



PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

clear goals, strong commitments,
responsible policies

POSITION PAPER

Ensuring the right to quality education of children and women is a recognized fundamental official right in the Republic of Moldova.

In order to guarantee the right to education for all children, the Program for the Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic Moldova for the years 2011-2020 was approved. Under this program, various structures and support services have been developed, such as the Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance (RCPA) (at the central level), the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service (PAS - at the district level), as well as resource centers for inclusive education and teacher training and multidisciplinary intra-school commissions.

Notwithstanding the many advances in the implementation of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova, the vast majority of educational units remain inaccessible for children and young people with different disabilities and with special educational needs, including pre-school children.

In what regards early education, there is no systemic approach yet implemented. There are some practices of including children with special educational needs (including disability) in education facilities, but they are sporadic. Inclusive education operating mechanism for services is not approved and neither is the funding of such services. Early education institutions, with few exceptions, are not ready for a qualified approach addressed to children with special educational needs.

ABOUT APSCF

The Alliance of active NGO's in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF) from the Republic of Moldova is a network of non-governmental organizations working together to create a coherent and functional framework for the development of all actors, mechanisms and implementation practices of public policies, ensuring the real protection of the family and child. For more information visit www.aliantacf.md/en.

ACRONYMS

LPA Local Public Administration
SEN Special education needs
RCPA Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance
PAS Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service

SYSTEMIC AND EFFECTIVE MECHANISMS FOR THE PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



The evolution of the educational paradigm from exclusion to inclusion implies the confinement of systematic interventions on the areas such as:

- the legal framework and the approval of public policies;
- the financial mechanisms to support inclusive education;
- support services;
- human resources management for the implementation of inclusive education;
- changes in the attitude towards the inclusive environment in public perception (children, parents, teachers);
- effective partnerships between central and local authorities and civil society representatives.

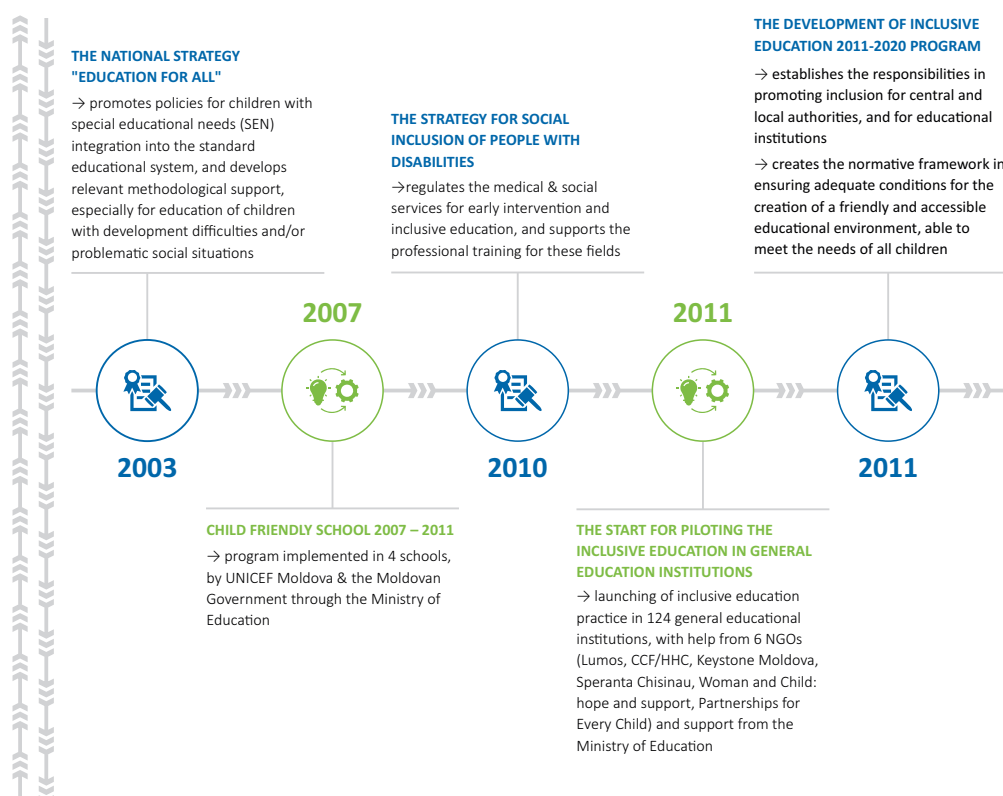
The legal framework in the Republic of Moldova is in line with international standards for the development of inclusive education and is based on the principle of education for **all children**, as reflected in the documents approved and ratified over the last years. Progress has been made with the inclusion of children with SEN in the education system, possibly thanks to the joint efforts of all central, local and school partners, but also due to the work of NGOs active in this field.

However, we believe there is a **need to rethink the strategy of using budget resources** to promote and ensure inclusive education. Our experience proves that the existing funding mechanism is not fair enough because of various reasons: a) it only addresses primary and secondary education; b) inclusive education allowances are only directed to create / ensure the functionality of resource centers and pay the support staff, and do not respond or fully cover the educational needs of the children included; c) the specific needs of access, transport, assistance (psychological, speech therapy), rehabilitation (kinetotherapy), etc., are not covered financially, although they are formally guaranteed by the state; d) funds for inclusive education are used by the authorities of the territorial-administrative units for other purposes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MOLDOVA

National policy documents and normative acts

Key moments in the implementation process

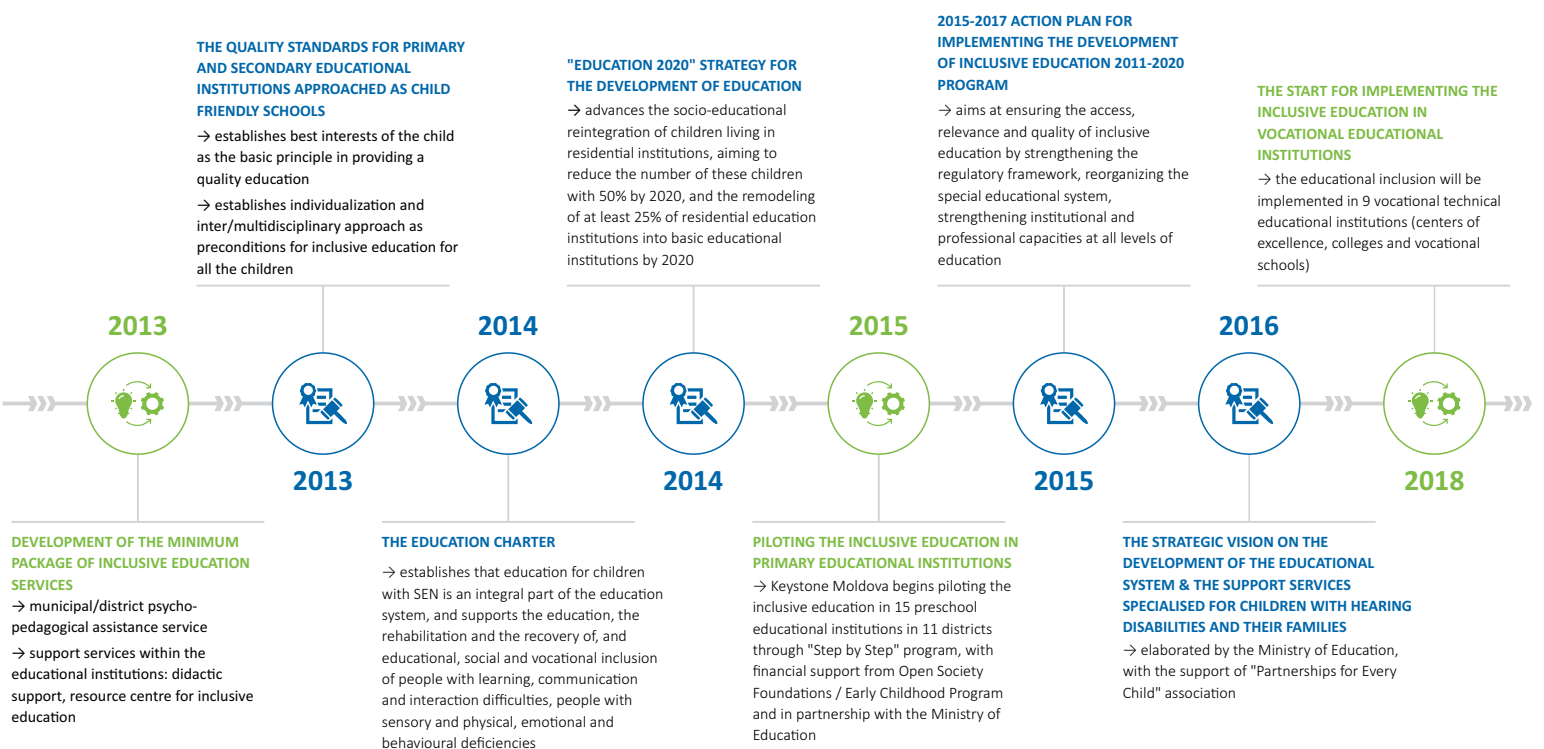


The central authorities should define **clear objectives** and pursue the achievement of these objectives by **allocating financial resources according to needs and standard cost per pupil and student with SEN**. The mission of implementing inclusive education services cannot be delegated to local education units without sufficient support, and *expressions such as "within the planned and approved financial means of the National Program for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for the years 2017-2022" must be accompanied by adequate funding from the central authorities.*

Without a proper support mechanism, expression as *"within the limits of planned and approved financial means"* becomes, in fact, a model where no tangible progress can be made, because this mechanism can turn into a vicious circle. Educational institutions have an obligation to implement services but don't have resources, the Government asserts that it is the obligation of educational institutions from the territories to provide these services, but local municipalities - since schools are under their financial management - are less and less involved in the implementation of these measures due to the lack of financial resources.

An APSCF study launched in 2017 shows how local public administrations (LPA) collaboration with educational institutions to promote inclusive education is becoming more and more cumbersome. As a result of the interviews conducted with representatives of the local public administration, they mentioned that they are involved in the development of educational services whenever there are investment projects focused on the infrastructure renovation (building the access slopes from the LPA's financial resources, repairing the library, providing computer rooms, building the fence, aqueduct, sewage, etc.). All other aspects related to teacher training, specialized support from key professional figures such as psychologist or speech therapist, educational support in the development of curricula, etc., do not enter into this cooperation mechanism.

The same study shows that although most of the surveyed pedagogues consider that their community has taken all the necessary measures to ensure that all children are enrolled at any stage of schooling regardless of age, gender, disability, nationality or social status, *40% of the interviewed teachers consider access to physical disabilities at school is limited or even very limited*. The main causes are: lack of a personal assistant, lack of access to schools, lack of facilities adapted to the needs, lack of transport and poor and damaged roads.



OBJECTIVES, STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



APSCF welcomes Objective 2 of the Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Program for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for the years 2017-2022 aimed at ensuring the right to quality education of children and women with various disabilities.

We believe that the positive experience recorded in the pilot schools that had collaborative inclusive education support programs with NGOs shows that where there is adequate support, the school environment is more friendly and accessible to all children, and the results are satisfactory to everyone: from teachers, parents to beneficiaries (both children with special educational needs, and their colleagues).

On the one hand, it is necessary to consider the objectives we want to achieve. The government objectives are from this point of view a good starting point. On the other hand, there is a need for funding and a fund management mechanism to ensure that these objectives are met in a realistic way.

We believe that in order to achieve these objectives the following steps are necessary:

- to define and approve an applicable model for the inclusion of children with disabilities in education facilities in order to ensure their right to education;
- to find the necessary resources at national level according to needs and standard cost per pupil;
- to constantly monitor the effective access of children with SEN to inclusive education services in the territory;
- the annual evaluation of the progress of the implementation of the national plan in terms of the proposed objectives;
- on the basis of the observations made, to constantly verify the resources destined for inclusive education and the introduction of some appropriate measures to provide the funds needed to meet the proposed objectives;
- LPA should be more involved in increasing the accessibility of children with locomotor disabilities (road repair, transport insurance, ramp construction at school buildings, adaptation of auxiliary rooms, etc.), as well as support for vulnerable families with children with ESCs for the integration of these children;
- to allocate financial resources for specialized equipment in schools and for the assistance of children with sensory disturbances and children with autism spectrum disorders (TSA);
- to reduce the number of pupils in classes with children with SEN up to 15 in total (from which 2-3 would be children with SEN);
- to elaborate and approve the norms for equipping kindergartens and schools with technologies and proper equipment for alternative communication in order to support the inclusion of children with SEN;
- to develop / improve the professional competencies of pedagogues, support teachers, coordinators of intra-school multidisciplinary teams in inclusive education. In this context, it is necessary to organize the training of these groups, based on theoretical and practical courses, as well as mentoring work.
- to provide teachers with the methodical and teaching materials needed to develop and implement an adapted and modified curricula, and encourage the differentiated assessment of pupils with different needs; to organize trainings for teachers on working strategies with children with SEN
- to analyse of the use of financial sources for inclusive education in the last two years and elaborate some measures to improve the use of the budget for inclusive education.
- to revise the calculation formula for insuring the financial implementation of inclusive education in schools and kindergartens, so as to cover the needs of children with different levels of disability.
- to ensure special attention for support teachers as an indispensable component for successful implementation of initiatives on inclusive education and to revise the norm on the number of assisted children (the ratio of 5 children with severe / associated disabilities and 10 children with SEN).

In conclusion, we want to express our desire to be included as a constructive partner in a dialogue with state institutions on all aspects regarding inclusive education. We hope and expect in the same time that all interested stakeholders and representatives of government institutions demonstrate good intentions and personal commitment, so necessary to ensure that all children in the Republic of Moldova have equal access to quality education.