

## Chapter 3

# A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENT'S (SEN) EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS FROM INSIDE PROJECT<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter aimed to analyze the basic approaches to the education of special needs students (SEN) within the scope of a European Union (EU) project named “Integrating Special-needs Individuals into Digi-holistic Education” (INSIDE) and carried out with the partners from Türkiye, Basque Country, and Ireland under the coordination of Antalya Provincial Directorate of National Education. The project focused on the common needs teachers and families working with

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SEN students had for using digital technologies to support children's social adaptation skills. This chapter addressed issues related to educating individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) in these partner countries.

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) stated that "intellectual disability is a condition characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior that originates before the age of 22" (AAIDD, 2021). Following this definition, differing viewpoints emerge regarding the commencement of the disability, the persistence of brain development until one's twenties, and the culmination of the developmental phase. Consequently, the starting age of 18 years, found in the 9th to 11th editions of the AAIDD Guidelines, has changed from the 12th edition of the Guidelines to "must have been diagnosed before a person reaches 22 years of age" (Schalock et al., 2021). In the World Health Organization (WHO) International Classification of Diseases and Health Conditions (ICD-10) system, ID is the inadequate development of the mind that occurs during developmental periods and is characterized by impairments in cognitive, social, and language-related abilities. Although the definition of intellectual disability is made similarly, the more stigmatizing terms have started to be replaced by non-stigmatic terms. It is possible to see the effects of this approach in the ICD-11 published in 2019 (Reed et al., 2019). With ICD-11, the former term "mental retardation" was changed to intellectual developmental disorders. In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association changed the term mental disability in the DSM V Handbook, an updated version of DSM IV, to intellectual disability/intellectual developmental disorder.

Individuals with ID experience some difficulties characterized by limitations in cognitive and academic skills, daily living skills, social relationships, and expressive language skills (Dykens, 2000). Although the difficulties experienced may differ based on age and developmental characteristics, they bring about limitations in functioning in society and displaying the skills necessary for independent living for all. Thus, structured programs with effective and evidence-based methods and rich stimulant environments are needed for individuals with ID (Price, Morris & Costello, 2018). Such interventions aim to develop academic skills, communication skills, social skills, game skills, self-care, and social adaptation skills (Jacobson et al., 2007). With the advancing technology, these limitations can be addressed and minimized, and SEN individuals can benefit from a technology-based personalized learning program.

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 - Quality Education, underscores the necessity of creating educational strategies and processes to diminish disparities among students and foster equity. This commitment within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisions a transformative journey, providing all individuals with an environment that empowers them to exercise their rights and potential fully. Significant global human rights milestones have played a pivotal role in this regard, exemplified by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). This statement has inspired education systems worldwide, leading the way towards establishing more inclusive schools.

For the scope of this chapter, the regulations, practices, approaches, and applications of the partner countries were investigated with a comprehensive literature review as a part of the EU-supported Erasmus+ Project INSIDE. The partners used the policy documents, reports, and publications, including journal articles and proceedings, as data sources. We aimed to gather information about current legal regulations and policies of special education and education of students with mild intellectual disability (MID) between the ages of 6-12, the educational services including educational settings and programs at local/regional scope. The researchers from partner countries have reported the information in their countries under the titles of a) regulations and policies for the students with MID, b) educational services for the students with MID, including settings (i.e., formal and private educational settings such as inclusive schools, independent private schools or centers, special education classrooms, etc. for the students with MID) and c) educational programs (i.e., which programs/curricula are implemented or followed in public and private institutions/schools/classes for the students with MID).

## **REGULATIONS AND POLICIES**

### **Basque Country**

The first law that regulates education in Spain is the General Education Law (GEL, 1970). Special Education was strongly enhanced with this law. This is the first legal text that refers to aspects related to special education in the Spanish State. In fact, in Title I, special education is officially recognized within the educational system (Casanova, 2011), enabling the education of the “deficient” and “misfits” with profound anomalies in special education centers while promoting schooling in special education units under the ordinary regime for the mildly “handicapped.” With this, the GEL (1970) organizes the educational response to children with

disabilities and is regulated for the first time, and the response to diversity begins to move forward.

In this direction, later, a new stage of reform took place since Spain had become a democratic country.

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 introduced a decentralized and symmetrical State model:

- where educational authority is distributed among various governmental tiers
- where the educational authority exercised by the Autonomous Communities remains largely uniform.

In 1979, just a year after, due to the enactment of the Statute commonly referred to as the Statute of Gernika, the Basque Country acquired a measure of self-governance, transforming into an autonomous community within Spain. Presently, it possesses its own taxation, healthcare, law enforcement, and educational systems, among other attributes. However, in each of these domains, adherence to Spanish laws is obligatory initially, followed by potential adjustments made by the Basque Country's parliament. This matter entails the dependency and constraint that influence the progression of the educational structure. First, the laws are formed by the Spanish ministry, and then they are concretized for the characteristics of the Basque Country.

Subsequently, the Organic Law of the General Organization of the Educational System of Spain (LOGSE, 1990) facilitated including students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in their local mainstream schools. The necessity to align Spanish legislation with the specific context of the Basque Country prompted the Basque Government to formulate:

- The Basque Public School Act (Law 1/1993) aimed to make additional progress and duly acknowledged the imperative to address disparities and promote diversity integration.
- The Decree 118/1998, which outlined guidelines for catering to the educational requirements of SEN students within the framework of an all-encompassing and inclusive educational setting. This legislation adopted the principles of LOGSE in the Basque Country, ensuring the integration of SEN students into regular schools. Among SEN students were those students with intellectual disabilities. This law is currently in force and developed in different Basque government minor laws for the schooling of SEN students.

In 2006, a fresh legislative enactment in Spain emerged known as the Organic Law of Education (LOE, 2006), which contributed to bolstering the inclusive

perspective. The notion of Special Educational Needs (SEN) underwent a transformation, being substituted by a novel concept: students with Specific Educational Support Needs (SESN). This updated term broadened the scope beyond SEN by encompassing additional groups of students who, while not categorized as disabled, also necessitate distinct educational assistance. In the Basque Country, this was developed in Decree 175/2007. Taking this idea into account, in 2020, a new educational law was dictated by the Spanish Government LOMLOE, and, nowadays, the groups of SESN students are shown in Table 1.

The general measures for responding to SEN students with ID are:

(1) The education plan within the school comprises the primary principles that the institution will adhere to while operating within its surrounding community.

(2) The curriculum project specific to the school (PCC) encompasses all educational levels offered, encompassing at least the goals, subject matter, methodologies, resources, and assessment mechanisms utilized within each subject or field.

(3) The school's blueprint (along with the ultimate yearly summary) outlines the design for each academic year's activities.

<b>Table 1. Classification of Students with Specific Educational Support Needs</b>	
	<b>Students with:</b>
<b>Students with Specific Educational Support Needs (SESN)</b>	Special Educational Needs (SEN)* Maturational delay Developmental language and communication disorders Attention or learning disorders. Severe lack of knowledge of the language of learning Being in a situation of socio-educational vulnerability Gifted Have entered the education system late. Have special personal circumstances or school history

\*Students with ID are in this group

In situations where the standard curriculum falls short, the school contemplates implementing additional targeted measures that center around the concept of reinforcement or support. Various forms of collective reinforcement are employed, including the following approaches: segregating the regular student cohort into distinct groups for specific subjects; introducing new optional subjects to address content that might pose greater complexity for certain students; augmenting

the teacher-to-student ratio to aid those struggling to meet the objectives of a particular level, and more (as outlined in Decree 175/2007). Ultimately, when these specific measures prove insufficient in achieving curriculum goals and the classroom program fails to cater to the needs of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), adjustments to the curriculum are enacted.

As per the Decree 118/1998, two types of adjustments are outlined to address the unique requirements of a student with Intellectual Disabilities (DI) who is enrolled in a regular classroom:

- Personalized curricular adjustments for accessibility are implemented. This adaptation involves utilizing specialized materials such as Braille books, tools like tablets and computers, and individual support resources like specialist educators, speech therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and experts in visual impairment. The purpose is to enable the student to effectively engage with the standard curriculum. It is important to note that only flexible components such as teaching methods, activities, resources, schedules, or physical environments can be modified while the core content remains unchanged.
- Profound individualized curricular adaptation (ACI) is the most exceptional provision for students integrated into regular classrooms within mainstream educational settings. ACI is designed to create an accessible curriculum for students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID), encompassing adjustments to methodologies, resources, schedules, overall objectives, subject matter, and assessment criteria. A comprehensive ACI is implemented for students with significant cognitive impairments to foster essential life skills. In the case of students with moderate cognitive disabilities, ACI aligns with the curriculum of preceding academic levels, and if students successfully attain the stipulated objectives set by the law, they become eligible for an educational certificate.

Although the law for SEN students is from 1998, for the answer to SEN students in general settings, the Basque Government edited two plans in 2012, “Strategic Plan for Attention to Diversity within the Framework of the Inclusive School 2012-2016” and 2019 “Framework Plan for the development of an inclusive school. 2019-2022”. This Framework Plan ensures consistency and comprehensive coverage for all initiatives, whether in the form of plans, programs, or projects, that aim to address the distinct requirements of every student, fostering their holistic growth and academic achievement.

The Autonomous Community of the Basque Country is awaiting a new education law and a new decree regulating attention to diversity.

## **Ireland**

In some cases, Ireland has been acknowledged as a latecomer to inclusion in their legislative practices (MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007; Banks & McCoy, 2017). Other authors go further, such as Swan (2000) in Flood (2013), who “described the progression of special needs education in Ireland in three phases: the era of neglect and denial, the era of the special school and the era of integration or inclusion” (Flood, 2013, p.5). It seems to be widely accepted that Ireland’s progression into the era of integration and inclusion was marked by the publication of the Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC), which dealt with the concept of integration as opposed to inclusion, with “as little segregation as is necessary” (Department of Education and Science, 1993, p.23). This, of course, left space for a dual education system, where children could be taught in special classes and special schools, which can still be seen in our schools today. However, this is not to diminish the role of the SERC, as their recommendations paved the way for the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998). This Act made it a constitutional right for children with disabilities and other special educational needs to receive appropriate education and laid out provisions for all children. The Education Act was followed in 2004 by the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (Government of Ireland, 2004), which detailed a statutory framework for inclusive education. It is important to note here that the full implementation of EPSEN was postponed due to the economic downturn in the late 2000s, and some elements of the Act still have not been implemented.

With the implementation of EPSEN (Government of Ireland, 2004), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was established. Sections 19 through 33 of the EPSEN Act detailed the establishment, role, and powers of the NCSE. These roles can be categorized broadly into four areas. Firstly, when established, the NCSE was responsible for allocating low-incidence (resource) hours in primary schools through their network of SENOs. Secondly, the NCSE coordinates the education and health service support for children with SEN through a cross-sectoral group. Finally, the last two roles of the NCSE are interlinked. The NCSE researches inclusive education in Ireland and uses the findings to advise the Minister for Education on matters relating to Special Education (Government of Ireland, 2004).

The EPSEN Act (2004) placed inclusion, as opposed to integration, firmly to the forefront of educational provision for children with SEN by stating explicitly that children with SEN should be educated in an inclusive environment alongside their peers who do not have additional needs (Government of Ireland, 2004). However, it is essential to note that the movement towards more inclusive practices in Irish schools is still ongoing. In 2019, the NCSE published its progress report, mindful that in 2018 Ireland had ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations, 2007). The UNCRPD will play a significant role in reimagining the inclusivity of Irish schools, particularly Article 24, which relates to education provision. The NCSE (2019) notes that the consistent interpretation of Article 24 by the UNCRPD Committee is that parallel education systems, such as Ireland's mainstream and unique school system, are incompatible with its view of inclusion and are not considered inclusive.

As such, two further NCSE reports deal with Ireland's plans for future inclusive education. The first noted how it was felt that some SEN modules at the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) level were viewed through a psychological lens, reflecting a deficit approach, while in contrast, more generic inclusion modules were often more strongly framed in a sociological context, reflecting the social model of inclusion. The report suggested that inclusive education should be seen as a holistic approach, where inclusivity practices should permeate the curricula rather than as a discrete subject area (Hick et al., 2019). It also suggested that new teachers should view themselves as 'agents of change,' whereby they are ideally placed to promote the development of more inclusive practices in schools (Hick et al., 2019). However, it should be noted that all teachers, regardless of years of experience, are bound by context, i.e., the existing policies and culture of their school.

The second publication on the future of Irish inclusive practices (NCSE, 2018) made 13 overall recommendations with the view that the Department of Education should introduce a new support model for pupils with additional needs. The hope is that this new approach, currently known as the School Inclusion Model (SIM), will lead to better outcomes for children with SEN as it aims to provide more immediate and equitable interventions through a cross-sectoral or multi-disciplinary approach to inclusion in conjunction with the Department of Health and other government departments (NCSE, 2018). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many of these recommendations still need to be implemented. The frontloading Special Needs Assistant (SNA) model, whereby schools are allocated



SNA posts based on educational profile rather than by individual child's needs, was due to be piloted in the current school year (2021/22) but has been deferred until the 2022/23 school year. Another recommendation, the In-School Therapy Support project (Lynch et al.,2020), is in year two of an extended pilot program in 150 schools and Early Learning Centres (ELCs) in Ireland. This involves allocating an in-school therapy service to deliver school support to children who need it rather than referring them to the Health Service Executive (HSE). An evaluation of the Therapy Support project to date has hinted at many challenges in producing the project as a sustainable model for inclusion, including recruitment, induction, and management (Lynch et al., 2020), signifying, perhaps, that the inclusive concept behind this project has not yet been fully realized.

### **Türkiye**

Türkiye has regulations concerning the education of students with special needs on the axis of international and national legal texts. There are many legal regulations to regulate the services provided to individuals with special needs. With the 41st, 42nd, 49th, 50th, 60th, and 61st articles of the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye, it is stated that everyone is equal before the law in terms of the family's right to education, training, and work, and the right to social security (The Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, 1982). Article 6, on the other hand, states, "...The State shall take measures to make those who need special education due to their situation useful to society". These articles of the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye shed light on the regulations that should be created for disabled individuals. In other words, Türkiye must provide free education to every child, including children with intellectual disabilities, that best suits their needs.

Article 12 of the Primary Education Law No. 222, which entered into force in 1961, states, "*Children who are in the age of compulsory primary education but who are mentally, physically, spiritually and socially inadequate receive special education and training*" (Official Gazette [OG] No.10705, 1961). Education of individuals with special needs at school age has become legally compulsory. Article 8 of the National Education Basic Law No. 1739 enacted in 1973: "*Measures are taken to raise children in need of special education and protection*" (OG No.14574, 1973). The statement has formed an essential basis for continuing the education of students with special needs.

When we look at the legal regulations directly related to special education, the first is Law No. 2916 on the Children in Need of Special Education, which came into force on October 12, 1983 (OG No. 18192, 1983). Law No. 2916 has played a

crucial role in advancing special education. Its objective is to offer education and training to individuals aged 0-18 who, due to their physical, mental, psychological, emotional, social, and health conditions, either cannot fully benefit from the standard education system or can only partially do so. With this law, “*necessary measures are taken to raise children with suitable conditions and characteristics together with their normal peers in schools and educational institutions opened for the education of children who are not originally such.*” This statement is also the official beginning of inclusive education in Türkiye.

In the 15th article of Law No. 5378 on Disabled Persons and Amending Certain Decree-Laws, there is the statement, “People with disabilities cannot be prevented from receiving education without any reason (OJ No. 25868, 2005). Thus, it is obligatory for all persons authorized and responsible for “providing disabled children, young people and adults with equal education opportunities with normal education opportunities, taking into account their differences and special circumstances” to fulfill their duties in this regard.

In Türkiye, the most important of the legal regulations is the Decree-Law No. 573 on Special Education adopted in 1997 (OG No. 23011, 1997). With Decree-Law No. 573, educational diagnostic services have been made compulsory, besides the medical diagnosis. The Least Restrictive Environment principle is also stated for the first time in regulation. It is obligatory to prepare an individualized education plan (IEP) that specifies the current performance level, needs, annual goals, type, and duration of the support education services that the individual can receive for individuals with special needs, whose special education needs are determined by the educational diagnosis, monitoring and evaluation team at the Counseling and Research Centers (CRC). In Decree-Law No. 573, early education services, family education services, and inclusive education services are also guaranteed. In this law, lower and upper age limits have been eliminated to ensure lifelong education.

The Regulation for Special Education Services, which was first issued in 2000 and was last updated in 2018 in OG No. 30471, is the regulation that regulates the execution of special education services in Türkiye. A comprehensive special education service delivery is outlined in this regulation. The Regulation for Special Education Services necessitates schools create an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for every student with special needs, regardless of whether they receive education in inclusive environments. According to the regulation, an individual with MID is “an individual who needs special education and support education services at a limited level due to her mild inadequacy in intellectual functions and conceptual, social, and practical adaptation skills” (OG, 2018).

The “ÇÖZGER” Special Needs Report for Children, an integral part of the Regulation on Special Needs Assessment for Children (OG No. 30692, 2019), has been introduced to identify and address the requirements of children and young individuals with special needs. This initiative seeks to guarantee their access to essential services such as healthcare, education, rehabilitation, and various social and economic rights. The introduction of the ÇÖZGER report aligns with the regulation’s publication in 2019 and its commitment to improving the well-being of those with special needs.

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) regulations for both Preschool and Primary Education Institutions (OG No.29072, 2014) and Secondary Education Institutions (OG No. 29871, 2016) incorporate provisions that support special education legislation. These regulations underscore the pivotal role of the CRC in identifying children with special needs and emphasize the significance of formulating Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for them. The 11th article of the MoNE Preschool and Primary Education Institutions Regulation stipulates that children recommended for enrollment in these institutions through a CRC report can choose their preferred school, irrespective of their residential addresses. Likewise, per the 8th article of the Secondary Education Institutions Regulation, children with special needs can attend secondary education institutions focusing on nurturing life skills and addressing their learning requirements in alignment with their developmental competencies. Notably, the regulations dictate that student placement in secondary education institutions is determined by their abilities, health conditions, and place of residence.

## **EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

### **Settings**

#### ***Basque Country***

The Basque State School Act (1993, art.10) states that “wherever possible, all students will be schooled in mainstream units close to their home”. As the Basque Educational System Report says (School Council of the Basque Country, 2019), in mainstream school there has been an evolution of students according to the type of need for educational support from the academic year 2016-17 to 2018-19 (see Table 2):

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	▲ 19/16
<b>Hearing Impairment</b>	408	425	442	8.3
<b>Motor Disability</b>	787	832	884	12.3
<b>Intellectual Disability</b>	2126	2162	2053	-3.4
<b>Visual Impairments</b>	240	240	260	8.3
<b>Generalised Developmental Disorders</b>	2545	2796	3173	24.7
<b>Severe Behavioural Disorder</b>	1608	1699	1832	13.9
<b>Multiple Disabilities</b>	305	344	335	9.8
<b>SEN students</b>	8019	8498	8979	12.0

\*Prepared by the authors based on Consejo Escolar de Euskadi (School Council of the Basque Country, 2019)

The Basque school provides material and personal resources in order to support and create adequate conditions to ensure all students have appropriate schooling in mainstream settings, including those who present ID. Underlying these intentions is the concern to remove barriers to learning and participation of the entire diversity of students.

The Basque State School Act (1993, art.10) also states that, only when necessary, students should be schooled in special education units within mainstream schools. This option is only chosen when all other measures have not met the needs of the student and the school does not have enough resources to cater for SEN students with complex needs in ordinary classrooms (see Table 3). These special education units are known in Basque as “gela egonkorra” (stable classroom). The number of students in this separate class is growing.

Public		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
		Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public
<b>Stable Class rooms</b>	<b>Compulsory Education</b>	133	308	144	342	160	324
	<b>Secondary Education</b>	177	137	202	168	229	187

\*Prepared by the authors based on Consejo Escolar de Euskadi (School Council of the Basque Country, 2019)

The special education unit is a separated classroom, within the mainstream school for no more than five students with severe disabilities. It has specific and permanent resources, a physical space and it is also made up of a stable group of students, with a special education tutor and specialists in educational support (ancillary staff). Based on the group programme, an Individual Education Plan is developed for each pupil. This allows individualized attention tailored to any student's particular support needs, and, at the same time, it facilitates socialization and inclusion as the special classes are part of the mainstream school. These special classes cater for students up to 16 years, even though they can exceptionally stay until 18.

Special education centers (for students with severe ID). When the students present disabilities of greater severity and permanence and may require extraordinary and exceptional resources, these centers can be an option to attend these students satisfactorily. These centers' curricular project (Basque Government, 1996) is a general framework, with criteria and didactic guidelines, which aims to facilitate teachers' educational attention to students with more profound or serious disorders, sensory and motor deficiencies, and requiring extraordinary resources.

### ***Ireland***

The EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004) explicitly states that children with SEN should be educated in an inclusive environment, alongside their peers who do not have special educational needs. However, other factors alongside the commencement of EPSEN have led to more children with MGLD enrolling in mainstream primary schools. Firstly, the introduction of Learning Support/Resource Teachers (now known as Special Education Teachers (SETs), (Department of Education and Science [DES], 2017) in 1999 provided additional support teachers to mainstream schools to cater for children with learning difficulties. While initially MGLD was classified as a low incidence disability (DES, 2003) and as such allocated to the Resource Teacher (RT), the General Allocation Model (GAM) reclassified it as a high-incidence disability (DES, 2005), moving it into the remit of the Learning Support Teacher (LST). This meant schools did not have to specifically apply for extra resources for their enrolled pupils with MGLD. Instead, they would be expected to allocate resources from the hours given to the school under the GAM. In theory, this allowed for more flexibility in allocating additional support to children with MGLD. However, in practice, this resulted in a decrease in time allocated to additional teaching for these children

(Stevens and O'Moore, 2009). Another factor in the increase of children with MGLD in mainstream schools was the closure of almost all MGLD classes in 2009 (Travers, 2009). These classes were closed as the DES argued that by 2007, the percentage of children with MGLD in the mainstream was significantly higher than the percentage of children in special schools and classes (64% in mainstream versus 36% in special school/class settings) (Stevens & O'Moore, 2009). Finally, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act (Government of Ireland, 2018) states that schools must accept all students who apply to enroll unless the school is oversubscribed. This prevents schools from discriminating against pupils on several grounds, including SEN.

### ***Türkiye***

According to the results of Disability in Population and Housing Research, the proportion of the population (3 years of age and over) having at least one type of disability is %6,9 (General Directorate of Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly [GDSPDE], 2020). The rate of individuals with an ID is 17.07%. The MoNE holds special education services in Türkiye. Compulsory education in Türkiye is 12 years.

In the context of formal education institutions, the typical progression comprises kindergarten, primary school, secondary school, and high school. The responsibility for diagnosing and placing students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities (MID) lies with the regional GRCs.

Individuals with MID are educated in separate and joint educational institutions where they are placed after the educational diagnosis in the GRCs. According to the results of the educational evaluation and diagnosis by the Special Education Evaluation Board (07/07/2018- 30471 Special Education Services Regulation Second Part First Part Article 7[1]), which was established in the GRCs, individuals with SEN are based on the least restricted educational environments. They receive education in the same environments as their peers, primarily through mainstreaming/integration practices. In addition, students with special education needs continue their education in special education classes opened in schools where their peers are educated. However, these individuals receive education in special education schools and institutions opened in all types and levels according to their educational needs and performance levels. Home and hospital education services are extended to individuals of compulsory education age who, owing to health issues, cannot directly engage with formal educational establishments. The official educational settings in Türkiye for students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities (MID) are outlined as follows:

- \*Kindergarten for students with MID (separate)
- \*Primary Schools for students with MID (separate)
- \*Middle Schools for students with MID (separate)
- \*Special Education Classrooms (in General Schools)
- \*General Classes in General Schools- with/without Resource Rooms
- \*Private Special Education and Rehabilitation Centers (separate- supportive education service)

All these government-affiliated institutions operate without any cost, including transportation. Based on the annual statistics released by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in 2022, the number of r schools, classrooms, and student enrollment are presented in Table 4.

<b>Table 4. Number of Schools, Classrooms, and Students (MoNE, 2022a)</b>				
	<b>School/ Class/ Institution</b>	<b>Students Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Special Education Kindergarten*</b>	137	4.740	3.217	1.523
<b>Special Education Schools with Nursery Classes*</b>	166	1.585	1.031	554
<b>Primary School (for MID)</b>	32	859	558	301
<b>Special Education Class (Primary School)*</b>	-	30.236	20239	9.997
<b>Inclusive Education (Preschool)*</b>	-	1.830	1.177	653
<b>Inclusive Education (Primary School)*</b>	-	129.637	82.366	47.271
<b>Secondary School (for MID)</b>	36	1.243	790	453
<b>Special Education Class (Secondary School)</b>	-	24.939	15.897	9.042
<b>Inclusive Education (Secondary School)</b>		154.617	97.306	57.311
<b>Inclusive Education (High School)*</b>	-	71.235	43.685	27.550
<b>Private Special Education and Rehabilitation Centers*</b>	3118	471.378	294.383	176.995

\*Disability groups are not specified.

Primary school students with MID are educated at mainstream schools with the curriculum determined by the MoNE. Students who have taken a full-time inclusion decision to follow the education program implemented in the school they are registered to. IEP is prepared based on the programs followed by the students. Based on The Primary Education Curriculum, an IEP is prepared by the teacher.

In primary and secondary schools only for MID, students follow the regular primary and secondary education programs. IEP is prepared based on the programs followed by the students (OG, 2018). Class sizes consist of a maximum of 10 students. In primary and secondary schools where students with MID are educated, the lessons are taught by a special education teacher. Special education classrooms are the classes created by providing exceptional equipment and educational materials in schools and institutions for students with SEN who require education in a separate class, considering the type of disability, educational performance, and characteristics. Special education classes can be established within both regular general education schools and dedicated special education schools.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

### **Basque Country**

The Basque Country has accepted the global challenge of the UN 2030 Agenda by adopting the I Basque Country 2030 Agenda (Basque Government, 2019d). In line with Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning are presented as different targets. Target 22 of this goal is about promoting top-quality, inclusive, equal, and innovative schooling, moving towards excellence, and guaranteeing equality regarding access to education.

In the Basque Country, the scope of action to improve the educational system is guided by the “Heziberri Plan 2020” which includes the strategic lines consistent with the European sphere regarding education and its challenges. This plan consists of three projects that include: the educational pedagogical framework; the curricular decrees of the Basque Autonomous Community; and the steps towards a Basque Education Law (<https://www.euskadi.eus/heziberri/presentacion/web01-a3hbhezi/es/>).

According to the strategic lines indicated in the Plan, the Basque education system faces the challenge of strengthening:



1. Inclusive education and attention to diversity
2. Initial and continuous teacher training
3. Preparation and use of teaching materials
4. Autonomy and control of educational centres
5. Evaluation of the educational system and research

Although the Basque Government has published Diversity care programs and specific documents for students with different characteristics, such as, for example, on hearing impairment (Basque Government, 2020) or visual impairment (Basque Government, 2016) among others, there is nothing specific for students with ID. There are documents about children with Autism (Basque Government, 1996, 2002a), Asperger (Basque Government, 2002b), and Down syndrome (Basque Government, 1997).

For the answer to SEN students in general settings, the Basque Government edited two plans: Basque Government (2012). The “Strategic Plan for Attention to Diversity within the framework of the inclusive school 2012-2016”. This Plan sets out a series of measures, resources, and guidelines for creating the correct conditions to ensure appropriate schooling for all students and removing barriers to learning and participation. The plan conceptualizes and manages resources to cater to the needs of these students within the ordinary school setting. Due to the plan, students with SEN are present within the framework of the Basque school system.

Basque Government (2019a) “Framework Plan for developing an inclusive school. 2019- 2022”. This Framework Plan offers coherence and coverage to all actions that, in the form of plans, programs, or projects, seek to respond to the specific needs of all the students and that facilitate their integral development and their school success:

- Diversity Response Plan. Guide for its preparation (Basque Government, 2019b). As the plan states, it is necessary to consider the basic principles of the inclusive school: presence, participation, and learning results, considering the action from the ordinary school framework through the Center Educational Project, the Center Curricular Project, and the Diversity Response Plan.

- Actions and inclusive methodological strategies 2019-2020 (Basque Government, 2019c). This document assumes the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) paradigm and proposes guidelines for developing an inclusive curriculum that is easily accessible to all students. The UDL foresees, from the same programming, to make the necessary adjustments for the different situations and

capacities, reducing the need to adapt or redesign it specially. This publication offers a list of inclusive methodological strategies and actions considered essential in evidence-based education and classroom practice. For example, Project-based learning, Student ambassador, Reader sponsorship, Cooperative learning, Collaboration of the volunteers in the classrooms and the center, Pedagogical contracts, Joint performance of two teachers in the classroom, Interactive groups, Reading as a couple, Mentoring The SIOP model; Dialogical literary gatherings; Dialogical curricular gatherings; Personalized tutorials; Peer tutoring; Flipped classroom; Gamification; Visual thinking.

## **Ireland**

In 2007, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published guidelines for teachers of students with General Learning Disabilities (GLDs). These guidelines covered all curricular areas detailed in the Revised Primary Curriculum (DES, 1999) but were designed to complement, not replace, the Curriculum. For students with MGLD, a set of post-primary guidelines were also published for some curricular areas. The Curriculum Access Tool for General Learning Disabilities (CAT-GLD) provides more structure for teachers in planning for children with MGLD. This framework breaks each strand of the curriculum into individual skills, allowing teachers to effectively plan for, teach appropriately, and assess their students' learning (NCSE, n.d.).

EPSEN (Government of Ireland, 2004) laid out a statutory framework for preparing and implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs). However, as previously mentioned, this area of EPSSEN still has yet to commence in 2022, meaning that while IEPs have been legislated for, they are not legally required in schools. Many schools instead favor the use of Student Support Files (SSFs), which were introduced as part of the Continuum of Support (National Educational Psychologists Service (NEPS, 2007). This allows a school to place a child on one of three stages-Classrooms Support (CS), School Support (SS), or School Support Plus (SS+), depending on the needs of the pupil in question. Children with MGLD generally fall under SS+, as this includes the involvement of relevant outside agencies (such as the HSE) in developing educational interventions for the child.

## **Türkiye**

In Turkey, the legal framework mandates the creation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for every student with special needs. The definition of IEP can be found in paragraph g of article 4 in the Regulation of Special Education Services, and it is described as follows:

“A special education program, which includes support training services to be given to individuals with special educational needs, and which is prepared to achieve the targeted goals in line with their developmental characteristics, educational needs, and performance, based on the program followed by individuals with special education needs” (OG, 2018).

Various curricula have been developed for MID students according to school types and levels. The Support Education Program for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (MoNE, 2021) aims to ensure that individuals with ID who continue their support education in private special education and rehabilitation centers operating under the MoNE benefit from the special education services provided effectively and at the highest level. The program has been prepared by considering the characteristics of the development areas of individuals with intellectual disabilities (severe, moderate, mild) in Türkiye. According to the educational evaluation and diagnosis of students with special needs, seven support education programs are implemented in the PSERCs affiliated with the MoNE. These programs are arranged according to disability groups, and the support education program for students with ID is one of them. The program consists of nine modules. The total course hours in the module are 1660.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The Perspectives of Basque Country: Since 1970, when the General Education Law was approved during Franco's dictatorship, there has been a succession of education laws in Spain up to the present day. During democracy, the political parties' use of power has degenerated into developing different educational laws with different political depths. The religious, moral, historical, linguistic, and nationalist criteria, among others that have marked each one, have often deviated from developing an adequate pedagogical response to the characteristics and needs of the children of the Spanish State. This reality does not exempt pupils with any disability or educational need who are in positions of greater vulnerability as in many other scenarios. Likewise, in the field of special education, from the Moyano Law of 1857 to the current LOMLOE (2020), the regulatory framework for responding to diversity has varied (Álvarez-Rementería et al., 2022), and the successive educational policies established have not been exempt from debate or even demonstrations contrary to them.

The configuration of policy in the Basque Country, an Autonomous Community of the Spanish State, has also been influenced by this reality. Thus,

in the Basque context and within the autonomous margins available, it has had to adapt its education laws to the state plan. For example, the Basque Government is beginning to legislate under new Decrees published in 2022, which are based on the state law of the LOMLOE (2020). Thus, as stated in this law, the following priorities are assumed: increasing educational opportunities, reducing student segregation, and strengthening digital competence. However, despite the continuous adaptation of state laws in the Basque Country, the specific regulation for the attention to diversity is still being determined. Therefore, a major handicap of the most current educational policies is precisely this omission. In the second decade of the 21st century, the response to pupils with intellectual disabilities is governed by the 1998 Decree, derived from the LOGSE (1990). In the Basque Country, it is urgent to develop a more updated regulation that regulates the attention to diversity within the inclusive education framework.

Although in the Basque Country, the majority of students with ID are enrolled in mainstream schools, it is considered necessary to make progress on the 1998 regulations and to regulate all attention to diversity from a more updated perspective, in accordance with the right to inclusive education internationally recognized as a right. Specifically, provision four of the LOMLOE (2020) urges the Basque Government to develop a plan so that within 10 years, ordinary schools have the necessary resources to be able to attend to disabled students in the best possible conditions. Furthermore, the education authorities will continue to offer the necessary support to special education centers to act as reference and support centers for mainstream centers.

The Basque Country has accepted the challenge of the 2030 Agenda, and within this framework, it is faced with the challenge of offering an educational response to students with ID. To this end, the regulations should be updated within the framework of an inclusive school. Perhaps, because of all this and being aware of this lack of response, the Department of Education of the Basque Government is drafting documents on the attention to diversity. Furthermore, taking the characteristics of pupils with special educational needs as a starting point, different types of methodologies are included to respond from the classroom in order to make inclusion a reality in schools in the Basque Country. In other words, this legal absence is made up for through a wide variety of plans, programs and projects that cater to the diversity of pupils. However, this is not enough, and a legal framework is needed to guarantee the right to a quality and, therefore, inclusive education for all pupils without exceptions.

The Perspectives of Ireland: Currently, the Irish education system has not yet ended segregated provisions for children with special educational needs. While some scholars have queried the best way forward for Irish inclusive practices (Howe & Griffin, 2020; Banks, 2021; Shevlin & Banks, 2021), the NCSE stand firmly over their suggested policy of full inclusion, similar to the model offered in New Brunswick, Canada (NCSE, 2019). This is despite the difficulties referenced above regarding the implementation of the Therapy Support project. However, there is an emerging argument (Howe & Griffin, 2020; Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Merrigan & Senior, 2021) to suggest that if we are to consider inclusion as meeting the social and academic needs of all pupils (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014; Nilholm & Goransson, 2017), then special school settings form an essential part of an education system's response to inclusion by helping to meet the needs of all pupils. To date, inclusive education practices in Ireland appear to be integration renamed (Parkinson, 2014), whereby special education has merely been transposed from the special school setting into the mainstream. Suppose this is truly the current state of affairs in the Irish school system. In that case, current practices can only be described as superficial, lacking the systemic changes necessary to transcend current practices and truly embody an inclusive education system (Ainscow et al., 2019; Kinsella & Senior, 2008; Kinsella, 2020).

Currently, Ireland offers a continuum of educational provisions, encompassing mainstream classes, special classes within mainstream schools (predominantly ASD classes) and special school settings. Approximately 2% of children with special needs are currently enrolled in a special class or special school setting (NCSE, 2019), with numbers enrolled in special schools remaining static over the past decade (Banks, 2021). This is despite significant investment over the past decade in provisions for special education in mainstream settings, suggesting that the paradigm shift from mainstream and special education into inclusive education has not yet been achieved in Ireland.

Literature related to the IEP process in Ireland is scant, although research tentatively suggests that the development and implementation of IEPs have become embedded in an Irish setting (Rose et al., 2012). To date, guidelines issued in 2006 (NCSE, 2006), intended to aid with the familiarization of the IEP process ahead of the enactment of EPSEN, remain the most up-to-date information available for stakeholders involved in the writing of IEPs. However, with the review of EPSEN, it is hoped that more current guidance will be offered in due course.

The Perspectives of Türkiye: Although it is observed that the legal regulations in the field of special education in Türkiye are generally sufficient, it can be said

that there are some problems in the implementation of the legal regulations. A new approach to the evaluation and reporting process of children has been used since 2019 in Türkiye. Special Needs Report for Children with the abbreviation “ÇÖZGER” aims to determine the needs of children and young people with special needs to ensure that they benefit from health, education, rehabilitation, and other social and economic rights and services. It is thought that the use of ÇÖZGER will become more widespread in the next decade.

While the educational settings for individuals with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities (MID) in Türkiye encompass both segregated and inclusive environments, there remains a notable prevalence of students in inclusive education. Although current statistics showcase the enrollment numbers in inclusive education within general education settings, specific data based on disability categories are unavailable. Consequently, the exact count of students with MID and their distribution across various school levels remains undisclosed. In terms of educational programs, Türkiye offers primary, secondary, and high school programs tailored for children with MID. However, disability classifications are absent from preschool and early childhood programs. Moreover, it's evident that students receiving inclusive education at primary, secondary, and high school levels follow individually customized general education programs.

**Common Perspectives:** In summary, it can be said that the three project partner countries in this study have concerns about both the general special education laws and the quality of the services provided for the education of students with ID. In a century when world citizenship is prioritized, it is observed that efforts are continuing to bring laws and practices to a level that will ensure the integration of individuals with special needs into society. When trying to make a projection about the special education laws and services (educational environments and programs) of the project partner countries under the spotlight in this section, the following points and recommendations are revealed:

1. Individuals with special needs (including individuals with ID) need more inclusive and more universal legal arrangements for an equal and fair life.
2. It is essential for each country to set the goal of creating universal values in education in its projection.
3. While the laws emphasize the inclusion of individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) in education alongside their peers, the application of inclusive education varies across countries, prompting a reevaluation in alignment with shared European values. Consequently, there's a call to enhance collaborative research focused on assessing existing legislation, enhancing implementation

strategies, and formulating more effective policy measures to address this aspect.

4. It's essential to recognize that evolving social and technological landscapes can influence the formation of laws. Future legislation should integrate inclusive methodologies with the integration of technology in educating individuals with MID. Governments should proactively establish legal frameworks to enhance their support in this realm. Additionally, prioritizing the creation of an adaptable educational system that can effectively respond to shifting circumstances is crucial.

5. The concerns presented by the three countries examined in terms of programs and practices regarding inclusive education are noteworthy. Although Special Education among 3 countries is considered sufficient in terms of laws, it can be said that none of the countries have reached their target levels in terms of inclusivity. This statement was based on the Basque country's determinations regarding the regulations regarding the central government, the practices that Ireland had to postpone due to some economic difficulties, and the criticisms that Türkiye has established a more discriminatory system in practices. Taking measures on the basis of countries to ensure that students with SEN are included in general education institutions and that separate classes or schools are not opened except in compulsory situations (such as very severe disabilities); It can be recommended that countries make more efforts to share good practices and share expert personnel, knowledge and experience.

The content of this section is limited to the data obtained during the project period because of the document review made by the academics of the relevant partner countries to reveal the current situation as the first academic output of the INSIDE project. It may be possible to strengthen international cooperation share and develop good practices through comprehensive scientific studies to further examine equality, access to services, and quality in each country and to identify needs.

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