

**Contribution by the European Network on Inclusive Education & Disability, includ-ed
to the European Public Consultation on the Europe 2020 Strategy
31.10.2014**

The **European Network on Inclusive Education & Disability, includ-ed**, would like to express its opinion on the Europe 2020 strategy, especially in the key areas of education, following its mission to promote equal opportunities in the educational context for people with disabilities, with the aim of improving their employability and work inclusion.

About includ-ed

The **European Network on Inclusive Education & Disability (includ-ed)** is a collaborative and multi-stakeholder initiative promoted by **Fundación ONCE** and co-funded by the **European Social Fund**. Its member organisations, as founding partners together with Fundación ONCE in Spain are: Association des Paralysés de France (APF), Kynnys ry in Finland, and Rytmus in the Czech Republic. includ-ed also counts with other associated members: queraum. cultural & social research (AT); FIRAH - International Foundation of Applied Disability Research (FR); University of Akureyri (IS); Inclusion Ireland (IRE); Association RENINCO (RO); CSIE - Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (UK). Includ-ed comprises a virtual community of more than 3000 experts and organizations throughout Europe active in the field of inclusive education.

includ-ed's two primary goals are: 1) to promote, identify, disseminate and exchange good practices and all types of resources related to inclusive education for people with disabilities across Europe; and 2) to influence EU and national policies and to encourage an active and inclusive focus in education systems. includ-ed understands that equal opportunities and inclusive education are key factors for employability, work integration and social inclusion. includ-ed focuses on 4 main thematic areas which are: Secondary education; Transit to higher levels of education; Transition to adult life and the labour market; and New technologies for inclusive education.

includ-ed's actions are strategically aligned with: The '**United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**', particularly articles 24 and 27 on Education and Work; **The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020**; and the **European Strategy 'Europe 2020' for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**. Includ-ed is running from 2009 to the end of 2015.

More information about includ-ed: www.includ-ed.eu; Twitter (@includ_ed); LinkedIn (includ-ed Network); includ-ed Technical Secretariat: includ-ed.secretariat@paueducation.com; +34 933 670 434

I. Taking stock: the Europe 2020 strategy over 2010-2014

I.1. Content and implementation

➔ People with disabilities are in clear disadvantage in the educational field

- According to the **EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020, launched in tandem with the EU 2020 Strategy**, one in six people in the European Union (EU) has a disability that ranges from mild to severe, making around 80 million who are often prevented from taking part fully in society and the economy because of environmental and attitudinal barriers. From this perspective the EU Disability Strategy works around eight main areas where action is required, being education and training one of them (together with employment, accessibility, participation, equality, social protection, health, and external action). The specific goal is to promote inclusive education and life long learning for students with disabilities, and includes a series of actions to ensure that these students receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their education and that effective individualized measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.
- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, which became a legally binding instrument for the EU on 22 January 2011, also impacted the way in which disability policy, as part of the EU 2020 Strategy, needed to be devised. The Convention includes substantive provisions relating to accessibility (Article 9), education (Article 24) and employment (Article 27), all areas of crucial importance for the EU Strategy. Since the Convention States Parties are bound to take into account the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and programmes, it is thus justified that the UN Convention explicitly serves as a frame of reference for both targeted disability policy and disability mainstreaming across the various fields of action under the EU 2020 Strategy.
- The recent EC Staff Working Document **“Report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the European Union”¹**, highlights inequalities between people with and without disabilities in various areas, being one of them Education. While the percentage of early school leavers in the EU represents 11% for persons without disabilities (age 18-24), the equivalent percentage is nearly 19% for youngsters with disabilities.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/swd_2014_182_en.pdf

Furthermore, while nearly 37% of people without disabilities aged 30-34 have completed tertiary education, only 27% of people with disabilities aged 30-34 have done so.

➔ **The economic crisis affected negatively to education and inclusive education systems, having an impact on already vulnerable groups such as students with disabilities**

- incluD-ed draws attention on the study *Assessing the impact of European governments' austerity plans on the rights of persons with disabilities*, conducted by the European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability in October 2012², which gathers crisis-specific data, including the following conclusions: restrictions on resources for inclusive education is likely to result in higher school dropout rates on the part of pupils with disabilities and diminish the proportion of students going on to third level education. Many of the measures identified by the study have the potential to seriously inhibit progress towards the EU2020 objectives relating to employment, education, poverty and social exclusion.
- Also in 2012 the EC published a report on *Education and Disability/Special Needs — policies and practices in education, training and employment for students with disabilities and special educational needs in the EU*. The report, compiled for the Commission by the NESSE network of experts, showed that, despite Member States' stated commitment to promote inclusive education, too many learners with special needs are still placed in segregated institutions or in mainstream settings with inadequate support. The report called on Member States to work harder to develop inclusive education systems and to remove the barriers faced by vulnerable groups when it comes to participation and success in education, training and employment. It also highlighted wide variation between Member States as to how children with special needs are identified, and whether, after identification, they are placed in mainstream or special schools. The report also underlined the need to harmonize definitions in this field across the EU and to improve data gathering to enable Member States to compare their approaches more effectively and learn from each other's experience³.

² http://www.efc.be/programmes_services/resources/Documents/Austerity2012.PDF

³ <http://www.nesetweb.eu/sites/default/files/NESSE-disability-special-needs-report-2012.pdf>

EU2020 has made a difference, but in the educational field inclusive education needs to be reinforced

- incluD-ed is convinced that to advance the vision of 'Europe 2020' and achieve a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy in coming years, inclusive education systems need to be promoted, developed and established throughout the EU. High levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion - priorities of EU2020 - cannot be achieved without establishing inclusive education systems.
- A study conducted on behalf of both ONCE Foundation and Bosch i Gimpera Foundation by Professors Jorge Calero Martínez and Álvaro Choi de Mendizábal, from the University of Barcelona⁴, disclosed in 2012 some valuable information on the potential contribution of persons with disabilities to the achievement of the EU 2020 Strategy objectives. The study aimed at: 1) quantifying the current situation of the population with disabilities in all EU countries with regard to the EU 2020 Strategy objectives, and 2) estimating how the effects of an improvement of their relative position could allow for better results of those EU 2020 Strategy objectives. The data was based on the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) available in 2009. The potential contribution of persons with disabilities to the achievement of the EU 2020 objectives was analyzed across a number of areas, including education.

The results also show that investing in improving the situation of persons with disabilities would contribute to the achievement of the EU 2020 Strategy objectives: even if the impact associated with that improvement on the aggregated level of the different objectives is not especially high in absolute terms - given the reduced number of people with disabilities -, the impact is indeed relevant in relative terms. The study also underlined that the spending in education and programmes for job creation should be considered an investment when it comes to persons with disabilities. The savings in public benefit payments should be welcomed in addition to the conventional benefits associated with education and the increasing economic activity.

⁴ *Population with disabilities in the EU: its contribution to achieving the objectives*, 20 December 2011. Study co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) in the framework of the Spanish ESF Operational Programme Fighting against Discrimination

1.2. Tools

➔ **Sub-targets regarding vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities need to be incorporated in EU2020**

- EU targets need to be based on comprehensive and reliable data, be ambitious and consistent with the values and principles enshrined in the Treaties. In general terms, targets are a useful policy tool, but should be broken into specific sub-targets reflecting the needs of specific target groups, among which persons with disabilities. This would bring better consistency between the EU Strategy, disability policy and the implementation of the UN Convention, and therefore enhance effectiveness.

➔ **Flagship initiatives need more disability mainstreaming.**

- The Flagship Initiatives under the EU2020 Strategy have had the mission of further elaborating on policy-specific strategies matching the headline targets. However, although flagship initiatives such as Youth on the Move and the Digital Agenda for Europe (two of the most connected with incluD-ed's field) include some actions regarding people with disabilities, disability mainstreaming should be reinforced, consequently maximizing the opportunities to connect disability with the broader EU2020 Strategy.
- incluD-ed has disseminated its vision of a series of EU instruments related to education and labour inclusion, insisting in the need to expand and deepen the perspective of people with disabilities so that they also benefit from policies and programmes. This has been pointed out by incluD-ed through different *position papers* regarding instruments such as Erasmus for All⁵, Youth Guarantee⁶, Commission Recommendation on Child Poverty and Well-being⁷, U-Multirank⁸, Accessibility of Public Sector Bodies' Websites⁹, as well as concerning international initiatives applying in Europe like OECD Programmes for International Student Assessment (PISA)¹⁰ and for the International

⁵ <http://www.includ-ed.eu/resource/views-european-network-inclusive-education-disability-proposal-%E2%80%99Erasmus-all%E2%80%99>

⁶ <http://www.includ-ed.eu/resource/views-european-network-inclusive-education-disability-epsco-council-recommendation-implemen>

⁷ <http://www.includ-ed.eu/resource/views-includ-ed-commission-recommendation-child-poverty-and-well-being>

⁸ <http://www.includ-ed.eu/resource/views-european-network-inclusive-education-disability-includ-ed-u-multirank>

⁹ <http://www.includ-ed.eu/resource/views-includ-ed-commission%E2%80%99s-proposal-directive-accessibility-public-sector-bodies%E2%80%99-website>

¹⁰ <http://www.includ-ed.eu/resource/views-includ-ed-network-oecd-programme-international-student-assessment-pisa>

Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) in 2014¹¹. The latest work about to be launched has to do with the EU Mobility Card and how to promote that students with disabilities benefit during their stay abroad from the mutual recognition of disability cards and related entitlements.

II. Adapting the Europe 2020 strategy: the growth strategy for a post-crisis Europe

II.1. Content and implementation

➔ Inclusive education needs to be part of EU2020

- incluD-ed welcomes this review of the EU2020 Strategy as an opportunity to put more emphasis on the fact that inclusive education has a direct impact on Education objectives themselves, but also on objectives regarding employment and poverty.
- In the framework of the EU2020 Strategy revision, incluD-ed wants to share the key messages reflected in its recent **STATEMENT on promoting inclusive education systems in Europe**, which was handed in to the European Parliament last April during First Conference on Inclusive Education and Disability in Europe at the EP in Brussels, co-hosted by MEP Rosa Estaràs and incluD-ed Network. With over 100 attendees, this historic event gathered representatives of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council, by means of Permanent Representations, and experts and civil society organisations such as the European Disability Forum¹². The content of this Statement is considered key to revisions of EU2020 and is reflected below¹³:

¹¹ <http://www.includ-ed.eu/resource/views-european-network-inclusive-education-disability-oecd-programme-international-assessme>

¹² <http://www.includ-ed.eu/newsandevents/first-conference-inclusive-education-european-parliament-addressed-current-status-and->

¹³ <http://www.includ-ed.eu/newsandevents/statement-promoting-inclusive-education-systems-europe>

STATEMENT on promoting inclusive education systems in Europe (includ-ed, April 9, 2014)

Trough this STATEMENT on promoting inclusive education systems in Europe the includ-ed Network calls on current and future members of the European Parliament and the European Commission, as well as representatives of all European Member States, to consider and include the following recommendations regarding the development of inclusive education systems into their work programmes for the period 2014–2020.

To advance the vision of ‘Europe 2020’ and achieve a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy in coming years, inclusive education systems need to be promoted, developed and established throughout the EU. High levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion - priorities of EU2020 - cannot be achieved without establishing inclusive education systems.

includ-ed bases this statement on:

- *the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (articles 21 and 26 on persons with disabilities);*
- *the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed by the European Union and its Member States (particularly article 24 on education).*

includ-ed highlights that:

- *European Member States have already experienced positive results from implementing inclusive education for students with special educational needs;*
- *inclusive education benefits all learners and strengthens social cohesion;*
- *access to and permanence in the education system ensures equal opportunities for all and is a main source of labour and social inclusion.*

includ-ed requests that the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union take steps in contributing to:

- *the development of a European strategy urging Member States to implement inclusive education systems at all levels, bringing Europe in line with objectives set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;*
- *encourage Member States to invest in inclusive education to achieve ‘Europe 2020’ targets.*

includ-ed calls on the development of inclusive education systems by Member States that:

- *enable early special educational needs detection mechanisms for qualified early and personalised support;*
- *establish mechanisms that facilitate transitions between the different stages of both education and employment;*
- *establish a framework of services that supports inclusive education, particularly for students that require high-level support;*
- *promote and support participation of students with special educational needs in post-compulsory education and university;*
- *enhance universally accessible curricula for lifelong learning and accessibility of ICT in an educational context;*
- *reinforce teacher training to ensure quality inclusive education;*
- *monitor progress, collect reliable data and best practices.*

1.2. Tools

➔ Data on people with disabilities should be reinforced in the framework of EU2020

Next steps should include investing in improving data collection and monitoring major trends relating to persons with disabilities across Member States. It has already been officially recognised that there is a huge demand for policy-relevant statistics on disability at the EU level. There is also a need to take account of the UN Convention as Member States and the EU have an obligation to report on the implementation of the UN Convention by monitoring statistical information on disability.

➔ In the field of education, the situation of clear disadvantage of students with disabilities should be taken in to account and should be specifically measured within the EU2020 education objectives.

This specific measurement should be coherent with the proper developments in the field of employment, allowing to relate the situation of people with disability in education, and their participation in the labour market. Data must be clear, comparable, and consistent over time to serve as key instrument for policy making.

- ➔ incluD-ed is convinced that it is also essential to **keep track of the legislatives acts as regards inclusive education, not only in their design but also in their implementation and effectiveness**, checking inconsistencies between what is promoted in the objectives, the process by which they are intended to be achieved, and the results obtained.

Some instruments have been developed in this field such as the model proposed by Maria Antonia Casanova, expert collaborator of incluD-ed¹⁴, highlighting the following:

1. The rules of schooling of the country require that students with disabilities are educated in mainstream schools.
2. The administration takes the time to verify that schooling is done properly.
3. The administration provides the means and resources needed to provide an inclusive education system.
4. Schools have a flexible organization that serves all students according to their personal characteristics.
5. Schools have enough autonomy to adapt the curriculum to the diverse population they serve.

- ➔ **Innovation and ICT are an opportunity but also a key challenge for inclusive education and people with disabilities**

incluD-ed believes that new challenges as well as chances to cope with current challenges will come especially from the **further development of the information and communication technologies** that should be totally accessible for people with disabilities. If they are not, they will be creating new barriers and will be a factor of exclusion as they are spread in education systems. The increasing education possibilities that are offered through the internet, especially the **development of MOOCs, and mobile applications** MOOCs and Apps offer huge possibilities to educate in an inclusive manner EU citizens at reduced costs, but can generate exclusion if they are not accessible.

¹⁴ Models proposed by Maria-Antonia Casanova, expert of the incluD-ed Network on inclusive education, in curriculum design, attention to diversity and evaluation, trainings for staff and management teams. Collaborates with Camilo José Cela University of Madrid, Director of Training of the Higher Institute of Educational Development

➔ **Exchange and dissemination and good practice on inclusive education is relevant and must be criteria based**

Exchange and dissemination and good practice on inclusive education fosters mutual learning opportunities to build on experiences that proved themselves as valuable. This is one of the main goals on incluD-ed, serving as a platform of information at European level. However, the idea, the concept, the approach of inclusive education has to be translated into “tangible” items when it comes to identifying good practices and how the actually impact on people with disabilities. For this purpose, incluD-ed has developed Evaluation criteria for good practices on inclusive education that have proved useful. These criteria can be downloaded here, comprising a set of indicators regarding: impact, innovation, transferability, sustainability, participation of people with disabilities, broad base participation and evaluation: <http://www.includ-ed.eu/resource/evaluation-criteria-includ-ed-good-practices>

Key messages of incluD-ed

- ✓ Given that 16% of the EU population has a disability, the EU2020 targets regarding education and employment will only be met if people with disabilities are adequately brought into the equation.
- ✓ Efforts have to be made to make the education and training systems as well as labour markets more accessible and inclusive.
- ✓ In particular, the revised Europe 2020 strategy should incorporate sub-targets specifically looking at education and working inclusion of people with disabilities.
- ✓ Those targets should be precise, compulsory and elaborated together with disability stakeholder organizations.
- ✓ Doing so will foster the collection of data on the work and educational inclusion of people with disabilities at local, regional, national and European level allowing EU comparisons and adequate policymaking.
- ✓ The revised EU2020 strategy should provide more funding and resources to improve the situation of people with disabilities ensuring their educational, working as well as social inclusion.