

SUMMARY

on the assessment of the *implementation of Inclusive Education mandatory course in universities*¹

I. General Information

1. Purpose of the assessment: Ensure quality pre-service education in inclusive education²

2. Duration: April-June 2016

3. Assessment Methodology

Stages:

- Ensure the regulatory and methodological framework for the assessment: approve the Ministry of Education Decision on organisation of the assessment, development of methodology, identification and establishment of an expert group of evaluators, development and approval of assessment tools.
- Evaluation itself: self-assessment, external assessment (organisation of monitoring/verification visits, documents review, organisation of questionnaires and focus groups)
- Analyse and interpret the data. Develop the Assessment Report

Assessment methods:

- perform the self-assessment of the higher education institutions (HEIs), by filling in the assessment forms
- analyse and verify the self-assessment data
- organise the fact-finding visits of experts appointed in HEIs (1 day per each HEI)
- fill in questionnaires by representatives of target groups: students attending the mandatory IE course, lecturers teaching the course, managers
- organise discussions in the focus groups with representatives of target groups
- review the relevant documentation at the institutional level

Sample: 14 HEIs (13 universities and one institution of ongoing training and research) (about 50% of the total of 28); 11 and 3 private HEIs

Assessed aspects

- Institutional values and policies in IE
- Regulatory framework on IE course implementation in the institution

¹ *Inclusive Education* course, as a state standard for pre-service education of the teaching staff, has been implemented since 1 September 2012, according to the Order of the Ministry of Education No 125 of 7 March 2012

² The IE course implementation was assessed according to the Activity Plan of Development and Promotion of Inclusive Education Project (Specific Objective 4. Ensure quality education of the teaching staff in inclusive education), implemented by AO "Lumos Foundation Moldova" in partnership with the Ministry of Education, on the basis of the Ministry of Education Order No 141 of 4 April 2016

- Curricula
- Quality of the IE course, the teaching quality
- Assessment of student's learning activity
- Collaboration/partnerships in IE
- Inclusive environment at the institutional level
- Opinions of the target groups regarding the pre-service education in IE

4. Assessed period: 1 September 2012 – May 2016

II. Basic findings

1. Suppliers:

- a) **12 HEIs** offer the IE course in the formula recommended by the Minister of Education, worthing 2 ECTS credits;
- b) **7 HEIs** offer the IE course that worths more than recommended (3-6 ECTS credits);
- c) **11 HEIs** offer courses in areas related to IE;
- d) **2 HEIs** offer the IE course as part of another discipline.

2. Students – beneficiaries of pre-service education in IE

Based on the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Education, during 2012-2016, **almost 11,800 students** were trained in inclusive education. Of which:

- about 70% – by studying and promoting the mandatory IE course, in the formula recommended by the Ministry of Education;
- about 30% – by studying and promoting the IE course that worths 3-6 ECTS credits and/or the related courses in the field.
- Among beneficiaries of pre-service education in inclusive education:
 - about 10,500 students (89%) study Educational Sciences
 - about 1,300 students (11%) study different specialties, other than Educational Sciences. They implemented the educational psychological module in parallel, additionally to the basic university curriculum
 - 10,307 (87%) are students in cycle I, Bachelor studies
 - 1,503 (13%) are students in cycle II
 - 11,620 are students in public institutions
 - 180 are students in private institutions

3. Lecturers

During the 2015-2016 academic year, in those 13 HEIs evaluated, the Inclusive Education course was provided by 35 teachers.

- Almost 32% (11 persons) have a the degree of PhD or habilitated PhD;
- Approximately 26% (9 persons) have a scientific-didactic title of university lecturer or professor.

- Almost 60% are young teachers with pedagogical experience under 10 years.

33 university teachers (almost 94%) started teaching the IE course during 2012-2015, which shows that the number of persons involved in pre-service education in IE increased, once it was included in 2012 as a mandatory course

4. Opinions and Attitudes of Target Groups

The opinions of target groups were assessed by questionnaires and focus groups, organised in each assessed institution.

In order to get a clear picture of the satisfaction with the mandatory IE course, their opinions were assessed along the following dimensions:

- quality and usefulness of the IE course
- teaching quality of IE course
- development of relevant skills/competences in IE course

In total 529 persons were involved: 468 students, 31 teachers, 30 university managers.

4.1. General opinions:

- In universities, managers, teachers and students have an overall **positive attitude** towards the state policies in this field.
- Representatives of the target groups think that the pre-service education in IE for future teachers is absolutely necessary, and should be provided by implementing the mandatory IE course in universities. Most respondents marked this as **needed to a very high/high extent: 417 (89.1%) students, 29 (93.6%) senior teaching staff, and 27 (91%) managers.**
- **100% of questioned students** noted that after the completion of the course, they developed a **general vision regarding the importance and relevance of IE promotion** in the Republic of Moldova.
- The students think the IE course is consistent, logically structured, clear and motivated; **82.3% of the respondents (385 persons) this it is so to a very high or to a high extent.** The same opinion have **80.6% of the lecturers teaching IE** (25 persons).
- Almost 98% of questioned students rate positively the teaching quality of the course and the relational framework during its teaching.
- According to the senior teaching staff and beneficiary students, the IE course contains necessary and useful information for future activity with children with special educational needs. **81.6% of students (382 persons) and 74.2% of senior teaching staff (23 persons)** rated this aspect **to a high or very high extent.**
- Both students and senior teaching staff reported that teaching-learning-evaluation of IE course developed the necessary competences for IE promotion/implementation in school/kindergarten, including **88% of students**

(411 persons), and 93.6% of interviewed teachers (29 persons), respectively, rated it as to a high or a very high extent.

- Hereinafter, 100% of students would like proper conditions to be established for the further development of IE competences, to have a balance between theory and practice, and to make the teaching-learning technologies interactive, etc.
- The respondent students reported a **higher personal interest in IE after studying the IE course**: 76.3% of them (357 persons) rated it as to a high/very high extent, and 18.4% (86 persons) – sufficiently.
- **Students who attended the IE course say that they are ready to become advocates of IE in the school/kindergarten and in the society**, including 32.7% or 153 persons – to a very high extent, 41.7% (195 persons) – to a high extent, 22.6% (106 persons) – sufficiently, and only 3% (14 persons) – to a low extent. 87% of lecturers (27 persons) think that the study of mandatory course helps, to a very high and to a high extent, to train the advocates of IE in the society.
- **After implementing/completing the IE course, most students changed their perception and visions regarding the educational inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools.** Thus, the share of respondents who agree fully with the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools increased from **47% to 81%**. In parallel, the share of students who do not agree, to a certain extent, with this idea, reduced about 5 times, from 16% to 3%, and the share of students who totally disagree with this idea decreased from 9% to 1%.
- The students, lecturers, and managers think **the pre-service education in inclusive education for students from other specialities, is necessary and useful.**

4.2. Factors that influence the implementation of Inclusive Education course in HEIs

Representatives of target groups mentioned a range of factors, which according to them, influence to different extents, the implementation of IE course in HEIs and the successful implementation of the pre-service education in the field:

a) Factors that facilitate the processes:

- Legal/regulatory framework approved, with explicit provisions in IE
- IE module developed/published and distributed in universities (with the support of AO Lumos)
- Centralised training (with the support of AO Lumos) of the holder senior teaching staff performed until the launching of mandatory IE course
- Partnerships with institutions that provide inclusive education services
- Institutional research projects/international projects regarding inclusive education, under implementation

b) Factors that hinder the processes:

- Reluctance to IE issue in the society/institutions
- Small number of hours planned for IE course as a mandatory component of pre-service education of teachers
- Predominance of theoretical aspects to the detriment of the practical/applicative ones during the course teaching
- Low students' involvement in internships offered by institutions with inclusive practices.
- Bibliographic resources in the field (insufficient number of copies, the lack of specialised literature in Russian).
- Lack of specially arranged laboratories for the application of assistive technologies for different categories of children with SEN.

c) Factors that may improve and ensure the sustainability of the processes:

- **from the perspective of beneficiary students**
 - Consulting periodically the students' opinions about these processes
 - Ensuring the interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity when teaching the IE course
 - Strengthening the practical component during the teaching - learning of IE course, including by organising laboratory classes and internships in inclusive schools
 - Adding to the Diploma Supplement of graduates who benefit of initial training in IE with information regarding the competences developed during the IE course, additional qualifications gained, employment opportunities and educational support services and structures in schools, etc.
 - Encouraging the students to participate in IE researches
 - Involving students in inclusive pro-education volunteering activities
- **from the perspective of teaching staff:**
 - Updating/developing/supplementing the contents of the mandatory IE course. Enhancing the applicative component
 - Publishing the updated course and distributing it in higher educational HEIs
 - Extending gradually the list of subjects from curricula that are taught from the IE perspective
 - Developing educational resources to support the teaching staff/students
 - Developing and implementing, at the institutional level, ongoing training programs for university lecturers on how to teach from the IE perspective
 - Developing partnerships between the universities and mainstream educational institutions with inclusive practices, by designating them as bases for laboratory classes/internships for students
 - Using the volunteering opportunities by involving students in activities with children with SEN in pre-university educational institutions, using the functional specialised centers at the local level, using specialised NGOs

- **from the perspective of university managers:**
 - Organising the ongoing training on different IE topics for university teaching staff and managers
 - Working out and applying for capacity building projects and university endowment projects for an efficient preparation in IE and development of an inclusive environment
 - Ongoing monitoring of processes that are in progress

4.3. Recommendations – directions of immediate action and perspective directions

As a result of this analysis of IE course implementation in pre-service education of teachers at the university level, a set of recommendations were identified, as well as directions of immediate action and perspective directions for all stakeholders: the Ministry of Education, the HEIs, university lecturers, NGOs active in IE.

a. For the Ministry of Education

- Continue to promote the IE module as a minimum state standard for the pre-service education of teachers
- Update/deepen/supplement the contents of the IE modules, focusing on the applicative component (with the support of NGOs)
- Publish the IE course in Russian (with the support of NGOs). Distribute the IE module in universities as support in implementing the initial training in IE.
- Require that National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education assesses, for accreditation purposes, the programs in Educational Sciences and ongoing training programs in IE, as a matter of priority, which end with the issuance of Requalification certificates

b. For HEIs:

- Continue to implement the IE course as a State Standard in pre-service education of the teaching staff, according to the formula recommended by the Ministry of Education.
- Add commitments and concrete activities for IE promotion in the University Charta, institutional strategies and plans for institutional development
- Review the opportunities to include the IE course in curricula/programs of studies for the specialities in related fields
- Gradually extend/fill, if necessary, the list of university courses included in the curricula/programs of studies taught from inclusive perspective for students in different fields/specialities
- Initiate/organise, at the institutional level, ongoing training programs aimed at enabling university lecturers from specialised departments and the university managers in inclusive education to form appropriate attitudes and competences to create a supporting inclusive university environment.

- Strengthen the practical aspects included in the IE course by using practical classes
- Provide, during internships, conditions to conduct/exercise the competences for IE implementation (objectives, activities, inclusive educational background)
- Develop viable partnerships with HEIs from all around the country and from abroad in order to get advanced experience in IE

c. *For university lecturers:*

- Update the IE course curriculum from a competences-centered perspective, and by ensuring the interconnection between curricular competences
- Enhance the applicative component. Supplement the IE course with practical materials: case studies, problematic situations, IEP examples, etc.
- Diversify the technologies and educational strategies (methods, techniques, forms, measures) used/implemented in the teaching-learning-evaluation of mandatory IE course
- Review periodically the satisfaction level of beneficiary students
- Participate/involve in the development of teaching and scientific materials in IE
- Participate in ongoing training programs/activities in IE

d. *Cooperation with NGOs:*

Provide support to the Ministry of Education to:

- update the content of IE course, unified for HEIs
- publish the IE module
- develop and publish training materials, methodological guidelines and other materials on IE, and translate them into Russian
- Offer logistical and technical support to open laboratories in universities, endowed with specialised technical equipment to apply assistive technologies
- Provide support to organise ongoing training strategies in IE for university lecturers from specialised departments

Note: The results of the assessment of Inclusive Education course implementation were presented during a round table organised by AO Lumos, in partnership with the Ministry of Education on 23 September 2016.

The event was attended by about 100 persons, representatives of Ministry of Education, representatives of academic community from 28 universities, managers, senior teaching staff of IE course, beneficiary students.