



Open letter

Educational Programs for children with special needs for pre-elementary, elementary and secondary schools in Slovakia.

The undersigned citizens, teachers, parents, representatives of civil society organizations and civic associations, express concerns about continuing violations of constitutional and international rights of children in Slovakia, in particular the right of all children have access to quality education including relevant support, regardless of their intellect.

Inclusive efforts of schools in Slovakia are seriously jeopardized and undermined by the introduction of **educational programs for different categories of children with special educational needs**. These regulations, which are issued by the State Educational Institute (SPU) and apply to all types of schools, place unrealistic and damaging demands on our schools. They emphasise a deficit model for learners with special needs and promote segregation in schools by emphasizing differences between learners, and not allowing teachers to apply inclusive forms of education. These regulations will result in an increase in intolerance and dissatisfaction on the part of teachers, parents and children. The issue of inclusivity in education is further undermined in Slovakia by the substantial lack of professional staff and teaching assistants in schools.

In light of the current situation, we advocate for approaches that develop and enhance the potential of all children and lead to a nurturing learning and social environment in schools. We therefore call for a review of the current situation and request:

- Retaining **one joint educational program for all children**. The education of children with diverse special needs should remain the responsibility of only one particular school education program. This is in keeping with the Slovak Republic's commitment to inclusive education through its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and through the concept of inclusive education in the report *Learning Slovakia*.
- **A clear description of the competencies of counselling facilities, which in conjunction with professional staff, teachers and parents** will create the necessary support measures to meet the needs of individual children and class. The support mechanisms (time, period, responsible person) will be determined on an individual basis and according to individual need, developing a truly learner-centred approach, which is underpinned by the cooperation of all stakeholders. Support measures should be available to all children who demonstrate need.
- The preparation, design and implementation of an inclusive approach to education, which incorporates all children in all types of schools, should be **informed and guided by experts from civil society organizations representing practitioners, as well as academics, teachers, parents, and professional staff**.

The Slovak government is morally and legally required to provide a supportive and welcoming environment for all children in the educational space. This can only be achieved by **respecting the needs of all educational actors** - teachers, professional staff, directors, parents, and most importantly, children.

In Bratislava, 21st of November, 2017

InkluCITY
Platform of families with
children with special needs
Slovak Teachers Chambre
PRO LP Association of medical
educators
Fundation Open Society

To dá rozum
Institution of expatriates
Institution of holistic education
Social Inclusion of Learners
Nové školstvo
Coalition for children

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Letter addressed: Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic