# *Methodology*

In all European countries education is a highly regulated sector of society. Statutory legislation and prescriptions structure the educational system and provide a framework for the practice and development of inclusive education. This framework rules the allocation of resources, the environment under which schools and other educational facilities work, their conceptual orientation, teacher training and many other institutional preconditions that can be favourable or hindering for inclusive education.

# *Legislation*

In Part A of the questionnaire (PDF, 734 KB) the experts assessed the legal basis for inclusive education in their countries (PDF, 345 KB). Results show that in spite of legal changes in all countries which have supported inclusive education, many pupils with SEN can enrol in a regular school only under certain organisational and financial caveats. In nearly all participating countries pupils with disabilities do not have effective access to primary and secondary inclusive education with the same ease as others in their community.

In most countries under review, legislation is neither consistent nor sufficient. In countries with a strong tradition of special education, legislation has to bridge the ‘old system’ of special schools with new approaches for inclusive education. In other countries inclusion oriented legislation has not been accompanied with the allocation of necessary resources to provide inclusive arrangements for all persons with SEN in regular schools or other educational facilities. Efforts to make new resources available or shift resources from the special system to mainstreaming have been of limited success so far. Thus, persons with disabilities in many cases have no access to inclusive education in mainstream services in their community on an equal basis with others. This is not to say there has been no progress. In some countries positive changes in educational laws have been introduced which have produced real changes.

# *Practice*

Part B of the questionnaire (PDF, 734 KB) assesses the practice of inclusive education (PDF, 425 KB) in a number of countries in Europe. Results show that even though there seem to be positive changes towards a less segregating school system in all participating countries, nevertheless inclusive education is not yet a high priority. The percentage of all pupils with disabilities or other special educational needs excluded from mainstream education is still very high measured against the expectations of the UN CRPD. However, the percentage of segregation varies considerably between participating countries and differs also from age level to age level of the education systems in all countries.

Although there has been a general slow increase in inclusive education, this has not been accompanied by a general decrease of persons with SEN in special schools or other segregating facilities. On the contrary, especially in countries with a traditional special education system, the number of children and youngsters in special schools has in fact also been increasing. In particular this is true of those with more severe disabilities or educational needs. So a pattern of reform can be identified as ‘progress by addition’ than progress by (structural) change’.

# *Progress*

In Part C of the questionnaire the experts assessed the development and progression (PDF, 435 KB) of inclusive education in their countries. There are important indicators on different levels that give reason to assume that the education system in participating countries will become less segregating and more inclusive by 2015.

Firstly, there is a growing sensitivity to human rights issues in societies that results from effective campaigning for non-discrimination and equal rights of people with disabilities.

Secondly, there is also a public questioning of the special school system as a result of the surprisingly intensive reception of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities in many European countries.

Thirdly, professional opinion has become stronger in putting forward the argument that inclusive education brings better results for pupils with SEN than segregating approaches.

Fourthly, demographic developments will probably contribute to more inclusiveness of the education systems because the absolute decrease in the overall numbers of children will provide better school and classroom conditions.

There are also some very concrete policies recently started in some participating countries to close or reshape the special school system and concrete initiatives of authorities for special schools to give attractive financial incentives to regular schools ready for inclusion. Also local governments are increasingly willing to change their educational system for children with SEN. Developments towards more inclusive education are on-going but mostly at a rather slow pace.