

Prof. Dr. Yvonne Csányi*
ELTE University, Faculty of Special Education
Budapest, Hungary

Experience of Transforming Education Provision for Children with Disabilities in Central European Countries

I. Introduction

There happened profound changes in the policy and practical realization of special education in the past decades in most countries of Europe and as a consequence also in Central Europe. The intention of this study is to present these mayor changes with all their benefits and to show also those factors which may promote or hinder the process of implementation.

1. Children with special educational needs

Before going into details let us have a brief survey of the subjects we are speaking of. Who are they? There exist a couple of concepts like persons with an *impairment*, with a *disability*, with a *handicap*. According to the WHO definition impairment refers to the organic side, to the lost of a certain function (like deafness, low vision), disability refers to the disturbance of different abilities or functions (like speech, physical ability to move, reading), handicap refers to the social disadvantage, it is a situation where the abilities of the person do not meet the demands and expectations of the environment. An impaired person has not to be necessarily disabled on a wide range of functions (i.e. a blind person with high intelligence) and a disabled or impaired person has not to be necessarily handicapped if the environment meets their needs. Nowadays these terms referring to children have been succeeded by the term *special educational needs* (SEN) ranging from profound disabilities to mild difficulties. The rationale behind this concept is that the concepts “impairment” or “disability” refer to a loss or to a deficit of an ability and because the ability of learning does not depend directly from the condition of certain organs or their physiological function but from the psychological functions. Thus, the stress has been moved from the deficits *within* the child, to *education* that supports the child, looks also for his/her strengths and meets all individual needs. “Disability categories are viewed as having only partial implications for educational provision or for the development of teaching programmes which inevitably have to take the

* The author is the national representative of Hungary in the OECD SEN/DDD committee

whole child into account. In this way , therefore, categories based on medical description are at best of only limited value to education policy makers “ (7)

The term *special needs education* has come into use as a replacement of the term *special education*. The older term was mainly understood to refer to the education of children with disabilities that takes place in special schools or institutions distant from, and outside of the institutions of the regular school. Moreover the concept of “children with special needs” extends beyond those who may be included in handicapped categories to cover those who are failing in school for a wide variety of other reasons that are known to be likely to impede a child’s optimal progress.

2. The term educational integration

2.1 From segregation to integration

Special schools have been the pivot of the education of pupils with special needs. In most countries educators and administrators have put a great deal of effort into the development of a special school system . In this schools all the available expertise has been concentrated and usually they functioned as separated, independent institutions. Mostly they had no or a very superficial contact to the local regular schools. A great part of them functioned as a boarding school for the children living in a distance. The separate system used to be seen as an expression of the care for pupils with special needs. However, this view of special education has gradually changed in most countries all over the world. Knowledge, expertise and facilities are still of importance, but the segregation of the pupils is now perceived as unacceptable, The prevailing view is that the great majority of children with special needs should be educated together with their peers in regular educational settings. The consequence is that regular and special education as a separate system disappear and are replaced by a single system that includes a wide range of pupils.

2.2 The types of integration

- *Geographical or local integration*: disabled children may be educated in classes of the regular school or it can also mean that special and regular school is on the same campus. Usually the disabled students do not mix with their non disabled peers, even socially.
- *Social integration*: disabled children may share extra-curricular activities like meals, playtime, excursions, etc. with non-disabled peers in kindergartens or schools but are not taught with them.

- *Functional integration*: disabled and not disabled pupils are taught in the same class. The two steps of this type are: *partial integration* and *full time integration*. Partial integration means that the children are in a special class or unit of a regular school and go only for certain lessons to a regular class, whereas students spend the whole school day in the regular classroom when they are integrated full time. The school is generally close to their domiciles. As we can see there exist different types of integration but only this last, functional one can be regarded as real educational integration.
- *Reversed integration* when children having no special needs attend a special school.
- *Spontaneous or wild integration* in which a “hidden population” of children with undetected special needs are attending ordinary classes without getting any kind of special assistance. There are reasons to believe that many of them form part of the large number of repeaters and drop-outs found in many countries... “Swim or sink” could be described this situation.

2.3 Inclusion

Nowadays the term integration has been succeeded many times by the term “*inclusion*” that has a wider context. Integration reflects the attempts to place pupils with special needs in the mainstream in regular education. The wider notion of integration is about fitting schools, their whole educational policy to meet the needs of all pupils including the gifted and the disabled ones as well. The emergence of more inclusive approaches has led to a new and changing role for special educators working in regular schools

Inclusion depends on the teacher’s attitude towards pupils with SEN and expertise in adapting the curriculum. The regular teachers role and responsibility in the whole process is crucial. However, inclusion is not just a task for teachers. It requires changes at different levels in education. Inclusion stands for an educational system that encompasses a wide diversity of pupils and that differentiate education in response to this diversity. “Inclusion in education can be seen as one of the many aspects of inclusion in society. It is not possible to create inclusive schools without a solid inclusion oriented basis in society” (7.). People with special needs are no longer defined primarily in terms of their need of special care and treatment, but rather are seen as citizens who have rights within society. They are entitled to ask for special services without the necessity of being segregated.

II. Different driving forces leading to the idea of educational integration and their effect on legislation (international survey)

The movement supporting integration in education has quite a long history in different countries of the world. It had been triggered by different reasons and the type and time of implementation was diverse in the States, in North Europe or in South Europe. Let us see some examples.

1. Normalization (Scandinavia)

The fundament for integration had been prepared by the principle of “*normalization*”. in the Scandinavian countries. This term had been emphasized already in the 50s. It has been sometimes misinterpreted as it does not mean that disabled people should be made normal. On the contrary, they should have the right to be accepted as they are and given the chance to live in society as equal human beings. It is the conditions of life that should be normalized. In Denmark the first official resolution on integrated education was passed in 1969.

2. Movements for civic rights (USA, Italy)

In the States the fight for the human rights of persons with disability aimed to terminate their segregation and it started together with the *movements for civic rights*. The Public Law (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) addressed the educational needs of handicapped children and youth. This law is many times known as the mainstreaming law because it required that handicapped students be educated with regular class peers to the maximum extent appropriate.

A political background seems to be the starting point in Italy too: the struggle for the *rights of disadvantaged minorities*. The movement for the rights of patients attending psychiatric treatment had also an effect on the education of Italian disabled students. All state special schools were closed as a consequence of the public law from 1977 in Italy and the children with disability had to attend their local schools. According to this law the conditions of education were fixed like more than 2 students with disability should not attend a regular class, the maximum class size should be restricted to 20 and an assistant has to support the work of the teacher.

3. The Warnock report (Great Britain)

The starting point for change was a survey on the outcomes achieved in special schools. The research had been done by the so called Warnock committee and the end result was that academic achievements of children in special schools are much lower than expected, as a consequence the Warnock report recommended integration instead of segregation. An effect of this report was the Public Law in Great Britain from 1981 that used already the term *special educational needs*. It supported strongly integration and encouraged the local authorities to set up plans for desegregation.

4. Projects, experimental classes (Spain, Austria, etc.)

In Spain started an official integration project in 1985 and the general educational reform was approved by the Parliament in 1990, this opened the doors of regular schools for the children with disabilities. Austria started with officially supported experimental classes all over the country in the 80s, when different models of integrated teaching were tested in pilot projects.

5. Movements of parents (Austria, etc.)

In many cases *parents*, especially those of pupils with special needs, have acted as a pressure group. Their willingness to organize a lobby, to go to court to persuade administrators and teachers and to invest into a regular career for their children has regularly brought about changes in education. Parents had been the driving force for example in Austria for two decades. As after the above mentioned experimental period the government wanted to close the experimental phase without a real change in the educational system.. As a consequence parents demonstrated in Vienna in front of the Parliament building and found different other ways to achieve the access of students with SEN to regular schools. The final result was a new educational law in 1993 that introduced a marked change. Every student with SEN is allowed today to attend regular schools. Parents have the free choice between special and regular schools. There exist three types of mainstreaming at present in Austria: a) the regular class with full time support, that means 4-6 students with SEN in a regular class of 17-20 non-SEN pupils with two teachers. b) Individual full time integration in regular classes c) Social integration on the basis of co-operative regular and special classes.

Parents of children with severe learning problems have been demanding integration in Hungary, when they saw that this form functions for hearing impaired, sight impaired and physically handicapped students.

6. Early intervention as a natural facilitator

Early intervention plays also a crucial role regarding integration in countries where this form already existed as the early identification and treatment can be regarded as a natural facilitator of the later educational integration..

7. International organizations as facilitators of inclusion

7.1 United Nations

The several *United Nations Declarations* culminated in the 1993 UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which urges all states to ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the education system. The same Standard Rules declare that “in order to implement inclusive education states should allow for a flexible curriculum as well as additions and adaptations, on-going teacher training and support of teachers, provide quality materials.”, “communities should develop local resources to provide this education.” (in 10)

7.2 UNESCO

UNESCO organized several World Conferences on Special Needs Education, the latest in Dakar in 2000. Probably the most important was held in 1994 in Salamanca (Spain) with the participation of 92 governments and 25 international organizations. Hungary was also represented there. The end result of this conference was the so called Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action. (1) The central theme were the issues of inclusion, that call for mayor reform of the regular school: to establish the *School for All*:. Let us quote some ideas of this publication:

“There is an emerging consensus that children and youth with special educational needs should be included in the arrangements made for the majority of children”. ...”The challenge confronting the inclusive school is that of developing a child-centred pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. The merit of such schools is not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step *to change discriminatory attitudes, in creating welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society*”. ... “For far too long, the problems of people with disabilities have been compounded by a disabling society that has focused upon their impairment rather than their potential.”... “Legislation should recognize the principle of equality of opportunity for children, youth and adults with disabilities in primary, secondary and tertiary education carried out, in so far as possible, in integrated settings. “(The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, UNESCO, 1994).

UNESCO's 1994 Salamanca Statement Called upon all Governments asked to adopt as a matter of law the principle of inclusive education and enrol all children in ordinary schools unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise. So it was suggested that the regular way should be inclusion and only the exemption the special school or class. Other parts of the Call urged to put greater effort into pre-school strategies as well as vocational strategies of inclusive education, and to ensure that both initial and in-service teacher training address the provision of inclusive education. UNESCO produced also a teacher training pack "Special Needs in the Classroom" and a guide to it, both had been translated into more than 40 languages.

7.3 OECD

OECD - already mentioned earlier - is an international organization and works close with UNESCO and with EUROSTAT, the largest statistical centre of the EU. One of its operative bodies is the *Centre of Educational Research and Innovation* (CERI) that initiates the research and projects that serve reforms, elaborates the system of indicators which have to be used when grouping the yearly statistical data. It supports also the exchange of new methods and co-operation on an international level. The so-called SEN/DDD* subcommittee belongs to CERI and its main task is to follow the changes in the 33 member countries of OECD (from Central Europe: the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Poland, Hungary) by gathering and analysing the educational data base from the ministries of each country concerning the educational provision of children with disabilities, learning difficulties and social disadvantages. OECD aims to involve the former member states of the Soviet Union, like Kazakhstan and Ukraine. There is underway an application to the World Bank for supporting financially this idea.

Special educational needs are defined according to this working committee by "the additional public and/or private resources provided to support their education". As we can see the cross national definition of SEN implies students with clear organic impairments, disabilities (*disability*: category A), with learning difficulties (*difficulty*: category B) and those where their educational difficulties arise primarily from socio-economic and linguistic factors (*disadvantage*: category C). In many of the countries, so also in Hungary and in the other

* DDD stands for: Disability, Difficulty and Disadvantage

Central European states, this latter category does not belong to their national SEN category, nevertheless they send data also on these students to the OECD central data base. The comparative data are usually analysed according to the national and cross-national categories, according to the levels of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary), according to the gender and age of the students and according to the educational settings (students in special schools, in special classes, in regular classes). Inclusion is also in this subcommittee a crucial issue.

7.4 The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

This organization is a non-profit organization with members from 25 European countries (the Czech, the Slovak Republic, Poland and Hungary from Central Europe). It was established in 1996 in Denmark with 15 member countries. A clear aim of the Agency is to improve the life quality of children with SEN, to support inclusion in the different countries by data gathering, disseminating information (web side, books, articles translated in all languages of the member states), by exchange programs, by regular meetings of country representatives and by international conferences.

8. Some data on the rate of segregated - integrated settings (international overview).

The special schools did nowhere disappear like in Italy (Italy has at present only a few state schools for deaf and for students with severe speech problems), but the number of students in segregated settings decreased everywhere dramatically but not alike for all types of disabilities. The integration of visually impaired students is for example 100 per cent in the States and 90 per cent in Great Britain and in the Benelux countries. In some other Western European countries this development has been considerably slower. In Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, for instance, around 3 per cent of all students aged 5 to 17 are placed full-time in separate special schools. In Sweden and England are these percentages considerably lower – well under 2 percentage and a study of the OECD (Organization for Economical Co-operation and Development) countries showed recently that half of the countries in OECD educate less than 1 per cent of their pupils in special schools. An other European organization publishes similar results and is for us from special interest as the countries of Central Europe are also listed (2). The data refer to the years 1999 and 2000, so the present situation is not reflected in them as there is a continuous and slow transition from segregated to integrated settings.

Table 1. Percentage of pupils with SEN in segregated settings

< 1 %	1-2 %	2-4 %	4 %<
Cyprus	Austria	Belgium (DE)	Belgium (F)
Greece	Denmark	Estonia	Belgium (NL)
Iceland	Ireland	Finland	Czech Rep.
Italy	Liechtenstein	France	Germany
Norway	Lithuania	Hungary	Switzerland
Portugal	Luxembourg	Latvia	
Spain	Netherlands	Poland	
	Sweden	Slovak Rep.	
	U.K.		

III. Reforms in four countries of Central Europe (the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Poland)

1. New laws in the countries of Central Europe

In the countries of Central Europe started integration mostly in the form of isolated attempts or pilot projects in the years before 1989, however after the political change the models of the countries in the “free world” had an important effect on the organization and reforms in the field of education. During the nineties the Central European countries underwent a fundamental social and political transformation process. They are now stable democracies, but their political systems may still be exposed to certain fundamental changes following parliamentary elections. This can effect also education and may endanger the implementation of longer term policies. The common European educational policy has therefore great importance. The use of national indicators and the comparison of different statistical data (see OECD below) demonstrate that a country is legging behind others on certain fields of education and this comparisons may be used as efficient arguments in the national debates.

1.1 Hungary

A highly segregated school system has been developed traditionally in Hungary since the foundation of the first special school for deaf children in 1802. This trend did not stop after the Second World War, on the contrary, new types of special schools appeared such as those for children with low vision, with autism, classes for pupils with language and speech problems. Only one group has not been catered for in the special school: the group of children with behaviour problems as they visit child guidance clinics if necessary.

1.1.1 Before the political change.

The first step had been made in the special school for children with low vision in the late 70s when there were employed special teachers to support the visually impaired children in regular classes. The first official research project funded by the state and focusing on integration started in 1981 and concentrated at the beginning mostly of students with sensorial and physical impairments and after some years of pupils with learning disabilities. The work in different regular schools and the development of the disabled students had been carefully followed up. However these were isolated trials. Their main effect was that there started several debates over this issue and the experts of the project had the possibility of presentations on several domestic special education conferences, also a great number of studies had been published and there were possibilities of translating professional books and articles. Often the debates were quite sharp as many of special teachers and regular teachers resisted, they were satisfied with the present solution and they did not understand why the reform was necessary at all.

1.1.2 The new Act on Public Education.

After the political change in 1990 the educational policy started to change as well. Our ministers and expertise attended more and more international conferences. Hungary became an observing member of the special needs committee of OECD (Organization of Economical Development and Co-operation) in 1990 and has been a regular member of this body since 1996. Hungarian representatives were present at different UNESCO conferences and seminars in the early 90s.

As a consequence the new Act on Public Educational (1993) opened the official and general possibilities for integration after the political change. All persons with disabilities have the right to be educated. Children with disabilities may attend regular preschools or schools if it is felt that they would benefit from such placement. The Act in itself can be recognized as a really positive milestone in comparison to the past. Two important legislative regulations were also issued in Hungary in 1998 and 2000. The Act on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and on their Equal Opportunities (1998) stresses the rights of these citizens to the barrier free environment including transportation and to the supporting services and aids. The main fields of equal opportunities are health institutions, education, employment, living conditions, culture and sport. Educational Act 2002 deals with the equal opportunities of

handicapped students in higher education. This Act opens the opportunity for of extra resources for SEN students in higher education

1.1.3 The integration of Roma students

A special new driving force toward integration has been the effort to integrate those Roma children who had been gathered in classes for only Roma students or had been attending the schools for mildly mentally retarded students, however they were not disabled only delayed in their development because of their social deprivation. The Roma minority has been protesting permanently against this discrimination. At present 40 regular schools had been turned into integration schools as a first step, where the teachers got special training and the schools financial support. The assessment procedure has been also reviewed and transferring procedures were made more strict, as one of the reasons for Roma children ending up in special schools was that experts examining children used measures that were inadequate to decide about the abilities of children socialised in poor and/or minority families. The other reason seems to be that these children went to preschool in much lower proportion than their non-Roma peers. Research shows that in the case of Roma children there is a strong link between regular preschool attendance and school success. There is now a new regulation concerning to bring all Roma children for at least a year to a regular preschool furthermore that the educational policy makers try to improve the tolerance of primary schools and especially during the beginning years of education to expand the support system who fall below the standards.

The situation was quite similar – except the case with the Roma children - in the other countries of Central Europe. Different types of special schools had been established for children with disabilities in every country. Also the boarding schools were necessary conditions as the special schools were many times quite far from the homes of the students.

1.2 The Czech Republic

There is a broad system of special schools in the Czech Republic (3) and the education of pupils with disability has a long tradition. Special schools are organized according age levels, so for children in the pre-school age, for students in the age of compulsory education and at upper secondary level including vocational schools.. Integration policy in the Czech Republic has started only after the political change, so after 1989. The main principle of the education of SEN students has been to create equal opportunities for this target group and to

minimize the negative impact and consequences of the disability to the pupils access to appropriate level and quality of education. Educational legislation and main general educational policy is primarily under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The inclusion process in the Czech Republic is also under the justification of this Ministry. The right of children to be educated is enshrined in the Constitution of the Czech Republic (1993). The first official document on integration has been launched in 1998. Basic principles concerning special education and care are in the National Plan of Providing Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1998). This important document contains main aims, tasks and principles for implementing the inclusion policy into practice concerning health, social and educational policy. The latest Act on Education was presented in 2005, it introduces the concept of special educational needs, which term regards also the gifted children as having special needs.

1.3 The Slovak Republic

The supreme guarantor of special education is the Constitution in the Slovak Republic (4) guarantees every citizen of the Slovak Republic a universal right to education and a special care for handicapped citizens when preparing their career. The legislation on educational integration of handicapped students was introduced first in the beginning of the 90s. Concrete conditions were also created for integrating pre-school children and also to acquire higher education in the mainstream. Parents have the right to initiate the integration of their child.

1.4 Poland

Special education is an integral part of the Polish education system (5). This is an arrangement provided in the Act on School Education 1991. An ordinance of the Minister of National Education in 1993 deals with the principles for the organisation of care of handicapped pupils and also on their integrated education in pre-schools and schools. The reform school education system including special education has been implemented under the Act 1999.

2. The SEN population in the countries of Central Europe

2.1 Hungary

The term “special educational needs” instead of the former concept “disability” had been introduced officially in June 2003. (modification of Act LXXIX 1993 on Public Education). SEN includes the following categories:

- students with physical disabilities,
- students with sensory disabilities (deaf, partially hearing, blind, children with low vision))
- students with mental retardation (mild and moderate)
- students with speech disabilities,
- students with autism,
- students being permanently and severely hindered in the learning process due to disturbances of psychic development (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, hyperkinesy, hyperactivity, etc),
- students with multiple disabilities

Students with adaptive, learning and behaviour difficulties” and “disadvantaged students” do not belong to the group of students with SEN, but they receive extra resources as well (see below)

2.2 The Czech Republic

The categories:

- visual disability
- hearing disability
- mental disability
- speech and language impairment
- specific learning and/or behaviour problems
- students with multiple disabilities
- students with autism
- students undergoing prolonged hospitalisation or students with chronic illness
- young delinquents in Borstal

2.3 Poland

The categories:

- students with mild mental disability
- students with moderate and severe mental disability
- deaf students
- partially hearing students
- blind students

- students with low vision:
- students with chronic illness
- physically handicapped students
- autistic students and students with multiple handicaps
- socially maladjusted students, drug addicts, students with deviant behaviour

As we can see there are small differences among the types of categorization except that three countries rank also the chronically ill and socially maladjusted students like drug addicted or juvenile criminals among SEN. However none of the countries place the students with disadvantage into the group of SEN as this is the practice in the OECD categorization.

3. Early intervention, early childhood education

The forms of provision are

- early intervention before preschool, that means mostly guidance to the family and individual development of the child (including babies and toddlers) and
- preschool groups

The importance of provision in the young age of children with disabilities can not be stressed enough. One of the advantages of this early care is that it functions as a *facilitator of the later educational integration* if this stage has been used to the maximum.

3.1 Hungary

There is a network of early guidance centres for the following types of SEN children physically handicapped, hearing impaired, sight impaired, children with moderate mental retardation, multihandicapped and autistic children. According to the Act on Education have all children and their parents from the time of the identification of the problem right to early provision (from 0 until they attend a preschool but at least until they start school.) If the children attend a regular preschool (full integration) the preschool has to provide a special teacher (these experts mostly visit 6-8 children in different preschools and are usually teams of a special school). The integration of a SEN group into a regular preschool is seldom and mostly with physically handicapped children. Of course, there exist also different special preschools attached to the special schools. The situation is quite similar in the other 3 countries concerning the main principles.

3.2 The Slovak Republic

Counselling centres provide early intervention to children and their parents between the age of 0 –3. After age three attending of a regular or special preschool is recommended. In the regular preschools exist special groups or the children are individually integrated. The centres offering counsel for families with young SEN children have regional competence and are independent institutions, but regular preschools may also employ experts in early intervention.

3.3 Poland

In Poland has started an other form of organization: the early support groups for children and their parents. Each group includes 2 or 3 children and their parents. The guidance and direct support to the children is provided by early intervention teams that include different specialists like psychologist, physician, therapist.

4. The assessment procedures

The necessary assessment and decision is made at certain psychological – educational advice or expert panels in all Central European countries, where they finally decide whether the child should attend a special pre-school or school or regular ones. Usually that is a suggestion and not yet an official decision. Parents are present at the assessment and they must sign the final expert opinion. Parental choice is an important issue in the Czech Republic, as parents generally assume that they have the legal right to express preference for the school they would like their child to attend and they have the last word in the process. In other countries the role of parents seems not to be similar.. In Hungary, for example parents have only the right to appeal against the suggestion of the expert committee's suggestion at the town clerk of their local authority, who usually sends the child to an other committee for assessment. If the second decision is equal with the first and the parents are still not satisfied they may go to the court. This almost never happens as the expert panels find the way of an agreement with the parents usually. In Slovakia although parental opinion is needed, the decision for the transfer of a pupil to a special school lies within the competence of the head teacher from the special school.

The result of the assessment can be the placement in a special or in an integrated setting. The expert's opinion contains the decision about the placement, the description of individual needs, the main ways how they are to be met and the additional necessary support in case of

integration. Assessments must be revised after a certain time in Hungary. This means one year after the first assessment and later on every third year. So a revised assessment may change or reinforce the earlier decision as children may develop sufficiently or better or worse in a given school.

In the Czech Republic the head of a school is obliged to initiate the change of the placement of the student whenever his/her situation seems to change. This means a “free track” from special school into mainstream and vice versa.

5. The organization of integration

As mentioned in the introduction there exist different forms of integration. We will give a short overview about the forms used in the countries of Central Europe.

5.1 Hungary

- Local or geographical integration is present when a class for students with mild mental retardation is attached to a regular school. This is the case in small towns and villages. The problem is that these classes had minimal contacts with the regular ones. Nowadays they are step by step liquidated and the students are integrated. There exist also separate classes for children with language problems like dyslexia, dysgraphia, delayed language development. It depends from the leadership of a regular school whether or not they offer possibilities for these students to mix with their peers attending with them certain lessons (partial integration) or in free time.
- Social integration can be observed mostly in preschools when a group of physically handicapped children attend special lessons in separate rooms but they are together with the other children in their free time, on the playground.
- Full integration is the most typical form of integration. One or two SEN students attend all lessons in the regular school.

5.2 The Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and Poland

The most general forms are local integration, partial integration (where students receive 80 per cent or more of the lessons in special classes) and full integration.

Also the so called *reversed integration* is present in the Czech Republic: all special schools are allowed to provide education to non-disabled pupils. The number of them is limited and must not extend 25 per cent of the total number of the students in the class.

Special educational centres provide service to SEN children and youth in the Czech Republic, usually they are parts of a special school. They work as teams (two special teachers for younger and older children each, a psychologist and a social worker) They offer diagnosis re-education, remedial lessons, psychotherapy, special needs education and are in charge of elaborating the individual educational plan in close co-operation with the regular class teacher, and the parents. Integrated students are seen as outpatients. One of the aim of these centres is to integrate the students near to their home.

6. The number of integrated students.

As full integration is the most typical in all Central European countries and because this is the real challenge for the educators we are going to deal only with this type:

Table 2. The rate of SEN students in the countries of Central Europe and the percentage of fully integrated students

Name of country	Total number of SEN students	Percentage of SEN students (100 %= total number of students)	Percentage of fully integrated SEN students
Hungary	70 501	3,5	36
The Slovak Republic	30 849	4	19,7
The Czech Republic	111 606	9.7	4, .5
Poland	149 845	3,4	9.7

It is interesting that there are great differences in the number of population regarded as disabled.. It is obvious that in all the four countries has started integration, however the rate of integrated students is quite different.

Some details of the data from the example of Hungary :

Table 3

Type of SEN	Percentage of integrated students
Hearing impaired	41
Sight impaired	45
Physically handicapped	61
Mildly mentally retarded	3,5
Moderately mentally retarded	2
Behaviour disturbance	92,4

Integration of students with mild mental retardation has started only recently, so we expect a change only in the next years. The main reason of the high percentage of integrated students with behaviour problems is that there exist no special school for this type in Hungary.

Table 4

Age of integrated SEN children	Percentage
Preschool (3-6)	73
Public school (6-14)	34
Secondary school (14-18)	20

It is obvious that as the age of the students increases and so the type of school is more difficult the more problematic is integration. We have to do a lot regarding the different ways of support on the secondary level.

7. The attitudes of teachers

Attitudes of regular teachers strongly depend on their experience with students with special needs, their training, the support available and some other conditions like class size, workload of teachers, the level of education. Especially in secondary schools teachers are less willing to include students with special needs in their classes especially when these students have severe emotional and behaviour problems.

8. Integration and additional resources

Finances are necessary to provide additional resources to students who have different difficulties in accessing the curriculum. In the countries of Central Europe funding is not delegated to municipalities as in a great number of Western European Countries, special needs education is financed indirectly by central government through other layers (like counties, regions) which have the main responsibility for special provision. Funding formulae are usually more favourable to those with special educational needs. The two types of resources are: a) personal resources, like a better teacher/student ratio, teacher assistants, training programs for teachers or other persons, and b) material resources, like aids or specialised teaching materials.

8.1 Hungary

- The official yearly amount allocated by the government to the local authorities for the costs of education per capita (capital grant) is roughly three times higher in the case of a child with special needs than for a non-SEN student. This amount is independent from the fact whether the child attends a regular school or a special school and also independent from the type of special need.
- Regular schools get also capital grants after students showing learning and behaviour difficulties, and after disadvantaged students, however these children do not belong to the official SEN category,.
- If a child attends a regular school, he/she has the right to receive extra hours for habilitation/rehabilitation according to the law. The number of these extra hours is dependent on the nature of the disability and will be fixed in the expert's opinion. These remedial lessons are provided by a special teacher. The special teachers are either employed by a regular school if the school has at least 8 fully integrated SEN students in different classes or there will come to the school a peripatetic (mobile) teacher. In Hungary there is a network of these mobile teachers who are specialized according to the type of handicap. Each of these special teachers visit a certain number of schools regularly.
- There exist also individual (or small group) correctional lessons provided by regular teachers not only for SEN students but also for other, mainly socially deprived children who need it
- Class sizes can be lowered - according to the Educational Law - as students with special needs are equivalent to two or three regular students depending on their problems (e.g. hearing impaired = 3, mildly mentally retarded = 2)
- It is possible for 3-3,5 per cent of students who have not completed the 8-grade public school (many of them Roma) by the age of 16 to participate in a 1-2 year remedial education program at a vocational training school. A student who participates in this remedial education counts as two students in enrolment figures.
- A university can claim 15 per cent more financial support for a student with special needs than the regular rate,.
- School buildings (and all other public buildings) should be barrier free the latest by 2010.

There exist also other favours granted to integrated students that do not have financial effects. These favours are aiming to support disadvantaged children too:

- SEN or disadvantaged children can be *exempted* from being formally graded in certain subjects with the permission of the head teacher.
- The head teacher can also permit an *individual progression* that conforms to the student's personal circumstances and level of development until the 4th grade so the student does not have to fulfil the same requirements as the others in the first four grades: he/she studies according an individual developmental plan. The legal modification of 1999 made it possible for schools to guarantee the opportunity to catch up, not only for SEN students but also for children who have a delay in learning because of social disadvantages, learning difficulties
- SEN students have the right to examinations under modified conditions (longer duration, oral or written reports)
- Certain subjects can be changed according to the exam regulations during the final examination (secondary school)

8.2 The Czech Republic

Capitation grants determined for students with special educational needs who are placed in special classes of regular schools are provided and differentiated according to the same criteria as those for special schools. However the amount of these grants make less than half of the capitation grants allocated to the same type of SEN students in special schools. Financial resources for individual full integration are not allocated in the form of capitation grants. They are allocated by the Ministry of Education to regional authorities in proportion of the number of students. The actual amount of funding for fully integrated students is stipulated by the region and is tied to the students' actual needs which are documented by an expert opinion of a specialised institution (i.e. educational and psychological guidance centre, special educational centre). Generally speaking integrated students receive less than the amount they would have had in a special school. The procedure is the same for public, private or denominational schools.

Social disadvantage (frequently children from the Roma minority) is not considered in funding, however social disadvantage often causes problems in fulfilling the requirements of

curricula. As a consequence these children attend schools for mildly mentally retarded often and share the same resources with the SEN students.

8.3 The Slovak Republic

The Ministry of Education is responsible for creating legal conditions for the use and distribution of the budget. The normative formula varies according to the level of handicap.

8.4 Poland

SEN students get different grants according to the type of handicap. This amount is higher (on average the double) than the capital grant of non-SEN students. There exists an additional amount which is added to the different SEN weights if the student attends an integrated setting.

9. The curriculum and the methods of differentiation in regular schools (Hungary)

“The adoption of more flexible, adaptive systems capable of taking fuller account of the different needs of children will contribute both to educational success and inclusion.” (1) It is important that children with special needs should receive additional support in the context of the regular curriculum not a different curriculum. The guiding principle should be to provide all children with the same education offering additional assistance and support to students who require it.

The Hungarian *National Curriculum* has changed a lot since 1990. There existed different types of curricula according to the types of children in the past. The new curriculum from 1995 and its latest edition from 2004 is a common one for all students providing to a certain level multilevel instruction and it is to strengthen the learning oriented nature of education. This means a shift from lexical knowledge to be mediated to skills that are to be developed. The new curriculum deviates from the previous Hungarian curricula traditions by allowing teachers to replace their programmed teaching activities with the orientation of learning and personal development processes of students.

The “*Guidelines for students with special needs*” (1997, 2004) contain suggestions to meet the different special needs in integrated or segregated settings. It should support the implementation of the National Curriculum.

School heads can play a major role in making schools more responsive to children with special educational needs. Their responsibility is to diversify learning options, to mobilize child to child help, to see the individual child's needs whether it is a child with special needs or without.

In Hungary there exist almost no tradition of connecting teaching and learning process. Lessons are generally characterized by the use of the frontal method (students play a more passive role in the teacher's activities.) and are created with the average child in mind. According to research and expert opinions the reasons for the failure of progress of children with special needs in regular schools are mainly the monotony of the methodological culture of teachers and the forcing of traditional methods that regularly prove to be inadequate for these students. Although in this consideration there have been positive changes, especially in the school entry period, it still cannot be said that differentiated education has been established in Hungarian schools. The so called *alternative schools* play a pioneer role in bringing together teaching and learning processes. These schools are usually open to public making local study of their educational practice possible for interested teachers and they are at the forefront of working out and spreading inclusive programs.

10. The new role of special schools

Special schools have been a major factor of special educational provision in every country. The new task of integration/inclusion brings to special schools new challenges. They have to switch from a pupil based educational institute to a multi functional offering also a resource centre for regular schools, students even parents. The new task is to give support to regular schools with materials and methods, to keep contacts with the regular teachers in the form of consultations, co-operation (team teaching), to provide with information teachers and parents. Short term help is also arranged for individual students, but the period of direct support should not be very long to prevent too much dependency on special arrangements.

At present the number of students attending special schools slowly decrease and a growing number of special schools (all schools for physical handicapped, all schools for students with sensorial impairments, many of the schools for students with mild mental retardation) have to accommodate to the new situation in Hungary.. Therefore they have changed their role and work as *resource centres* using the new official name: "Unified Special Educational Centre". According to this new organizational way at present the smaller part of the staff works as mobile teachers (this will slowly change in the future!) and has a double function when they

provide support to a) families in the form of early intervention and b) to preschools and schools which integrate SEN students.. The other members of the staff work in the traditional form in special classes or - if they have - in the special preschool or in the boarding school.

11. Inclusion and teacher training

“Appropriate preparation of all educational personnel stands out as a key factor in promoting progress toward inclusive schools. “ (1)

It is indisputable that regular teachers need some form of compulsory training concerning students with special needs. This can be built into the initial training or can be offered in the form of courses (in-service training). Also special teachers need training in the methods of supporting students with special needs.

11.1 Hungary

Teacher training colleges and universities had not provided enough knowledge about integration in the past. Integrated education has not been part of initial training apart from few lectures on special education. About half of the teacher training colleges has started dealing with differentiation as a general subject, however this has not influenced the methodology of the different subjects. Students observe and practice in schools mostly whole class teaching, the lack of individual teaching is obvious. This facts have been the reason for starting different projects for lecturers of teacher training colleges and universities. One of this projects (PHARE Twinning) was financed by the World Bank and got partners from Denmark. The aim was to write a curriculum for a 30-90 hours subject on integration and also a handbook in close co-operation with the Hungarian expert group, furthermore to offer workshops for the participating lecturers. (10) The main topics were differentiation in the classroom, co-operative teaching and learning, the conditions and implementation of inclusion, co-operative problem solving with the special teacher. The documents were ready by 2004 and the participants have been working with them since the same year.

There exist also different in-service courses (from 60 –340 hours) for regular teachers of preschools and schools. The main topic is also here differentiation and practical hints for the implementation of integration of students with different special needs.

The situation is much better in the faculties for special teacher training where the students are prepared theoretically and also in practice for the support of pupils in inclusive settings and for the co-operation with regular teachers.

11.2 The Czech Republic

Czech experts stress that the national strategy for improving the process of integration is focusing on the class teacher as the most important element of this process. The professional development of regular teachers is therefore crucial. Since the curricula of previous teacher training programmes were lacking the theme of teaching students with special needs, in-service programmes are considered as one of the most important tools towards successful integration. The professional further training of teachers is mostly financed by public funds. Within this task of the in-service training the role of the so called pedagogical Centres is growing.

11.3 Poland

Teachers working with SEN students receive support from the National Centre of Psychological and Educational Support or from regional Teaching Methodology Centres. These centres provide training courses for teachers.

12. The role of parents

The idea of choosing an integrated setting might come from the special teacher during early intervention, from the school teacher in the special or integrated kindergarten or school, and last but not least it can be the wish of the parents. They have to follow the official way if they want that their child gets additional resources (see above: Assessment) One of the most crucial roles of the parents during integration is the regular support of the child, the almost daily contact with the school and the thorough observation of the development of their child. They must not leave all duties to the school and to the support teacher.

13. NGOs and integrated education

In Hungary the different parent's associations support strongly the idea of integration. These associations organize regular meetings, conferences and publish newsletters, where they describe the present official possibilities for integration, and present parents and children who found the way to integration.. Representatives of these associations attend usually special

educational conferences and they use also the media (TV, radio). They also have contacts to parent's associations in other countries and take part on international conferences sometimes.

IV. Recommendations

1. Main lessons learned from implementing the reform

The following lessons are based on the Hungarian experiences but many of them are similar in the other Central European Countries as well.

1.1 General issues:

- a) Pilot projects and experiments had minimum influence on other schools but on the teachers involved and on the experts and researchers who observed the educational processes and drew consequences (i.e. the ideal number of students with SEN in a class, the support within and outside the class, the content of support, etc.).
- b) Discussions on different questions of integration with participants from regular and special schools are useful at least for listening to the counter-arguments and to deal with them.
- c) Guidelines and handbooks on integrated education for regular teachers pay an important role. In Hungary exist different brochures and books for teachers from pre-school to higher education. The documents are specialized according the type of SEN (separately for sight impaired, students with learning difficulties, etc.) Some of these documents are also available on the Internet.
- d) Differentiation, individualisation, learning by personal experience, co-operative learning and teaching is at present not widely enough used in schools in spite of the fact that teachers know about this expectation, it is part of teacher training, but they still stick to the traditional methods of instruction..

1.2 The Act on Education and issues of funding

Legislative progress regarding inclusion had been achieved and was a very important basic step, however it happens many times that the heads of regular schools are not familiar with these parts of the Act.

We still have difficulties with additional financial resource as school heads may use it free, it is not reserved explicitly to support the student with SEN in the access to the

curricula. The only condition is to provide certain hours for the special teacher. It happens many times that the amount is used for different other aims mostly because the schools are not financed sufficiently in general.

Schools had to be barrier free until January 2005 according to the 1998 Act on Equal Opportunities and Rights of Persons with Special Needs. Different projects already have results, however the deadline had to be postponed to 2010 because of financial reasons.

Since the 1999 amendment of the Law higher education has got the extra financial quota after students with SEN on this level too. This quota is used explicitly to support the students with SEN.- in contrast with the lower levels of education - and the network of coordinators on each faculty is already functioning quite well..

1. 3 Expert Committees

The members of the Expert Committees who are responsible for the assessment and for sending students to regular school are not always objective and do not recommend integration because they know about the decreasing number of children in special schools and want to help the school heads of these schools - whom they know well - to increase the number of students in special schools..

1. 4 Parents' rights

The free choice of school is sometimes only on paper as the parents do not know enough about their rights to protest against the decision of the Expert Committee.. Furthermore parents are never involved in the use of the financial support for their child (probably because the general lack of money for schools!)

1. 5 Personal conditions and attitudes

a) Mobile special teachers specialized in the necessary direction (i.e. giving advise about a physically handicapped child) are not yet available in each region. Their substitutes often do not have the right qualification.

b) School heads and teachers in regular schools without earlier experience with SEN students are usually afraid of the new task, because they feel unprepared and think many times that for students with SEN is the best place the special school with all the special experts there.

c) Special teachers are not all for the idea of inclusion because it means a big change in their life as they are used to an undisturbed work in their classes and do not want to have the new responsibilities. Furthermore the relatively large segregated school system has an influence on special teachers who feel threatened by the inclusion process. They fear that the survival of their position may be endangered.

d) We have not yet paid special attention to the upper secondary level of education. Coordinator teachers do not exist on this level – similar to those working at higher education – however they could help SEN students when listing their needs and organizing the different ways of support. Teachers on this level are less willing to include students with special needs. The increasing topic specialisation and the different organization of secondary schools result in difficulties for inclusion on this level. The number of sensorial and physically handicapped students is rather low on this level. This means that the candidates with SEN for higher education are also not enough.

1.6 Teacher training

- The topic of integration fits well into the curriculum of special teacher training. We succeeded also in finding fields for the practice (inclusive schools)
- Regular teacher training must also provide certain units on integration. It is not easy to convince these institutions about that. They have their own practice schools without SEN students and deliver some information on special education in general. It is a quite difficult task for them to insert the necessary inclusive steps into each methodology of the different subjects. We found the intensive training (workshops) of the lecturers of teacher training faculties very helpful. However we still miss the regulation on compulsory training on inclusion.
- The interest of regular teachers for in-service training is not very high if the training is very time consuming (in Hungary 300 hours within two years) as they often have to travel to the site of the course and they have to offer a great number of their week ends.. We think at present of perhaps more attractive shorter courses (30-60 hours)

2. Possible obstacles to the general spread of integration

The obstacles have been experienced in the countries of Central Europe.

- Integration policy is not part of the Education Act.

- Historical heritage of the dual system of regular and special education. Many times mainstream school are more or less used to transferring their problems to other parts of the school system, to the special schools.
- Traditional thinking patterns of regular and special teachers and their resistance to change...
- Architectural barriers: many of the schools are not accessible for students with physical disabilities.
- Traditional ways of teaching in regular schools (achievement oriented whole class teaching, no interest in the learning process itself)
- Prejudice of teachers and parents of the classmates
- Unprepared regular teachers (no adequate initial training and no or not enough courses on integration).
- Mistakes in the process of integration (methodical problems, quality of support, attitudes of the teachers, of the staff and of the leadership of the school)
- Limited resources for assigning support teachers
- No or not enough specialized support teachers in a certain area
- Uninterested parents who are not supportive and do not play an active role in the process of the child's integration
- High class sizes in the regular school
- The lack of early intervention
- The increasing amount of theoretical, lexical knowledge on the secondary school level,

3. Conclusions and suggestions for the introduction and implementation of integration

Inclusion of pupils with special needs in regular education settings is not a matter just for education. *“Inclusion should be part of an encompassing development in society in which the concept of handicap and the position of people with special needs are changing”* (7)

A clear **policy statement** on inclusion may act as a push in changing the attitudes of regular and special personnel. A policy for special education should not be developed in isolation from policies for the education system as a whole and many times there is a necessity of coordinating the work of the ministries of education, health and social welfare.

Inclusion is in the first place an **educational reform issue** and not a placement issue.

Integration is not just omission of segregation. It also involves adaptation of the ordinary school environment.

To include students with special needs in regular education, it is necessary

- to distribute funds,
- to organize support services
- to change the regular curriculum,
- to train teachers (new methods, new forms of organization in the classroom, etc.)

Funding can have different effects on segregation-integration. All regulations resulting in special needs provision in special schools which can not be made available in regular schools stimulate segregation. Therefore it can be recommended that capital grants should be bounded to pupils independently from the fact whether they attend a special or a regular setting. An OECD study (6) claims that the costs of inclusive education are lower than those of segregated special schools, but we should not forget that both systems have to exist beside each other. The development of integration will have a natural effect on the population of the segregated schools: the number of pupils will decline and their composition will be more heterogeneous and more severely disabled.

Collecting of international experiences, like participating at international conferences, study trips and the translation of books and articles are necessary preconditions of wide-ranging discussions that usually precede the official introduction of integration. In the literature on inclusion numerous suggestions can be found relating to teaching and classroom practices, the organization of the school and system factors such as policy and legislation. Teachers and experts have to see how many countries of the world accept the ideas of integration and how useful this form of education can be for both: non-SEN students and a quite high number of children who had the only choice of the segregated school career in the past.

First steps. The government can have an important role in stimulating and supporting early developments in pilot studies and pilot schools. When beginning it can be suggested to start with the integration of children with a mild and moderate degree of sensorial impairment and in case of barrier free school buildings with physically handicapped pupils. When starting teachers could also concentrate on those children who are already in their regular classes and

show more or less severe learning difficulties. Schools that wish to implement inclusion could be supported and funded on an experimental basis. The experiences of these schools can be of use when disseminating the message that inclusion is an attainable option for other schools as well.

Integration into society is the final goal of the different areas of special needs education consequently also of segregated schooling, however often the results have not justified this conception.. Students graduating from segregated settings remain marginalised in adulthood they have no real contacts to other members of the society. The prejudice of public opinion worsens the situation. There is an evidence that this aim can be achieved much easier if mutual acceptance starts earlier: in the form of educational integration in the preschool and/or primary school level. Research has shown too that prejudice can be lowered by the fact that broad layers of the society (parents, teachers) get to know the children with special needs and have daily contact with them.

Literature

1. UNESCO (1994): The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Paris UNESCO
2. C. Meijer, V. Soriano, A. Watkins (2003): Special Needs Education in Europe. Thematic Publication. Web: <http://www.european-agency.org>
3. The Czech Republic (2003) Web: <http://www.european-agency.org>
4. The Slovak Republic (2003): Web: <http://www.european-agency.org>
5. Poland (2003): Web: <http://www.european-agency.org>
6. OECD (1995): Integrating Pupils with Special Needs into Mainstream Schools Paris, OECD.
7. OECD (2004) Equity in Education. Paris, OECD
8. S.P. Pijl, C.J.W. Meijer, S. Hegarty (1997): Inclusive Education a Global Agenda London, Routledge.
9. Y. Csányi (2001): Steps towards inclusion in Hungary. Eur. J. of Special Needs Education Vol. 16. No 3, pp. 301-308.
10. Y. Csányi, E. Fótiné Hoffmann, Zs. Keresztessy, J. Willumsen (2004): Curriculum and Handbook on Inclusion. Budapest, European Committee, Ministry for Children Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education.
11. V. Soriano (1999) : Teacher Support. Trends in 17 Countries European Agency for Development in Special Education, Middelfahrt.