite well suited, to their abilities and situation. 8 children felt that all of the extra activities were not at all suited to their abilities and situation. Moreover, analysis by country shows that in Slovenia there were no pupils at all who thought that their school's additional activities were suited to them.

Opinions on inclusive education

Opinions on SEN children's right to a public school education

YES, they are entitled to it because:	**NO**, because:
• it is a kind of preparation for the future life;	• it can lead to stagnation;
• school should offer equal opportunities for all children;	• there aren't enough teachers;
• children are the future;	• teachers are not trained well enough;
• children develop faster when they have contact with each other;	• the children can feels like there is nobody to support them;
• it is advantageous in the socialization process;	• it is impossible for schools to differentiate the educational process to accommodate the many possible problems and disabilities;
• there can be quick progress in learning;	• specialist support in schools is insufficient.
• it is guaranteed by national law.	

More than three quarters of the teachers claimed each child has the right to learn in a public school, regardless of the type of disorder or / and degree of disability, 8 teachers stated oppositely.

Advantages of inclusive education

acceptance and tolerance — emotional development — feeling involved — socialization — motivation to work — greater integration — better understanding — elimination of deficits — acquisition of new skills — not being isolated
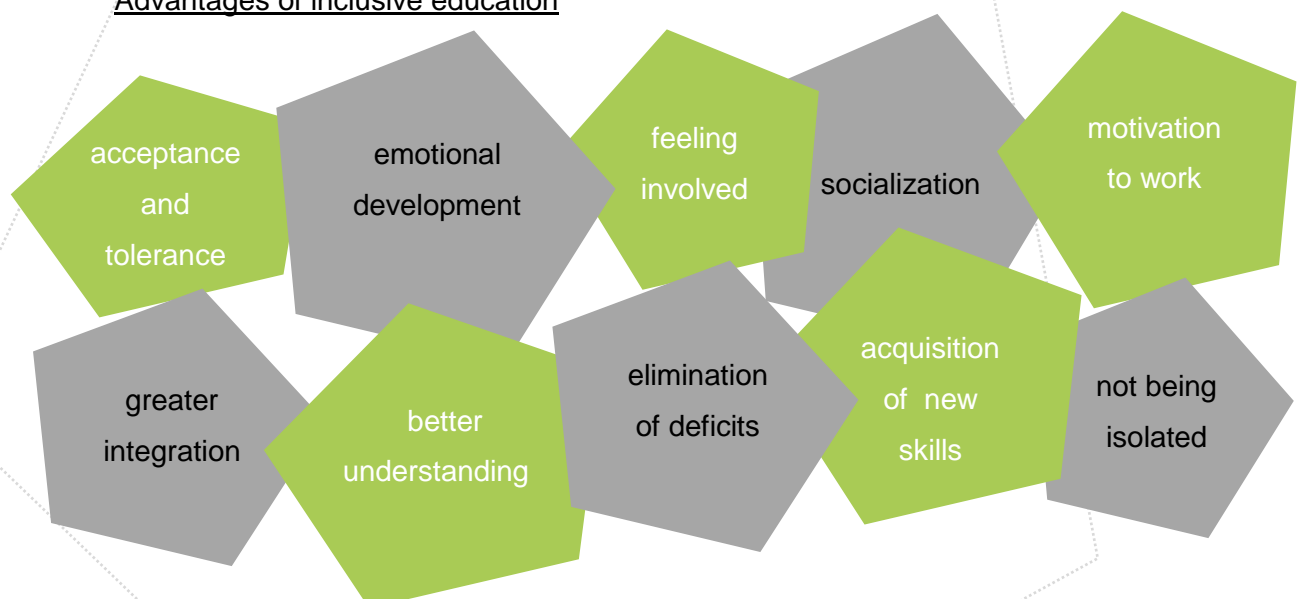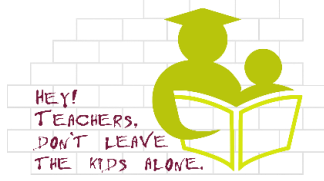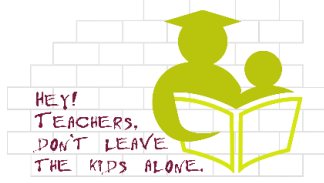
The teachers surveyed mentioned several positive aspects of inclusive education, such as how it develops acceptance and tolerance for diversity, integrates children from varied surroundings, expands their knowledge and social skills, and builds self-esteem, a sense of responsibility and belonging to their peer group. Additionally, the teachers also focused on better support at school from specialists, as well as being able to concentrate on the individual situations of each pupil. Inclusive education was perceived as a good way to bring some harmony to the society.

Disadvantages of inclusive education

overcrowded classes

inadequate facilities

trouble taking an individual approach

disturbances during lessons

decreased motivation to work

limitations on learning

problems with readjustment

distress and frustration

over-reactions

decreased self-esteem
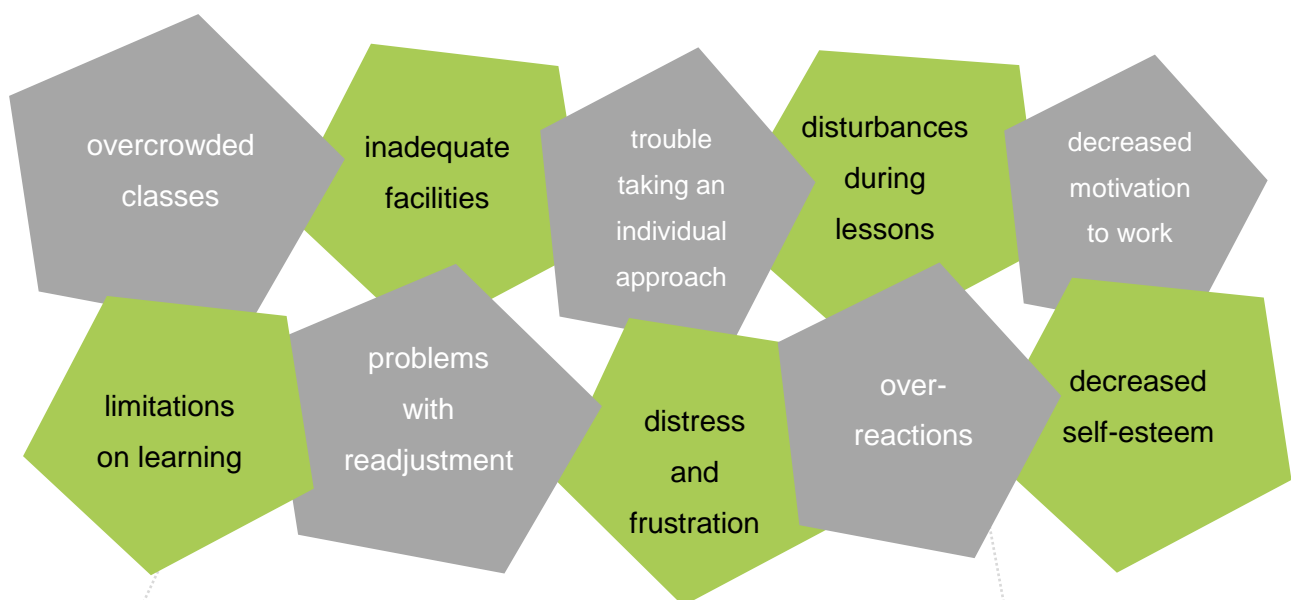
The teachers also pointed out the main problem with regards to inclusive education: that the entire educational system in their respective countries is not prepared to handle inclusive education curriculums. Teachers are not qualified enough to work with SEN children; classes are already quite large, which makes it impossible to individualize the education process, and the schools are underfunded and cannot acquire new specialists, or buy new, necessary equipment. Moreover, the parents do not always wish to work with the teachers, and this leads to a lack of complete information on both sides that impedes the process of educating SEN children.

<u>Opinions on the statement that children with special educational needs feel differently than their classroom peers</u>

18%

82%

■ YES   ■ NO
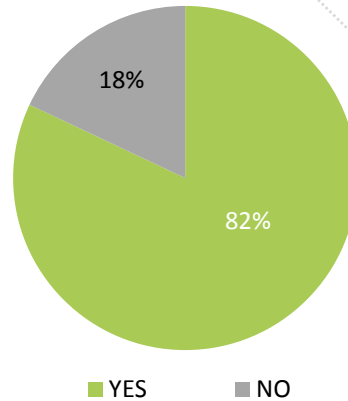
Almost 85% of the teachers surveyed claimed that their SEN pupils do feel different in school, because of the stereotypes and lack of knowledge in society. Children with special educational needs usually are aware of the differences between themselves and their peers. However, they don't always know how to act in different social situations, and are often fully dependent on adults (teachers, specialists, parents). They are alienated, and because of that do not engage in school activities. Additionally, they often compare themselves to their peers, and this decreases their self-esteem.

<u>Opinions on how SEN children overcome difficulties</u>

55%   45%
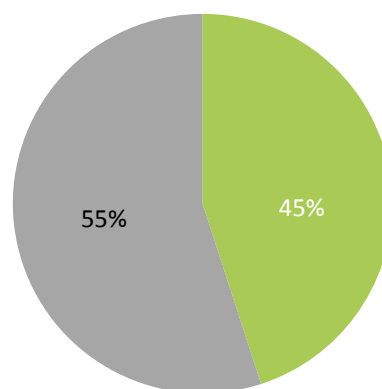
■ they try to overcome difficulties themselves   ■ they need help overcoming difficulties

45% of the teachers surveyed stated that their SEN children do try to deal with different problems by themselves. This is especially visible in terms of education (learning), art activities (painting, dancing) and social interaction. In the teachers' opinions, SEN children desire independence because they want to practice solving issues individually.

Most of the teachers said that in many cases, an adult's or peer's help is needed. Mainly in the classroom, but also sometimes with emotional and social issues (peer rejection, unpleasant behaviour toward the SEN child) – taking into account the child's specific needs.

Opinions on psychological and pedagogical help
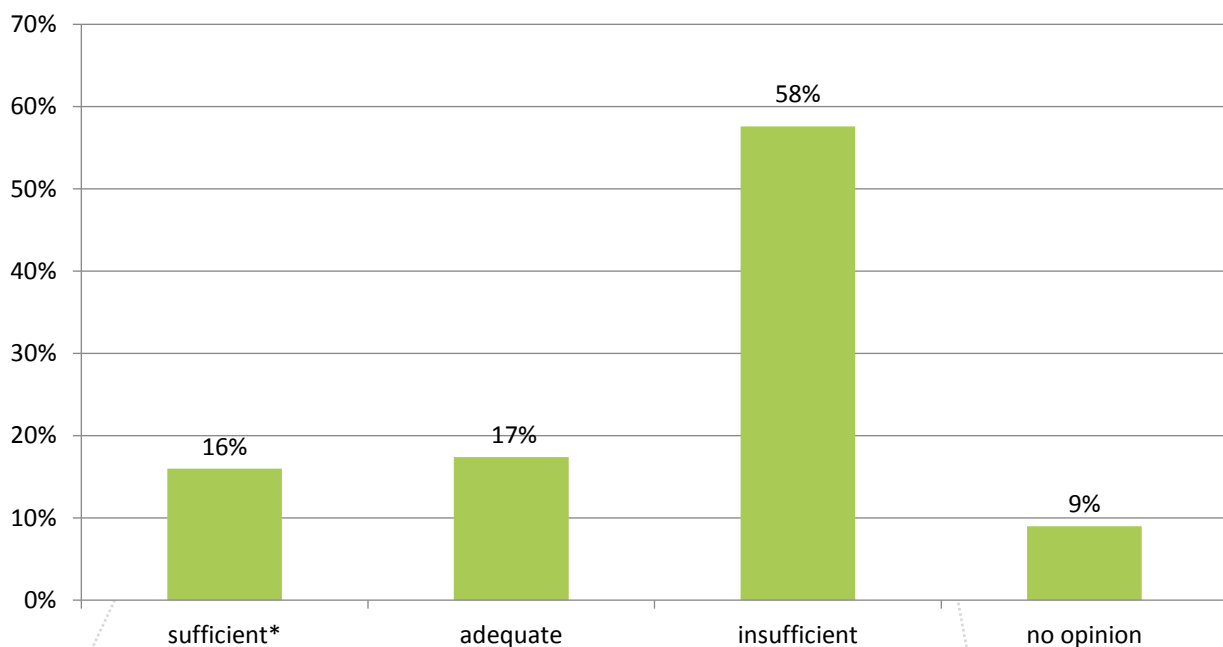
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In contrast to the parents surveyed, the teachers are not satisfied with the level of psychological and pedagogical support. More than a half stated that that the support offered by educational specialists in their school is insufficient. 33% claimed that it is adequate or sufficient. In Italy, Lithuania and Cyprus, most of the teachers were dissatisfied with the psychological and pedagogical help in their school, while in Poland they were satisfied with it. In Slovenia, the proportion between the stated answers was about equal.

Educational system

Opinions on class structure

The average number of children in the classes of the SEN children surveyed is 20. In each class, there are approximately 4 SEN children. Larger classes were reported in Poland and Cyprus, whereas in Italy and Slovenia there were slightly fewer, at around 18 pupils. The number of SEN pupils within those classes was similar in all countries.

Category	Percentage
mobility impairments	17%
hearing impairments	34%
sight impairments	23%
central neural system impairments	30%
chronically ill	43%
developmental dyslexia	57%
behavioural/emotional problems/hyperactivity	98%
autism	51%
educationally dysfunctional families	94%
economically marginalized	53%
low social competency	62%
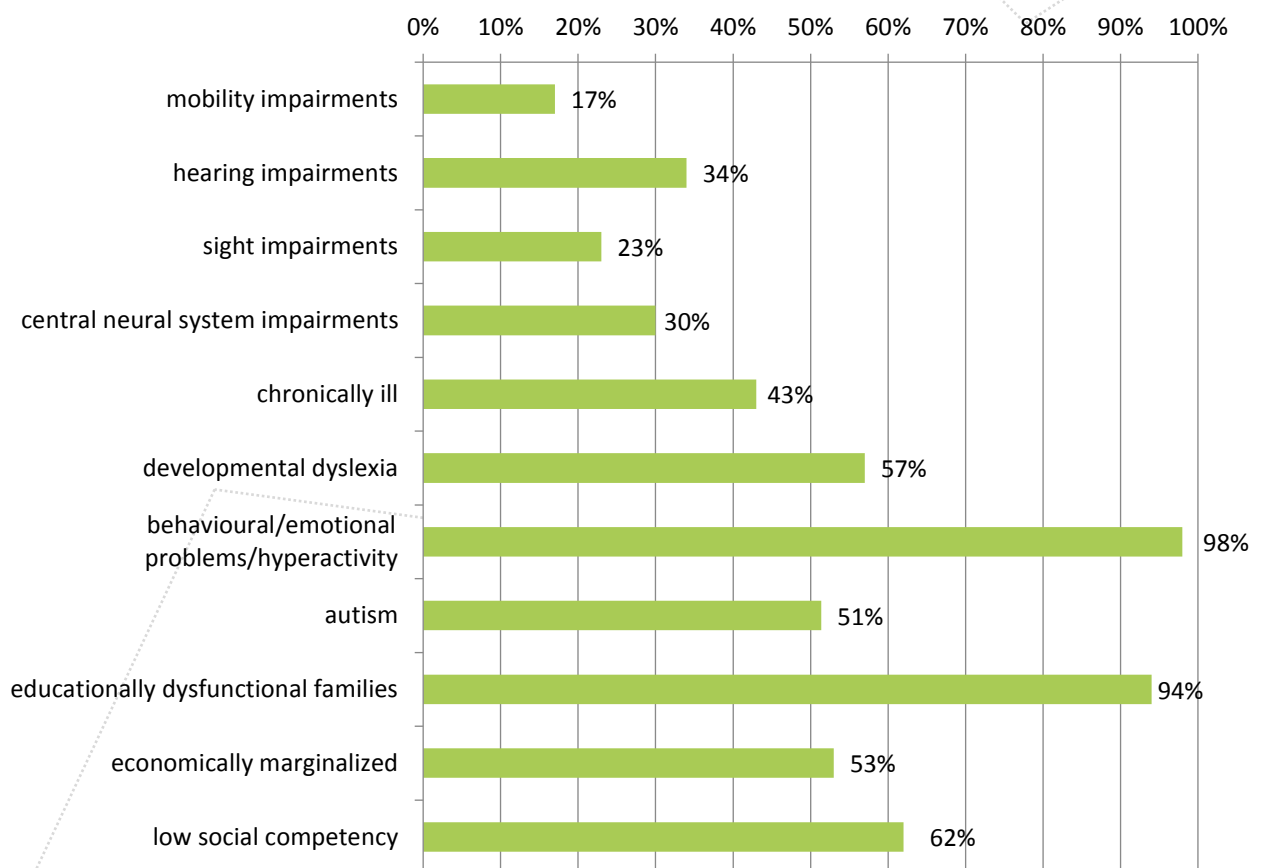
Analysis of the special educational needs or disabilities of the SEN children surveyed shows that most of their afflictions are behavioural or emotional problems, hyperactivity, as well as educationally dysfunctional families. Inclusive education is often associated with physical disabilities, however the research showed that this is not the largest group – only 17% of the teachers surveyed stated that SEN children in their school have some kind of mobility impairments. 34% mentioned hearing problems and 23% sight impairments. Additionally, in Italy the teachers stated that they also have children from foreign countries (making language a problem). In Poland, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome was stated as a problem.

<u>Opinions on whether schools actually do support elements of inclusive education</u>

■ support ■ do not support
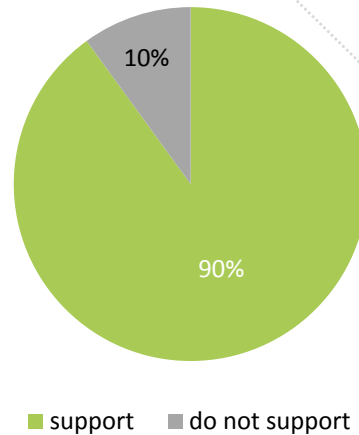
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Most teachers reported that their school does support the idea of inclusive education, and stated that the school offers the following elements of an inclusive education curriculum:

- engaging parents in different activities, such as helping on class trips;
- special welfare commission's meetings;
- regularly informing parents about their child's progress;
- meetings with specialists;
- the assistance of specialist during actual classes;
- employing Special Education teachers to support other teachers;
- 'Teaching without school bags';
- individualization of the education process;
- counselling for the pupils;
- diversification of classroom work;
- cooperative learning;
- promotion of learning through discovery;
- promulgating the ideas of inclusion, respect and tolerance;
- additional classes for pupils, such as sociotherapy or psychological training and workshops;

Additionally, almost 32% of the teachers surveyed stated that schools are *architectonically* adjusted to the pupils' needs.

Opinions on the ways that inclusive education is supported in schools

The teachers explained that there are many different ways of incorporating inclusive education in a classroom's daily schedule. Most of these are listed below.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

- home teaching;
- diversification of exercises;
- behavioural techniques;
- group learning;
- exercises with graded difficulty;
- help inside and outside of the classroom;
- supervised interactive games;
- individualization of the curriculum;
- tours.

TEACHING AIDS

- sensory methods;
- blocks, balls, kinetic sand;
- extra worksheets;
- interactive boards;
- posters;
- memory cards, postcards;
- table games;
- computer software;
- visual aids.

DURATION AND QUALITY OF THE TEACHING

- informing pupils of time remaining;
- varied levels of exercises (nearer the pupils' actual level);
- shorter classes with longer breaks;
- emphasizing the main focus of the lesson;
- dividing material into smaller units;
- differing time limits.

PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE

- different forms of teaching (plastic, theatrical);
- films, songs;
- adapting the presentation to the capabilities of children;
- highlighting the previous knowledge;
- visits outside the school building (museums etc.);
- experimental learning.

EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

- requirements proportionate to possibilities;
- noticing small successes;
- differentiated assessment;
- tactfully explaining mistakes;
- oral evaluation;
- smaller parts of knowledge;
- less severe assessment;
- more corrections.

SPATIAL ORGANISATION

- SEN children seating closer to the teacher;
- tables organized in the circle;
- music in the classroom;
- pleasant, colourful environment;
- mixed-ability groups;
- peaceful surroundings;
- spaces with teaching aids;
- play corners;
- playgrounds;
- additional training rooms for SEN children.

STRUCTURE (CLASS, ACTIVITY, HABITS)

- clear and understood structure;
- informing pupils about the problems of their SEN classmates;
- Interesting activities;
- fixed lesson structure;
- routines;
- school appeals;
- information board;
- obligatory rules for the whole school.

THE ROLE OF THE CHILD IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRUCTURE

- attendance;
- participation;
- being a member.

The role of the teacher in inclusive education

Opinions on whether the teachers are properly prepared for teaching their SEN pupils
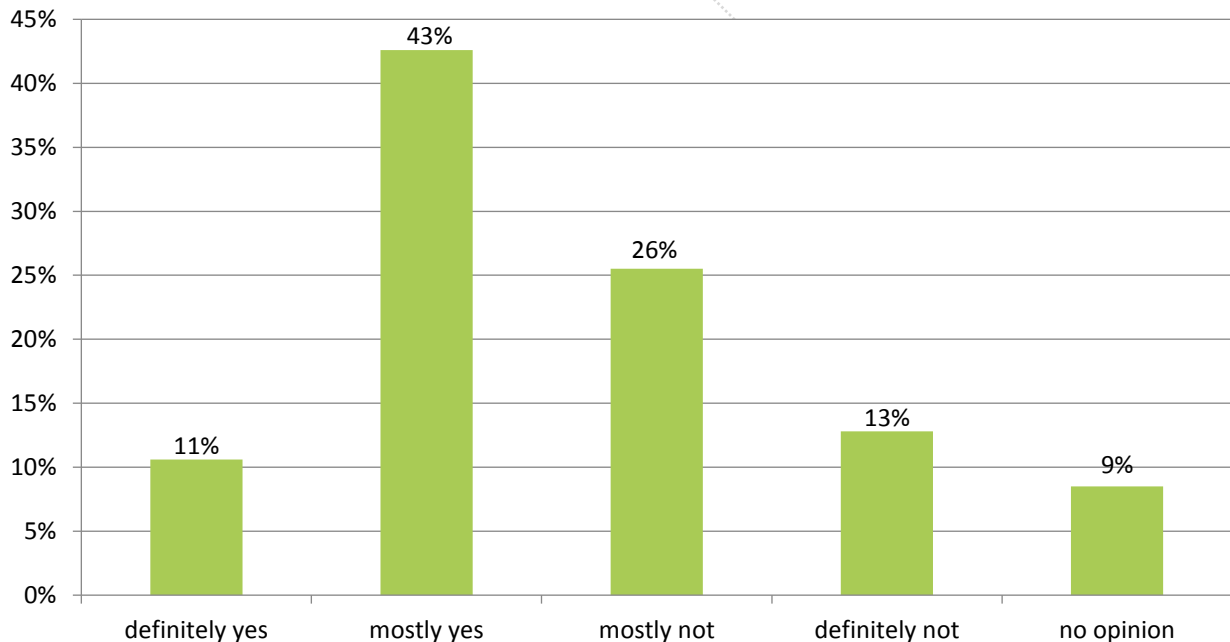
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Almost half of the teachers surveyed felt that they were mostly prepared for working with SEN children. Only in Poland and Lithuania did a teacher answer that yes, they definitely possess the necessary skills. But in both Slovenia and Cyprus there were teachers who stated that they mostly did not have the appropriate education and experience for working with SEN children.

Have the teachers received specific education or training on working with SEN children?
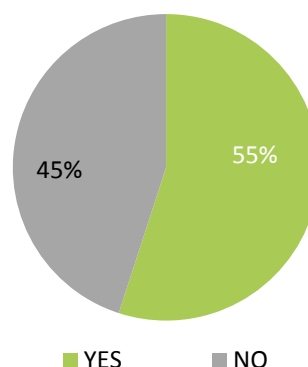
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More than half of the teachers stated that they had been educated on working with SEN children. The main courses or training programmes that they had taken were:

- Bachelor or Master degree;

- seminars on personal initiative;

- personal research and studies;

- upgrade courses on psychology, dyslexia, sociotherapy, special pedagogy, diagnosis and pedagogical therapy;

- independent reading of professional literature.

<u>Have the teachers gained new skills or qualifications specific to working with SEN children?</u>
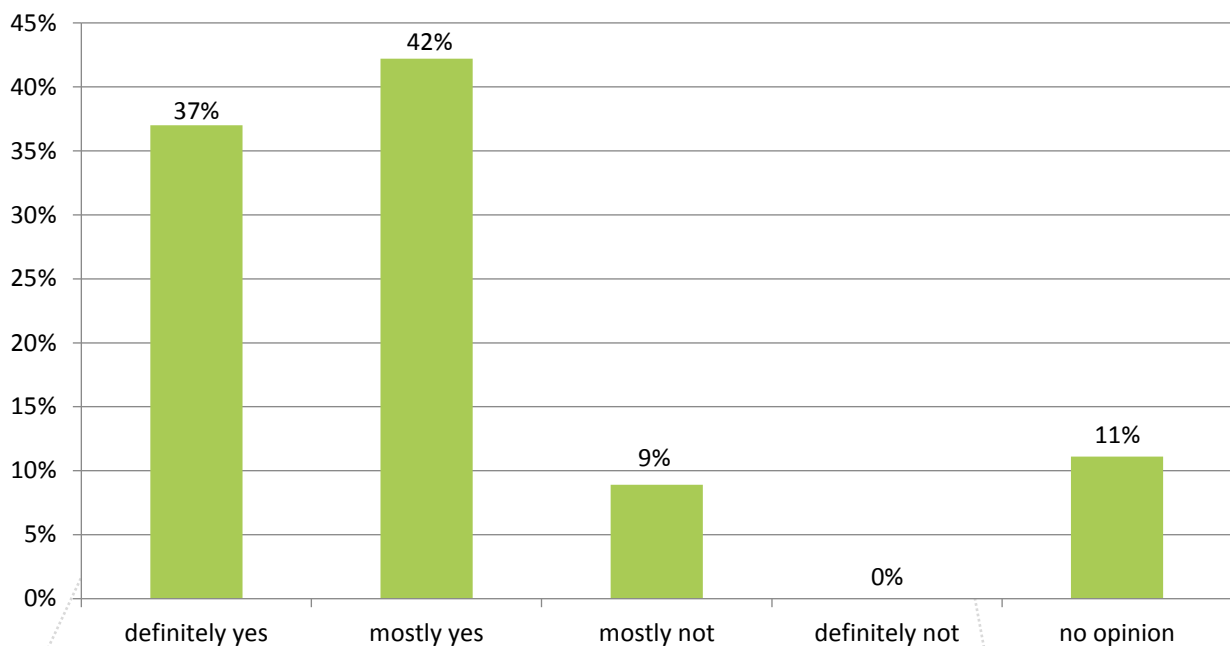
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More than three quarters of the teachers surveyed stated that they do plan additional workshops and training for their colleagues, or that they attend such events that are run by their country's respective Ministry of Education. The topics of future education covered depend on the problems that appear in the classroom. The most notable of these are children's emotions, dealing with aggression, sociotherapy, and new teaching methods.

Teachers' self-assessment of their inclusive education skills

Skill	No. of VERY GOOD or GOOD answers	Percentage
estimation of what skills the child needs	26	55.3%
leveraging the individual interests of the children	28	59.5%
determining how to adapt tasks to the pupil's abilities and to differ the level of the exercises in class	31	65.9%
adapting existing educational materials	32	69.1%
setting goals for each child according to their needs	31	65.9%
teamwork – with parents and professionals	27	57.4%
giving the children support	35	74.5%
using inclusive teaching methods	23	48.9%
assessing the effectiveness of the tools used	25	53.2%

*depending on the question, data from 2 to 3 persons is missing

Generally, the teachers surveyed stated that they had developed some extra skills that are useful in their work with their SEN pupils. The highest level of stated competency was in giving support – nearly three quarters of the teachers assessed their ability here as good or very good. Also, adapting existing educational materials and setting goals for each child according to their needs were self-rated on satisfactory levels. The teachers also mentioned that they are not fully content with their present level of knowledge and ability to incorporate certain inclusive teaching methods – less than half assessed themselves positively here. Analysis by country revealed that there were no emerging differences between the countries in question.

Opinions on working in the stream of inclusive education

■ Do you feel satisfied working with children in inclusive education?

■ Do you feel that inclusive education brings something important to society?

■ Do you feel that people are basically good?
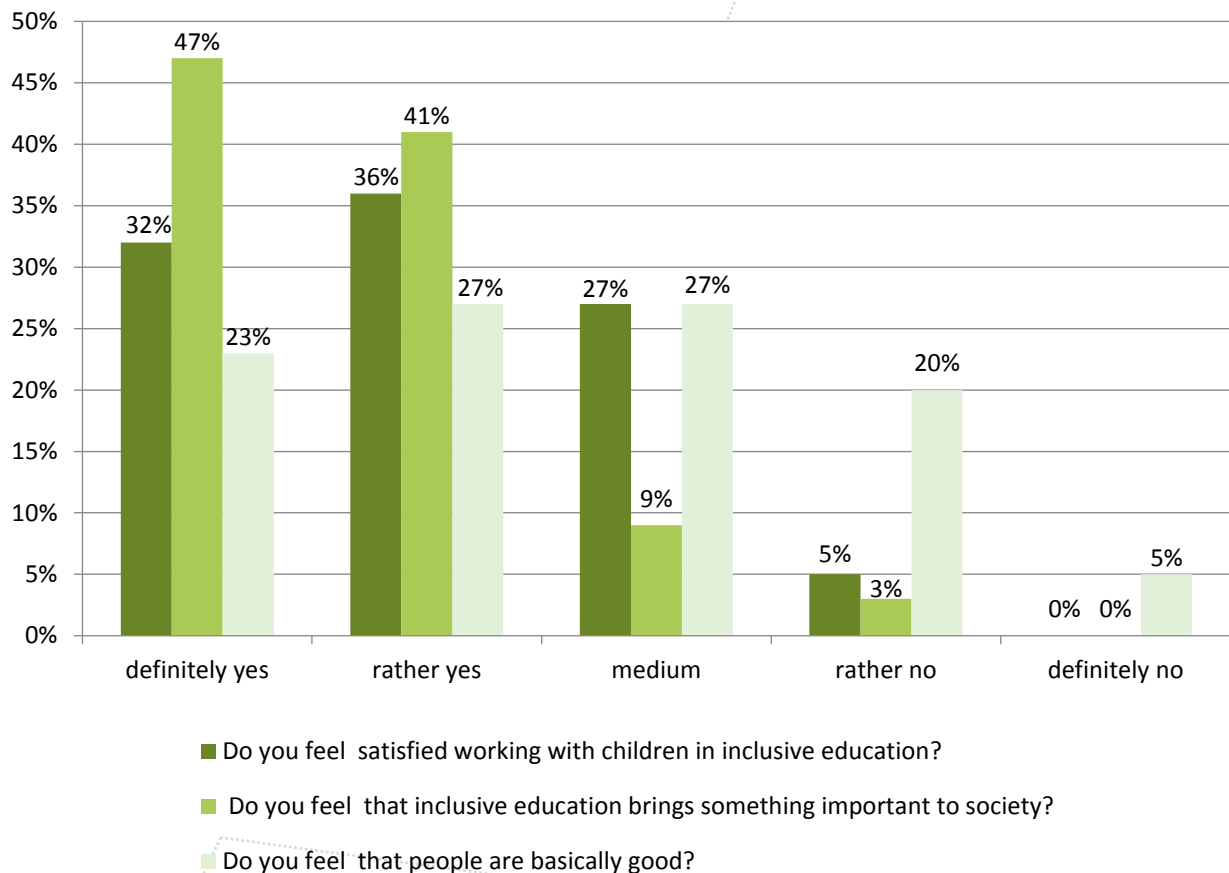
*depending on the question data from 2 to 3 persons is missing

Most of the teachers surveyed (68%) were rather satisfied with the possibilities open to them for working in inclusive education. Dissatisfaction was noted in Slovenia and Cyprus (1 teacher each). Generally, teachers felt that inclusive education was important and beneficial for all of society – 88% of them agreed with this idea. Analysing their opinions on human nature, it can be seen that 50% stated that people are mostly good, while a quarter thought that people were mostly just average, and a quarter perceived human nature as tending toward the bad.

■ Do you feel that a society is a good place or becomes a better place to live for all people (healthy or ill/disabled)?

■ Do you feel that you belong to a community (such as, eg. a group of teachers, parents, therapists)?

■ Do you feel that the way that the system of inclusive education operates in your country, makes sense?
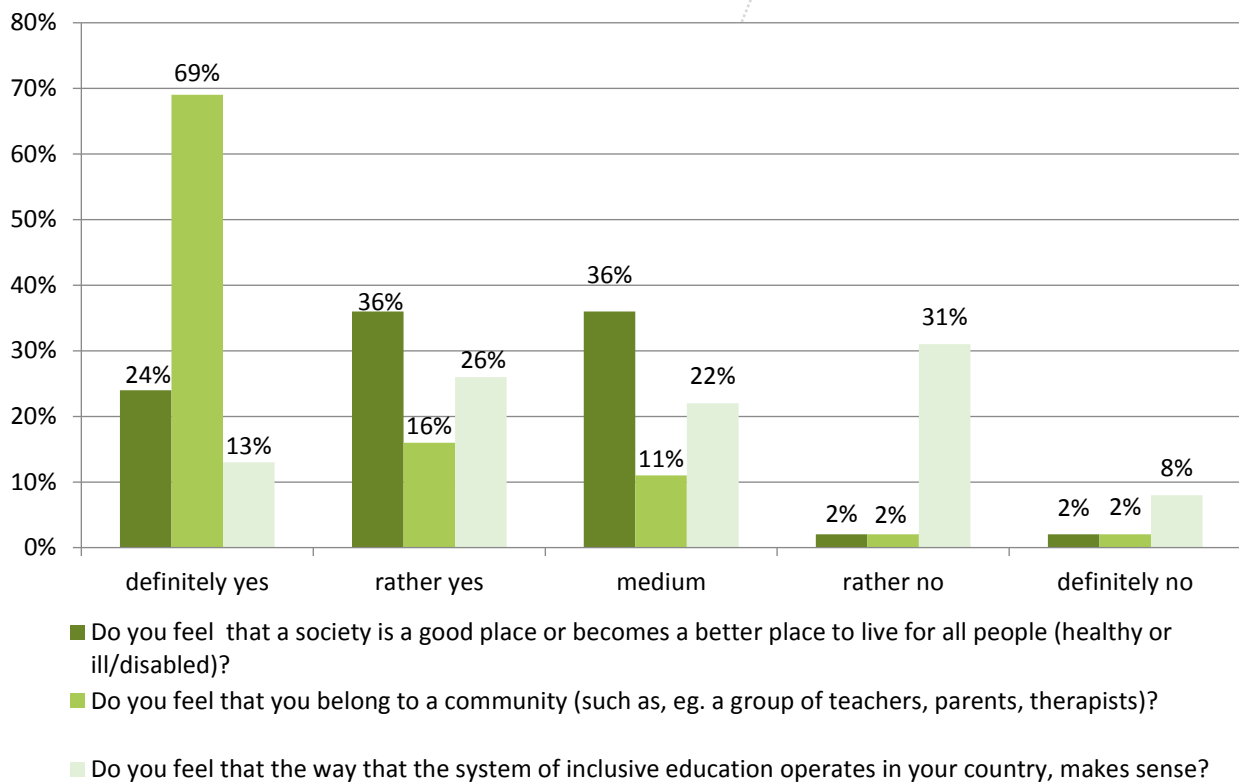
*data from 3 persons is missing

   60% of the teachers stated that society is or is becoming a better place to live in for people with illnesses and disabilities. Only in Poland and in Italy did someone (one teacher) have the opposite opinion. More than 80% of the teachers overall felt that they belonged to a group or a wider part of their society. In Cyprus, all of the teachers stated this, whereas in other countries the answers were more varied. Finally, when asking the teachers about the current state of inclusive education in their countries, they reported that they think it makes some sense, however 39% stated that it should work in a totally different way.

Cooperation between teachers and parents

Does the teacher know/understand the SEN pupil's family situation?

Legend: ■ YES ■ YES, but without details ■ NO

(Pie chart values: YES 36%, YES but without details 55%, NO 6%)
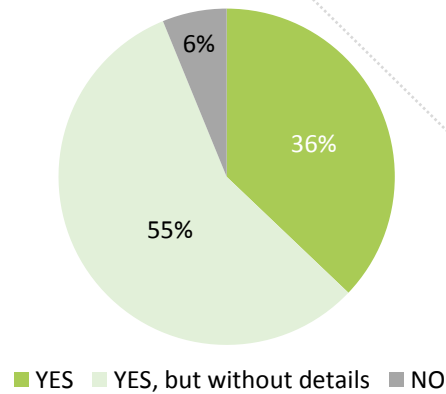
Contrary to the parents' opinions, most of the teachers stated that they are aware of their SEN pupils' general family situation, but that the information given by their parents or guardians could stand to be more detailed – this would help the teacher, for example, to propose additional possibilities. In Poland and Cyprus, all of the teachers possessed at least basic knowledge of their pupils' home situations, while in Italy, Lithuania and Slovenia there were teachers who didn't know what they were like.

Opinions on the work between parents and teachers

(Bar chart values: very good 10,6%, good 27,7%, average 44,7%, insufficient 10,6%, I cannot assess it 8,0%)
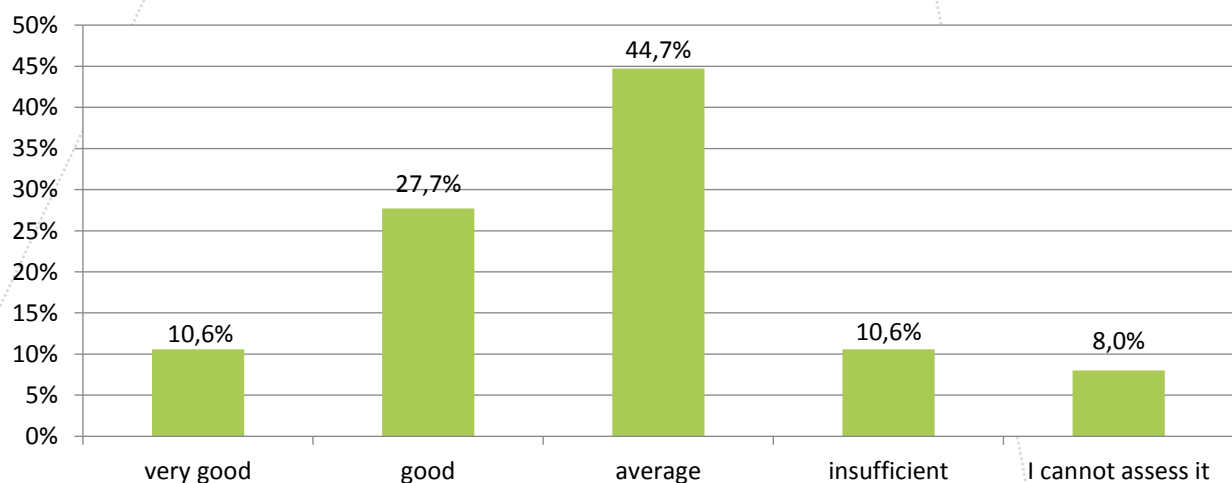
Nearly half of the teachers stated that their work with their SEN pupils' parents was at an average level of depth and frequency. In Italy, there were no teachers who were only slightly satisfied, or even fully satisfied, with the level and form of cooperation with the parents, whereas in other partner countries the results varied from very good to insufficient.

<u>Benefits of cooperation between teachers and parents</u>

The teachers stated many beneficial effects of good parent-teacher communication, including:

- wider knowledge of the SEN pupil's needs;
- happy and fruitful atmosphere;
- growth of parents' and teachers' authority;
- consistent planning of work;
- mutual support and help;
- faster child development;
- better emotional state of the child;
- designing more effective interactions and activities;
- continuous monitoring of the child's progress;
- upbringing problems prevention;
- higher motivation, greater involvement, openness and consequence;
- ability to better predict the child's behaviours.

<u>Difficulties in the cooperation between teachers and parents</u>

Some of the most significant problems stated by the teachers were:

- problems scheduling meetings;
- communication problems – misunderstandings, unresponsiveness, disinterest or lack of dialogue;
- perception of the SEN child's problems as their parents' failures;
- hiding the child's problems (lack of trust);
- fear of rejection and being assessed stereotypically;
- failure to recognize children's problems properly;
- disagreements and negative attitude towards the school;

- the parents questioning the teachers' actions and proposals, and not acting on the school's suggestions;
- lack of acceptance of the child and their difficulties;
- lack of willingness and energy (on both sides).

<u>Are the results of parent-teachers cooperation perceived as worthwhile?</u>
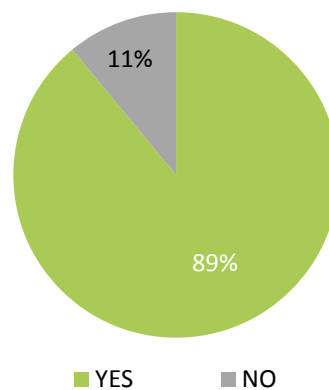
*data from 4 persons is missing

Almost 90% of the teachers stated that good collaboration with parents can have many positive effects. In their interviews, they focused on results such as: changes in the SEN child's behaviour; development of SEN children in different areas; better educational effects (better marks, improved school performance); increased motivation to learn; increased self-esteem; an understanding of the need to abide by rules, and emotional stability. Additionally, the parents become more open and active, following the school's suggestions and trying to be more involved in school life.

What teachers contribute to the parent-teacher relationship

Teacher contributions	No. of teachers	Percentage
I run a comprehensive programme of rehabilitation for my SEN pupils	23	48.9%
I give parents and guardians instructions for difficult educational tasks	35	74.5%
I talk about the needs and possibilities of the SEN child	35	74.5%
I point out the institutions that can help parents and guardians	32	68.1%
I talk about the rights of the SEN children	33	70.2%
I discuss their responsibilities with the parent/guardian (such as medical procedures and use of medication by the SEN child at school)	32	68.1%
I agree with the parents upon the principles of our cooperation and the implementation of school recommendations at home	32	68.2%

Nearly three quarters of the teachers give the parents of their SEN pupils some instructions or advice on completing difficult educational tasks, or correcting inappropriate behaviour. They also discuss the rights of the SEN children with their parents. They agree with the parents upon the principles of their cooperation and the implementation of school recommendations at home. But only 49% of teachers run any kind of developmental or rehabilitative programmes for their SEN pupils. Still, they do try to deal with emerging problems and difficulties on a daily basis. If there is a need, the teachers direct the parents to the relevant education or health institutions with some recommendations. They also hold team meetings, in which the parents can easily communicate exchange opinions on their child's behaviour with a group of teachers.

Conclusions

- There is a lack of knowledge about inclusive education – more than 50% of the parents surveyed did not know what the term meant. However, they did think that it could help children gain self-confidence, eliminate their deficits and bring some positive results in learning.

- The majority of parents thought that SEN children feel differently in their peer group, mainly because of a lack of acceptance of their differences by their peers, or through labelling and devaluation of the SEN children, as well as there being a lack of training in society.

- Generally, the parents were satisfied with the level of psychological and pedagogical help offered by their schools.

- They agreed that working with their child's teachers was worthwhile – the teachers gave them advice or instructions if needed, and informed them about important issues with the children. The parents stated that the main problems in this area are communication difficulties, problems scheduling meetings (including lack of willingness to invest the time), and an inappropriate attitude from the teachers.

- Considering the children's situation, the parents stated that their children like going to school and have a positive attitude to learning. However, some of them also said that their children were not satisfied with their school life, because of the form of the lessons or peer attitudes toward them.

- The parents were also convinced that their SEN children are treated by teachers similarly to the other pupils in their class.

- The majority of the children agreed they like going to school, especially because they can learn new things, attend classes they are really interested in, and meet with their friends.

- They felt that their teachers are positively oriented to them, and in difficult situations the children could count on their help.

- They also assessed their peer relations as being good or very good, although there were some cases in which bullying or teasing was reported.

- The children try to take an active part in the life of their class and usually feel as though they are a part of their peer group.

- Some of the SEN children surveyed mentioned that their peers' rejecting, ignoring or not accepting their ideas also sometimes happened.
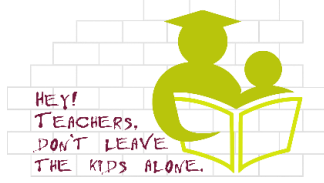
TEACHERS

- The majority of the teachers surveyed agreed that every child has the right to learn in a public school, because it is guaranteed by law and is beneficial to children's development.

- They reported that their SEN pupils feel differently in school because of stereotyping and a lack of knowledge of SEN children in society.

- In contrast to the parents, the teachers were not satisfied with the level of psychological and pedagogical help offered by their schools.

- Considering good practice within the idea of inclusive education, the teachers considered: engaging parents in the educational process; regularly informing them about their child's functioning; providing additional classes for SEN pupils; arranging meetings with specialists for the children, and diversifying their classroom work.

- The teachers felt only partially prepared for working with SEN children, however they plan to take some courses or extra training.

- They assessed their work with the parents of their SEN pupils as being average. The main problems were difficulties in scheduling meetings and communicating, the parents' fear of rejection and hiding their child's problems, and their questioning of the school's recommendations.

-

Focus Group Interviews

Aims of the focus group interviews

The general aim of the focus group interviews among the pupils, their parents and teachers was to identify their needs for inclusive education. It was important to have a clear map of their learning context and of the target contexts of the proposal (in terms of best practices, methodologies, risks), and to identify the preferences of future users of these pedagogical tools.

The purpose of the focus group interviews was to get information on the following topics:

- The actual experience of inclusive education in schools.
- To identify the main barriers to inclusive education.
- Create a map of the most common risks of exclusion in schools.
- Create new or modify existing inclusive teaching methods.
- Identify best practices at the local and national levels.
- Determine preferences for future inclusive education tools.

The key questions asked of the three target groups were as follows:

Teachers:

- Please describe your experience of inclusive education in your school.
- Can you identify the main barriers to inclusive education?
- What are the most common risks of exclusion in school?
- Which new or modified inclusive education tools do you employ?
- Can you identify best practices at the local and national levels?
- What are your preferences as far as future pedagogical tools?

Pupils:

- Please describe your experience of inclusive education in your school.
- What do you think can help isolated children?
- What are the most common risks of exclusion in school?
- How do teachers treat excluded children?
- Can you identify the main barriers to inclusive education?
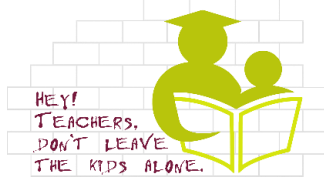
Parents:

- Please describe your experience of inclusive education in your school.
- What are the most common risks of exclusion in school.
- What can help isolated children? (best practices at the local/national levels).
- Can you identify the main barriers to inclusive education?

Participants

Focus group interviews in each of the countries were carried out in one group consisting of up to 10 people (pupils, teachers, parents). It was recommended that focus group participants were people different from those taking part in the interviews earlier. A person from the project team designated by the team leader led the discussion in the focus group. Partners were able to organize focus groups considering the specific character of their countries and local conditions, so that the results were as reliable and accurate as possible. Finally, in the focus group interviews there were 14 parents, 15 pupils and 19 teachers involved. Average length of the discussion was 1.5 hours.

Research conclusions

Poland – University of Lodz

Moderator – Katarzyna Walęcka-Matyja

Research conducted on the 25th of April 2017, in the morning.

Place of the focus group interviews: Primary School 36, Więckowskiego Street 35, 90-734 Łódź.

Participants: 3 mothers of pupils at risk of exclusion.

Main results:

- The mothers didn't have much knowledge about inclusive education.

- The mothers had difficulty describing their experiences of inclusive education; they pointed out that in this type of education, good, frequent contact with teachers is needed.

- The main benefit of inclusive education is that the child learns self-confidence and feels appreciated.

- The main barriers to inclusive education here are: there are no individual activities in the school, especially in the common room; children spend time in large groups, and not all activities are available for all children; the school doesn't develop individual pupils' abilities; the school doesn't teach the rules of social behaviour, such as tolerance; pupils at risk of social exclusion at school are calm, gentle, and have low social competence; the school tries to work with the parents; teachers organize parents' meetings, family picnics; parents of children with special educational needs don't cooperate with the school – they have some pretensions that the teachers don't support them in raising their children and that they should do this themselves; working parents have difficulties engaging in school activities, meetings etc – the main causes are tiredness and a lack of time.

- What could help: educating parents, because children at risk of social exclusion aren't raised in the spirit of tolerance and respect for others; increasing parental interest in their children's behaviour; organizing extra activities, such as singing – these kinds of activities provide for the well-being of students at risk of social exclusion at school; encouraging pupils at risk of exclusion to participate in school competitions (mainly by teachers); the best kids are constantly selected for contests, so it is important to also include the weaker children;

educating pupils on the social rules (rules of courtesy, tolerance, sensitivity to social indifference).

Cyprus – The 'Panayias Tricherousas' 26th Primary School
Moderator – Foteini Massou

Research conducted on 11th of May 2017, in the evening.

Place of the focus group interviews: 26th Primary School Limassol – Panayias Tricherousas – teachers' room.

Participants: 2 mothers and 2 fathers of pupils with SEN.

Main results:

- The parents have children with some Special Educational Needs (in the spectrum of Autism, physical disability); children are integrated in the general classroom, they leave the classroom for some hours a week to attend special education lesson in a special education classroom where they will receive support from a special education teacher. A child has a care assistant who happens to be a teacher, since his early years in primary school. The second one had a care assistant in only his early years in primary school. The third has a care assistant too. This is based on the state law (1999) in Cyprus;

- The parents appear not to know the philosophy of inclusive education; they appeared to be satisfied in

- a large extent by integration system that happened so far.

- Parents are trapped in medical model of disability, a fact that makes their information more urgent and necessary so they can make a turn to the social model of disability and demand the implementation of an inclusive education system.

- The parents need support in all areas;

- <u>The main barriers of inclusive education here are:</u> some parents do not accept that their child needs to be treated 'differently' in class/school. The same happen with children with SEN or without; they react negatively when they notice that they receive something different from other student e.g. different materials, different tests.

- Curriculum refers only to average student; At the same time the large amount of material that it must be covered by teachers makes it difficult for the teachers forcing them to "run" to cover the material with few opportunities for differentiation.

- Sometimes the care assistant functions negatively towards child. The care assistants need proper training in order to gain the appropriate abilities and skills.

- A lot of time is lost in the process of identification, referral and evaluation of the "problem" of a child.

- Lack of knowledge of the benefits of inclusive education; proper information is needed to be given to parent and teachers in order to understand that this action has only benefits for the child.

What could help:

- Parents and teachers need to be properly informed about the inclusive education so they can understand that this will benefit the child.

- They also refer the importance of cooperation between school and family (teachers – parents) and between teachers (general teacher and special education teacher, teacher – teacher). In this direction, a communication notebook would be a good form of communication, especially between teachers and parents. Another important success element is the development of individualized program where is needed, while the children in the classroom can work at stations to make it easier for its implementation and also to implement any other innovations in the classroom.

- The appropriate teacher training is even more imperative, as this comes out of their statements that are related to the ways in which they seek to help isolated children. Children with SEN are in most cases considered to be under the responsibility of the special education teacher, who is considered the most suitable for them.

Italy – University of Bologna and IERFOP

Moderator – Patrizia Sandri

Research conducted on 8th of May 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: primary school of Vado (Bologna).

Participants: 3 mothers, including 2 of students with special educational needs.

Main results:

- There is a need to keep the technical preparation and the value consciousness of the educational function together.
- The 'medical' model, which focuses mainly on 'deficit' and 'what doesn't work', requiring specialized interventions by rehabilitation or healthcare professionals, sometimes risks overtaking the 'ICF bio-psycho-social model'.
- In this second model, the state of well-being and growth of each child is promoted not only by detecting the operations, but also the facilitating and hindering factors present in the contexts of life, including the emotional competence of the teacher as well as the didactics.
- Some parents believe that teachers do not immediately take action in the face of problems, waiting for the health professionals to come forward with a screening or clinical analysis; these statements highlight that some teachers relate to a medical/clinical model rather than to a global, bio-psycho-social approach according to the ICF (2000).

Lithuania- Vilniaus kolegija office, Vilniaus

Moderator – Vaiva Juškienė

Research conducted on the 29th of September 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: Vilniaus kolegija, Saltoniškių g. 58, 08105 Vilnius, LITHUANIA.

Participants: 2 participants (2 parents - mother of Roma children, father of dyslexic child).

Main results:

- <u>The main barriers of inclusive education are</u>: little or no awareness of learning problems of students who don't speak Lithuanian, involvement of parents in common school activities is very low, no cooperation between teachers and parents, intercultural differences while communicating with parents are not taken into account, Roma children do not attend the pre-school classes, therefore they are not on the same level as other children when they join the school in the first grade, low involvement of Roma and SEN children in common school events and holidays.
- <u>What could help</u>: preparatory classes with language education for minority groups is needed, intercultural training and education of parents, teachers and students is needed for development of tolerance, involvement of parents in common school activities, take into account intercultural differences.

Slovenia – Razvojno Izobrazevalni Center, Novo Mesto

Moderator – Metod Pavšelj

Research conducted on 10th of April 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: Primary School Šmihel, Šmihel 2, 8000 Novo Mesto.

Participants: 2 parents of pupils at risk of exclusion.

Main results:

- The parents highlighted stress, lack of communication and sometimes a lack of willingness to cooperate from the teachers.
- The parents suggested that their school facilitates better recognition of special needs, to ensure timely detection of difficulties;
- one parent presented good practice from England, wherein peers help SEN classmates throughout their schooling;
- the parents highlighted that peers should know more about the needs of their classmates, because this is the best was to include people in society;
- the main barriers to inclusive education here are: a lack of information about school work, homework, school tests and requirements; a lack of school staff to help them outside school hours; single parents do not have enough opportunities for contact with teachers, they do not work together enough with the school; the SEN pupils' peers are not sufficiently educated about the SEN pupils' issues;
- what could help: more opportunities to talk with teachers, more communication between teachers and parents, communicating with their peers on how to support and help their SEN classmates; teamwork by professionals.

Conclusions:

- Generally, the parents don't have the knowledge of inclusive education.

- Parents differ in the level of acceptance of the difficulties shown by the children. Some parents do not accept that their child needs some other kind of 'treatment' in class. Some parents hide their child's difficulties.

- Some parents believe that teachers do not immediately take action in the face of problems.

- Parents consider that the school doesn't develop the individual pupils' abilities.

- Parents think the school doesn't teach the rules of social behaviour, such as tolerance or respect for others.

- Some working parents have difficulties in engaging in the school activities, meetings etc – the main causes are tiredness and a lack of time.

Poland – University of Lodz

Moderator – Katarzyna Walęcka-Matyja

Research conducted on 26th of April 2017, in the morning.

Place of the focus group interviews: Primary School 36, Więckowskiego Street 35, 90-734 Łódź, Poland.

Participants: 3 students (2 boys, 1 girl); age of respondents: 9-11.

Main results:

- Pupils like going to school, mainly because of their peers.
- They spend free time on conversations, motion games.
- They didn't perceive any other children that are not liked in the classroom.
- They understood how isolated a person can feel – they were sad and sorry about that.
- Pupils know the main reason for peer rejection – being 'new'.
- Pupils know how to help unaccepted children: friendship and contact with animals.
- Teachers are usually pleasant to unaccepted children – but if the children are disobedient, the teachers assess them in a negative way and get angry easily.
- In the school, there are many extra activities for children at risk of social exclusion, such as playing the guitar or playing sports.
- Children with special educational needs can rely on the help of specialists: teachers, psychologists and pedagogues.

Cyprus – The 'Panayias Tricherousas' 26th Primary School

Moderator – Foteini Massou

Research conducted on 11th of May 2017, in the evening.

Place of the focus group interviews: School – teachers' room.

Participants: 2 pupils (boys); age of respondents: 9-12. Children are integrated into a general class.

Main results:

- Children are integrated into a general class and at the same time, leave the class to attend Special Education classes for a few hours a week.
- Since his early years of primary school, one of the children has had a care assistant who also happens to be a teacher – the second child had a care assistant in his early years of primary school.
- Some SEN children react negatively when they notice that they have received something different from the other pupils, e.g. different tests – the same reaction is had by the students without SEN, too. They also react negatively when the teacher differentiates their approach/materials/evaluation, etc.

Italy – University of Bologna and IERFOP

Moderator – Patrizia Sandri

Research conducted on 8th of May 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: primary school of Vado (Bologna).

Participants: 5 pupils (3 boys and 2 girls); age of respondents: 10.

Main results:

- In class, not only is there a system of inclusive education, but also a culture of inclusion to help sensitize all members of the school community. There are also extracurricular activities, using movies, books, biographies, autobiographies, cartoons, and direct testimonies of people with disabilities and their families.
- There aren't any serious problems, but there are children who are annoying and for this behaviour they often blame.
- Often pupils with SEN joke but it depends on how the other person takes it, if they anger can and badly.
- Teachers often punish the SEN pupils, who then get angry because they don't understand why.
- Use of mediators in the educational context; the role of the teacher as a conflict mediator.

Lithuania- Vilniaus kolegija office, Vilniaus

Moderator – Vaiva Juškienė

Research conducted on the 29th of September 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: Vilniaus kolegija, Saltoniškių g. 58, 08105 Vilnius, LITHUANIA.

Participants: 3 participants (3 pupils – with dyslexia, poverty, Roma).

Main results:

- Pupils like going to school and learning.
- Pupils have friendly classmates.
- Pupils feel well at school.
- Pupils receive little help from specialists, even if they need it.
- Pupils receive little or no help at school.
- Roma pupils sometimes experiences bullying.

Slovenia – Razvojno Izobrazevalni Center, Novo Mesto

Moderator – Metod Pavšelj

Research conducted on 10th of April 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: Primary School Šmihel, Šmihel 2, 8000 Novo Mesto,

Participants: 2 pupils; age of respondents: 10-13.

Main results:

- One pupil said that they does not feel good in school because they do not have friends, cannot play with LEGO and other toys, there is too much homework …
- Pupils also do not feel good about school also because they have to attend new schools (their parents' wish).
- One pupil feels good in school.
- Pupils have problems only with English lessons, in which they needed learning help.
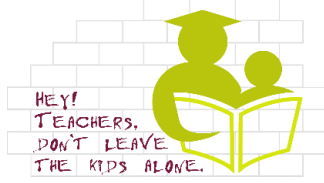
Conclusions:

- The school situation of pupils with special educational needs is varied; some pupils declare that they like to go to school because of their peers (Poland), others declare that they do not like to go to school because they do not have friends there (Slovenia).
- Pupils know the reasons for peer rejection: being 'new', aggressive behaviour, being economically poor.
- Schools organise special activities for SEN pupils, to help them overcome learning difficulties, develop social skills, engage in specialties, etc.
- Pupils with special educational needs can count on the help of their teachers.
- Pupils see the role of the teacher as a conflict mediator (Italy).

Poland – University of Lodz

Moderator – Katarzyna Walęcka-Matyja

Research conducted on 26th of April 2017, in the morning.

Place of the focus group interviews: Primary School 36, Więckowskiego Street 35, 90-734 Łódź, Poland.

Participants: 4 female teachers of primary school level; age of respondents: 28-53. They are all general/class teachers. Their teaching experience ranges from 4 to 29 years.

Main results:

- The teachers defined the term 'inclusive education' rather intuitively as they did not have any actual experience with it.

- In their opinion children in danger of social exclusion are mainly children from poorer families, who also often have problems with pronunciation.

- They claim that all children with different problems can be included in an educational, long-lasting and precise process.

- Good practice in inclusive education: applying for EU grants; participating in educational projects, such as the 'An exceptional pupil' project; preparing and carrying out questionnaires and interview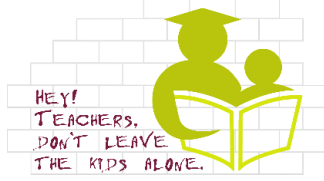s with parents (e.g. which types of classes are best suited to their children?); extended range of additional activities for children with special educational needs; carrying a base of children with educational problems; children being facilitated and supported during their transition from 3rd to 4th grade; leading a programme of cooperation with parents – declarations of openness; classes with specialists – psychologists, sociotherapists, speech therapists, leading pedagogical therapy; participating in different individual and group courses and workshops run by/for teachers; using active methods of teaching such as those based on positive behaviours or traits, individual and group work.

- The main barriers of inclusive education here are: large class sizes (20-26 pupils) – this makes it almost impossible to individualize an educational process; deficiency of additional, supporting teachers or specialists; many non-educational problems with children that usually have to be solved during classes – this shortens the time of real teaching and learning, sometimes even to 15 minutes; insufficient cooperation with parents; problems engaging them in different activities; lack of additional work with children at home; instilling in children a demanding attitude towards the world; parents are not authorities for their children.

- <u>What can help</u>: making parents realise that they are obliged to adjust their children to independent functioning in society; educating parents about teachers' and pupils' roles at school ('teachers are not enemies', 'learning is not only sitting in a classroom, but also tours and meetings with different people'); educating parents on the principles of proper education and an upbringing based on consequences; pointing out that the picture of the school in the media is exaggerated (schools are often blamed for problems and inappropriate behaviour of children); both parents and teachers being the authority figures in the SEN child's life.

Cyprus – The 'Panayias Tricherousas' 26th Primary School
Moderator – Foteini Massou

Research conducted on 11th of May 2017, in the evening.

Place of the focus group interviews: School – teachers' room.

Participants: 3 female teachers, 1 male teacher (all general/class teachers); age of respondents: 38-49. Three of them are also assistant managers. Their teaching experience is from 16 years to 26 years.

Main results:

- The teachers have children with some kinds of disability in their class; the children are integrated in mainstream class due to Cypriot law.
- <u>The main barriers to inclusive education here are</u>: the teachers feel helpless; the teachers feels under-equipped to help children who need something different from other students – they want to help more and offer better guidance; the teachers are considered to be the authority in the class; this makes it difficult to accept someone else's 'special teacher' at work and cooperate with them to get the extra help; sometimes the teachers can't easily accept a second teacher in the classroom; the common Curriculum and the huge volume of materials that have to be covered; a lot of time is lost in the process of identification, referral and evaluation of the 'problems' of a SEN child.

Italy – University of Bologna and IERFOP

Moderator – Patrizia Sandri

Research conducted on 8th of May 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: primary school of Vado (Bologna).

Participants: 4 teachers , all women; age of respondents: 45. All teach in heterogeneous classes. Everyone teaches all subjects, at the primary school level. Two have jobs in 'instrumental' wellness and SLD (Specific Learning Disability). Their average teaching experience is 16 years.

Main results:

- The school is open to every child, regardless of the severity of their deficits.
- In the Italian school system, there are parents who freely decide in which school to enrol their child.
- The school favours the assumption of co-responsibility by students on the learning path and in school life.
- The teachers take care of the overall growth of each student, both in terms of learning and in well-being, relations, and emotional solidarity.
- The main barriers to inclusive education here are: conflicts between children; the difficulty of some parents in accepting that their child has difficulties (disabilities or learning disabilities); poor teacher training in classroom management; the collaboration between teachers and parents. Some of the elements that have been identified in respect to classes and schools in this focus group are still present in many other Italian schools generally.
- Good practices: 'Teaching without schoolbags' – this means responsibility, community and hospitality; Weekly Children's Assembly to discuss what to do at school; Reflection Protocol, to analyse situations of exclusion or discomfort; integrated personalized programming protocols between teachers, technicians, educators, parents; cognitive ability enhancement laboratories; the signal box.

Lithuania- Vilniaus kolegija office, Vilniaus

Moderator – Vaiva Juškienė

Research conducted on the 29th of September 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: Vilniaus kolegija, Saltoniškių g. 58, 08105 Vilnius, LITHUANIA.

Participants: 4 participants (4 teachers).

Main results:

- <u>The main barriers of inclusive education are</u>: insufficient knowledge and competencies of teachers how to educate SEN child and how to assess his/her abilities, lack of teacher's assistants at schools, no cooperation between teachers and parents, low parenting skills, nofeed-back from parents leads to poor results in development of children.
- <u>What could help</u>: educating parents on the good communication rules, involvement of parents in common school activities, development good contacts with child, parents and the team of specialists, which are provide better academic achievements and emotional well-being, supporting team work of many specialists, take into account intercultural differences.

Slovenia – Razvojno Izobrazevalni Center, Novo Mesto

Moderator – Metod Pavšelj

Research conducted on 10th of April 2017, in the afternoon.

Place of the focus group interviews: Primary School Šmihel, Šmihel 2, 8000 Novo Mesto,

Participants: 3 teachers ; age of respondents: 31-51. All have experienced long periods of teaching and have a lot of experience with SEN children: two work in the first educational cycle (as general class teachers), and one works in the second and third cycle (as a specialist teacher – maths and techniques). Their teaching experience exceeds 20 years.

Main results:

- Each of the teachers describe their own experiences, and how they feel about them – they highlighted stress, a lack of communication and sometimes a lack of willingness to cooperate from parents.
- The teachers highlighted that they are not educated to work with children with special needs, such as autism, deafness and hardness of hearing, blindness and other visual impairments, etc.
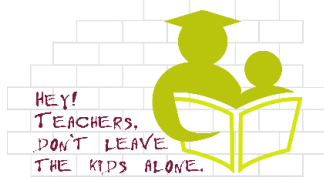
- It is easy to work with children with physical handicaps, but for other impediments they really need special teaching methods and the help of experts.

- The teachers thought that they do not need more education how to work with SEN children, but rather they need to learn about more good practices, exchange experiences and teaching methods with their colleagues, and work with parents and experts in the field.

- The teachers warned that teamwork is not a good solution when lots of professionals work with children in the same period – it may not be the best approach because of confusion from the child and parents.

- <u>The main barriers to inclusive education here are</u>: not enough transmission of information on children's issues between teachers; individual teachers do not have enough knowledge of how to help their SEN pupils.

- <u>What could help</u>: a system of working with children with special needs in school, timely identification of problems with assistance from relevant institutions; planning the transfer of information between teachers; additional staff to work with the SEN children; precise following of instructions for working with SEN children.

- Special projects to support the child, education for teachers and parents.

Conclusions:

- Teachers have children with some kinds of disability in their class.

- In countries such as Poland, Lithuania and Slovenia, teachers rarely work with other professionals in the classroom. Specialists do work with teachers in school classes in Italy and Cyprus. Although, sometimes teacher doesn't easily accept a second teacher in the classroom.

- The teachers surveyed pointed out that they had not been educated (during their main pedagogical studies) on how to work with special educational needs children. They stated that they need to know more about good practices, exchange experiences and teaching methods with colleagues, and work with parents and experts.

- The teachers also highlighted the fact that small teams of teachers and experts working with the SEN child are most effective. It is possible to avoid many misunderstandings with the parents of the child and improve communication in these team.

- The teachers stated that there are many barriers to inclusive education. The main problems they described were: large class sizes, which make it almost impossible to individualize the educational process; the many non-educational problems with certain SEN children, which usually have to be solved during lessons, thus shortening the time available for teaching and learning; a lack of specialist support, and insufficient collaboration with parents.

- The teachers elaborated some good practices that they employ.

- The teachers also use some modified teaching methods: differentiation of lessons; simplification of exercises; more time for exercises/facilities when needed; communication books for each child when needed; individualized curriculums for each child when needed, and work at specially designated stations.

- The teachers surveyed proposed several solutions to improve the quality of inclusive education. Their main points are: both parents and teachers should be authority figures for the SEN pupil; better teacher training in classroom management; a more efficient system of work with SEN children in school; timely identification of problems, and better communication and cooperation between teachers, educators, parents.

General Conclusions

In all, there were 135 participants from countries participating in the project *Hey! Teachers don't leave the kids alone*: 49 teachers, 45 pupils and 41 parents. Most of the respondents were women. They had different experiences and different views.

- Each child is individual and needs special care.
- A system for early identification of 'problems' and intervention is needed.
- Teachers, parents and experts should follow a global, bio-psycho-social approach according to the ICF (2000), than a medical model.
- Desirable changes in the school system include:
  - the number of pupils in a class should be reduced when there are children with special educational needs in that class;
  - encouraging pupils at risk of exclusion to participate in school competitions (mainly by teachers);
  - educating all pupils on social rules (courtesy, tolerance, sensitivity to social indifference, respect for others, etc).
- The teachers elaborated on some of the good practices they employ. They use lots of modified teaching methods, too.
- There is a need to promote inclusive, cooperative and individualised teaching methods.
- Teachers and schools are not prepared well enough for the inclusion of children with special needs, such as autism, etc.
- Teachers and parents need more education and a lot of communication to ensure sufficient common work to help the special needs child.
- Desirable changes in teacher training and education include:
  - issues of inclusive education, e.g. effective classroom management, coping with difficult pupils, effective communication and cooperation with institutions, experts and parents; knowledge of the features and symptoms of every disability;
  - the possibility of exchanging experiences with colleagues would be best for improving teaching methods and understanding disabilities.
- There is a need to improve cooperation skills between parents and teachers.
- Psychological help is essential in supporting children, teachers, and parents.
- Should be promoted an inclusive heterogenic school culture and it's necessary to promote the development of teachers intercultural competence.
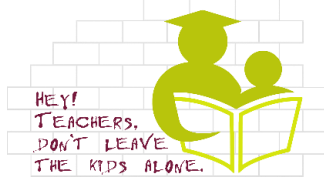
- It is noted that in countries with a long tradition of inclusive education (such as Italy), more information has been reported about the positive aspects of inclusive education than in other countries (such as Slovenia, Poland, Cyprus).

The significance of the research results can be viewed on two levels, local and international. On the local level, this research was important for the schools involved, including their teachers, parents and pupils, because it gave them an opportunity for open discussion, to talk and listen to each other. This could help them in future to build better communication and support for each other. It could also help to improve their systems of working with special educational needs in their schools. On the international level, the results of the study make it possible to compare the different situations of the pupils, their families and teachers in the context of inclusive education in Europe.

Literature analysis

Common report of secondary sources

Studies of secondary sources were conducted in order to gather information about the functioning of teachers, pupils and pupils' families in terms of inclusive education in the countries surveyed (Poland, Slovenia, Italy, Cyprus).

The aim of the research was to supplement the survey outcomes from a theoretical point of view, but with the focus on the European dimension of the topic. The following sources were analysed:

- Source literature – published after 2000.
- Additional sources: networks, groups, forums and other services at the European level that work in the field of inclusive education.
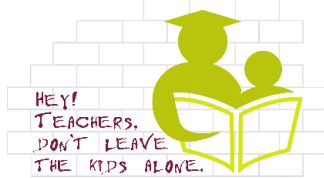
The main aspects of inclusive education for persons with special educational needs

Inclusive education in the Slovenian experience

The Programme for Children and Youth 2006-2016 (Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, 2006) set out the objectives of educational policy in Slovenia. These are to ensure equal possibilities for education and improve its accessibility, guarantee the quality of education of children, promote mutual tolerance, reduce inequalities in society, respect diversity and human rights, and implement lifelong learning at all educational levels.

It was also designed to assert the national policy with an emphasis on the Lisbon strategy. Through education, individuals have to enable personal growth, employment, welfare and more social security, while increasing societal security and cohesion. A significant move was made by adopting the Elementary School Act (1996, reformed in 2006), and the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2000, reformed in 2016).

It has to be noted that to this day, there is no single authority for the education of children with special needs at the national level in Slovenia, as is already common in the majority of EU Member states (special departments within ministries, agencies, etc). Partially, the adoption of conceptual issues in the area of the education of children with special needs is taken note of by the Disability Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, which was set up as inter-ministerial effort. In 2007, the Ministry of Health formed another inter-ministerial working group to draw up a proposal for regulating the state handling of children with special needs. It included

representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and Ministry of Education and Sport.

Another important step was taken in 2008, when Slovenia as a nation engaged as a regular member in the work of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (www.european-agency.org).

Nowadays, the leading professional and political concept in the area of education of children and youth with special needs both worldwide and in Slovenia is considered to be the so-called inclusive concept. An inclusive approach, or methodology, highlights the need to adapt the environment to the child. In addition to legal bases, inclusive schooling in Slovenia follows the *Instruction for adapted implementation of elementary school programme for children with special needs* (2008).

Inclusive education in the Cypriot experience

Despite the 2011 UN Convention on The Rights of People with Disabilities, Cyprus is implementing integration based on its own legislation (Law 1999). Based on this, teachers will have in their general class children with special educational needs (different kinds of disabilities), e.g. children on the autism spectrum. Children with SEN are evaluated by a committee in order to be placed in the most appropriate educational setting (Schools with mainstream classrooms and Special Education provision out of class, Schools with mainstream classrooms, Special Education provision out of class, Special Education Unit, Special Education Schools).

Parents with children with SEN experience integration as it is implemented in Cyprus by having their children in a mainstream class, and who then leave the class for some hours a week to attend special education lessons in a special education classroom, in which they receive support from a special education teacher.

Thus, despite the fact that many children with SEN are already in a mainstream school because of the existing 1999-2014 laws, the system offers children socialization but not necessarily an appropriate education. The New National Curriculum is inadequate in a political sense that is likely to be a severe obstacle in the way of inclusive education. There is a need to reframe the New National Curriculum in order to fit with the stated philosophy of the democratic and humane schools that celebrates diversity, human rights and social justice.

Parents and teachers need to be properly informed about the inclusive education system, so that they can understand that this will benefit their children with SEN. In service – education along with curriculum guidelines and support within school will give teachers the tools to apply more inclusive practices for the learning benefit of children with SEN.

Inclusive education in the Italian experience

In Italy, the choice of integrating disadvantaged students into mainstream schools will have been in effect for forty years, in 2017. Compared to the first phase of inclusion of pupils with disabilities in the late 1970s, the Italian school system has changed considerably, in particular by recognizing the autonomy of educational institutions. The normative indications – and also a good part of the didactic and educational experiences that have been carried out – have prompted the school used in this research to think of itself as an educational community that is aware of differences, and capable of proposing targeted and diverse teaching strategies. In this sense, we can say that our perspective is being emphasized in our country/Italy, and this transition, from integration to inclusion, is a sign of continuity with the past.

As Andrea Canevaro wrote in 2011, from the teachers' perceptive, in school integration "Inclusion is not a natural and mechanical product. It is an evolutionary, intentional and conscious process." In modern Italy, this has been translated into a process that was strongly desired by both institutions and families, as well as by democratic teachers, and has developed in a discontinuous way by drawing a non-homogeneous, leopard-coloured picture, situations of excellence and good quality, as well as others far more critical and backward.

Being Inclusive means focusing on learning, focusing on the needs of the person, individualizing, educational strategies, taking time to learn and accompanying the pupils and their families on the learning journey, creative play, organisation and planning, experimentation and documentation. In this sense, continuous and incessant quality assurance of integration and inclusion involves the pursuit of a quality of day-to-day education for all pupils in order to make the class and the school a learning and knowledge-building community.

It is important to add that the 'Good School' law came into force last July 2016, and this introduced a number of novelties to the Italian school system:

- Different competitions to win access to supporting specialists. On the other hand – unlike what is happening today – vocational training for those who wish to become SEN support teachers, from the level of their basic university studies onwards.

- Reviews of the inclusion criteria for the role of teaching supports, in order to ensure the continuity of the right to study for pupils with disabilities, and to make it possible for them to enjoy the same teacher for the entirety of that stage of their education.

- Identification of the competences of different local authorities with regard to support services for school enrolment.

- Evaluation of indicators for self-assessment and assessment of school inclusion.

- Review of the Certification Modalities and Criteria that should be used to identify a SEN child's remaining abilities, in order to develop them along identified paths in concert with all public, private or contracted public sector specialists with recognised, disabled pupils. In the sense of there being less and less medicalization of disability and an increase in attention to the development of the residual abilities of the person, from a perspective that is not merely welfare-based but inclusive, corresponding to the bio-psycho-social model adopted in 2006 by the Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- Provision of initial and in-service training requirements for school leaders and teachers on the pedagogical-didactic and organisational aspects of school integration.

- Provision of in-service training requirements for administrative, technical and auxiliary staff, with respect to specific skills, basic care and the organisational, educational-relational aspects of school integration.

Inclusive education in the Lithuanian experience

Inclusive Education in Lithuania is primarily based on international documents: UN convention of children rights (1989), UN regulations for equal opportunities of persons with handicaps (1993) and Salamanka declaration and Recomendations for the improvement of special education (1994) and the ideas, articulated in them, such as: "every child is unique and he has individual interests, skills and educational needs, typical only for him," "educational systems and curriculums should be adjusted to serve the needs of the variety of children and differences of the needs," "schools should base on the principles of inclusive education – the most effective mean for overcoming discrimination and segregation – and help to create communities with a focus on tolerance towards differences, to create sustainable society, to seek the best education for his members according to their capacities".

To further and enrich the concept of inclusive education in Lithuania, the idea that inclusion and quality are interrelated, in that inclusive ethos can be significant in qualitative education for all children (Dacar world education forum (2000), UN convention of rights of handicapped (2006), UNESCO Recommendations for the development of inclusive education (2008), UNESCO

Guidelines for the implementation of inclusive education (2009). Further development of this concept of inclusive education for Lithuania is expected to happen in the context of the European strategy on special needs (2020), which gives the priority to the inquiry based policy of inclusive education in EU countries, with particular focus on dignity, individuality, and morality of every person, including national identity and citizenship.
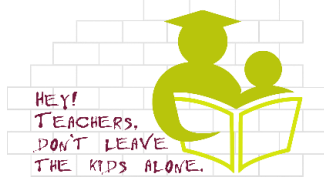
The concept of inclusive education in Lithuania today: Inclusive education is the process that ensures qualitative education for all its participants, where attention is focused on the expectations of every pupil, pupils' parents, also peculiarities of each pupils' needs, necessities in special help and special services and stopping drop-out processes from the system of education („Plan of actions of the development of inclusive education for the period of 2014–2016 year"; approved by the Minister of Education and Science, 2014-09-05,   law No. V-808).

Inclusive education in the Polish experience

In Poland, obligatory legislative framework for inclusive education was established in 2015, however the tradition dates back to 1990/1991. In accordance with the most recent legal norms, education for SEN children is possible at several types of educational institution, such as public schools (pre-schools), public schools (pre-schools) with integrative classes, integrative schools (pre-schools), public schools (pre-schools) with special classes, special schools (pre-schools), and in different types of special educational and developmental centres. The education of children with disabilities or those in danger of social exclusion can be extended and prolonged if necessary. In Polish public schools, children are included in the standard educational process.

Each SEN child participates in an individual educational and therapeutic programme that takes into account:

- the means and extent of the adaptation of the educational requirements and school education program appropriately to the individual development, educational needs and psychophysical capabilities of the child;
- integrated actions of teachers and professionals involved in the educational process;
- the form and times that the pupil is given psychological and pedagogical assistance;
- actions to support the child's parents;
- revalidation, rehabilitation and social therapy classes, and other activities suited to the individual development of the child;
- the scope of cooperation between teachers and professionals;

- for students with disabilities the methods of adjustment of the conditions of the education to the nature of the student's disability, including the use of assistive technology in education.

The idea underlying inclusive education is to change the school process so that it better responds to the needs of students with a variety of educational problems. According to a report by Poland's Supreme Audit Office (*Najwyższa Izba Kontroli* (*NIK*)), on public schools in Poland, the basic institutions that should be implementing inclusive education are unfortunately not adequately prepared to work with SEN children. Disabled students exhibit a number of special needs that public schools are not always able to meet. The wide-ranging implementation of inclusive education in Poland requires interdisciplinary interventions and systematic change. There is also a need for greater flexibility in the curricula, individualization of teaching and better preparation of support systems for primary school teachers.

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