EDUCATION EQUITY NOW

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KEY ACTIONS

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Including all children in quality learning

Key actions

The Call for Action EDUCATION EQUITY NOW! Include all children in quality learning is organised around four key messages:

1. **Every child in school**
2. **Every child learning**
3. **Every child learning early and enrolling on time**
4. **Every child supported by effective and efficient governance**

These Key Actions complement the Call for Action. They aim to provide guidance on possible ways to operationalise the Recommended Principles of each Key Message.

The Key Actions are grounded in research and good practice. Although they are indicative, they are both a source of inspiration and a concrete guidance for countries committed to taking practical steps to ensure that all children have access to a full cycle of basic education and secondary education.

The Key Actions were developed by a range of Ministry representatives and education professionals and practitioners across Europe and Central Asia.

1. Every Child in School

Recommended Principle 1

Develop, improve and enforce legislation and policies that are more inclusive, non-discriminatory and responsive of children's various needs, including children at risk of not enrolling, attending or completing a full cycle of basic education.

- Ensure that legislation and policies are in line with the principles of inclusion, non-discrimination and respect for diversity.
- Improve, harmonise and enforce regulatory frameworks to prohibit schools and local authorities from turning away students, including children with disabilities, minority children, migrants and non-citizens.
- Remove administrative obstacles to enrolment (such as ID or proof of address) by registering all children in school and helping families and children to receive the necessary documents.
- End school segregation and institutionalisation of children with disabilities and children from marginalised communities; invest in early intervention to prevent institutionalisation.
- Identify discriminatory practices impeding children's access to and meaningful participation in school and promote social norms that encourage inclusive environments.

Recommended Principle 2

Strengthen social benefits and protection programmes to ensure that no child is excluded from education as a result of direct or opportunity costs for households.

- Establish appropriate social protection policies and mechanisms, including benefits, allowances and cash transfers, to remove education access barriers for children from the poorest and most vulnerable families and children with disabilities.
- Develop financial and other forms of support programmes for children at-risk of not attending or completing pre-primary, pre-primary, lower and upper secondary education, such as scholarships and free school transport, free school meals and free textbooks.

Recommended Principle 3

Improve data collection and management systems to support the identification of children out-of-school and leaving education before completing a full cycle of basic education.

- Improve information systems, particularly those of the health, education, social protection and child protection sectors; Explore linkages between databases and children's records, with the appropriate safeguards and data protection mechanisms; Systematise flexible data collection mechanisms at local level on all categories of children at risk of exclusion
- Strengthen education data management systems to identify children leaving education during a school transfer or during transition to a higher level of education and to identify children who are at-risk of dropping-out; Define drop-out in legislation to support accurate data collection.
- Systematise the analysis, interpretation and usage of data on children by enhancing the level of disaggregation of data and publishing and discussing data and analytical narratives on education exclusion.

Recommended Principle 4

Develop child-seeking mechanisms for the referral and case management of children out-of-school or at risk of dropping-out

- Improve referral mechanisms and case management systems for children out-of-school, children at-risk of dropping-out,

children with disabilities and otherwise very vulnerable children.
- Build the capacity of local authorities, schools and all professionals in contact with children, including health and social workers, the police and local NGOs on referral mechanisms and case management processes.

Recommended Principle 5

Support schools and teachers to adopt inclusive practices and to develop drop-out prevention and response interventions.

- Promote school cultures and environments that are inclusive of all children, respectful of diversity, free of violence and conducive to effective learning.
- Support schools to build multi-disciplinary teams in and around schools in order to identify, monitor and provide support to students at risk of dropping-out.
- Encourage (through scholarships and campaigning) the enrolment of minority students and of students with disabilities in pedagogical disciplines at university level and in teacher training to increase the number of teachers with diverse backgrounds.
- Provide long-term training and support to teachers and school administrators with responsibilities for inclusion and explore flexible co-teaching modalities and the use of resource persons, assistants or mediators in the classroom and the school.
- Train teachers in second-language learning to support students struggling with the official language of instruction.
- Introduce Individual Education Plans supporting children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

Recommended Principle 6

Improve national and local cross-sector collaboration between ministries and vertical coordination between central, district and municipal levels.

- Improve vertical coordination between ministries, decentralised authorities, local administrations and schools and horizontal collaboration/ coordination across ministries at national and local levels on issues pertaining to inclusive education and out-of-school children.
- Place responsibility for the education of children with disabilities within ministries of education.

Recommended Principle 7

Design and provide alternative and second chance education using innovative approaches and harnessing the potential of information and communication technology (ICT), including distance learning opportunities.

- Introduce high-quality second chance opportunities and formal and non-formal educational programmes for children and adolescents who have dropped-out of school early and for working and street children.
- Maximise the potential of distance learning to reach-out young people in remote areas.

Recommended Principle 8

Consider increasing the length of compulsory education to up to twelve years.

- Undertake costing and feasibility studies; Launch a national dialogue and explore a range of upper-secondary pathways.

Recommended Principle 9

Support transition to upper secondary education and school to work transition through alternative vocational pathways.

- Limit early tracking and streaming, postpone academic selection and improve counselling on education pathways and careers.
- Facilitate transitions between education pathways (notably between general and

vocational programmes) and ensure that vocational education provides the right mix of skills for the labour market and adolescents' development.
- Provide academic support at the end of lower-secondary education and in the first year of upper-secondary to encourage students to stay in school.

Recommended Principle 10

Improve parental, family and community involvement in school and in drop-out prevention and response interventions.

- Foster parental and community involvement in school management, learning activities, extra-curricular activities and drop-out prevention interventions.
- Organise parenting classes and discussion circles for parents of children of all age.
- Welcome, inform and work closely with parents of children entering Grade 1 and of children who will transit to or have just transited to higher levels of education.

2. Every Child Learning

Recommended Principle 1

Promote a school culture that is conducive to learning, respectful of diversity and where attendance and participation matter.

- Provide learning environments that are violence-free, equipped with adequate facilities and teaching and learning materials including libraries, laboratories and IT equipment, and engaging for young people.
- Maximise on-task instructional time by combating both teacher and student absenteeism.
- Promote the development of positive teacher-student and peer relationships and encourage adequate student counselling.
- Explore mentoring schemes (adult to student or peer-mentoring) as a way to improve students' self-esteem, sense of belonging to the school, attendance rate and academic performance.
- Promote foreign language learning and international students' exchange and increase access to extra-curricular activities.
- Provide opportunities for young people to acquire skills and attitudes useful for entering the job market and for becoming active citizens through entrepreneurial learning activities and engagement in the community life.
- Promote youth-led school-based interventions to address health, substance abuse, gender, reproductive health and peace and tolerance.

Recommended Principle 2

Focus on the learning experience of students through flexible curricula, differentiated instruction and responsive teaching methods that address the unique needs and learning styles of diverse students.

- Put students at the centre by individualizing and differentiating instruction, supporting them to take ownership of their own learning, having high expectations for all of them and encouraging peer learning.
- Promote the use of school data information systems for early identification of students lagging behind and provide systematic academic or other relevant support for those students.
- Eliminate class repetition by implementing alternatives such as summer catch-up classes, second chance exams, community-based homework clubs, etc.
- Encourage family learning activities in all educational cycles and support disadvantaged parents help their children to learn.

Recommended Principle 3

Reform and increase the relevance of curricula by identifying core competences and articulating learning outcomes and by developing teaching standards that are in line with inclusive education principles and child-centred pedagogy.

- Develop national educational standards for each education stage based on wide national consultations with a range of stakeholders including students and their families.
- Develop flexible and inclusive curriculum frameworks that identify core competences and articulate learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours; Ensure necessary competences for the 21st

century such as digital competences and entrepreneurial competences are included alongside literacy and numeracy.
- Ensure that curricula and teaching standards are informed by inclusive education principles, how children learn and modern pedagogy.

Recommended Principle 4

Improve and regularly use formative learning assessment systems also as diagnostic tools so that students have multiple opportunities to develop an educational trajectory that suits them rather than focusing on high-stakes tests.

- Revise assessment strategies and tools based on reformed curricula and agreed learning outcomes. Ensure strategies cover relationship between early assessments and end-of-cycle assessments, including longitudinal surveys, and capacity development from classrooms to Ministry levels.
- Strengthen classroom and school-based formative and summative learning assessments and use an array of assessment tools and practices.
- Develop national assessment systems, which are sensitive to children's different circumstances and languages, and that provide a diagnostic of the outcomes of the education system.
- Join international and regional assessments; alternatives can include the development of simple, transparent and low-cost diagnostic tools.
- Use information and data from all type of assessments to improve teaching and learning practices in the classroom and education policies and strategies.

Recommended Principle 5

Improve pre and in-service education, training and professional development for all education staff (teachers, directors and auxiliary staff)

- Conceive teacher education as a continuum (pre-service, in-service and other professional development opportunities) to ensure teachers can meet the rapid changes and skills demands.
- Ensure pre-service and in-service training focus on pedagogy, child-centred and active learning methods, differentiated instruction, teaching students with special educational needs and learning assessment.
- Train teachers in second language teaching and learning to support children whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction.

Recommended Principle 6

Expand the use of ICTs and introduce universal design to improve learning.

- Explore pathways to introducing ICTs and universal design for learning into schools and classrooms as a strategy for making teaching more responsive to children's individual learning needs
- Consider ICTs as a tool for expanding access to education for children and youth that are out of school
- Ensure that all schools have computers and internet access, and that all students have dedicated time to use computers to support their learning

Recommended Principle 7

Empower parents to support and be actively involved in their children's learning.

- Organise family learning activities and family learning days in school, encouraging both mothers and fathers to participate.
- Equip parents with knowledge and skills on how to set-up a home environment conducive to learning and how to help their children learn throughout their schooling.

3. Every child learning early and enrolling on time

Recommended Principle 1

Universalize access to inclusive early childhood education, which should ideally start at age 3, especially for the most disadvantaged.

- Promote a variety of effective and efficient alternative educational arrangements (including broadcast media), public-private partnerships and pro-poor public financing strategies, so that no child is left out.
- Establish context-relevant and sustainable early childhood education models based on best practices from the region and beyond, develop models and scenarios based on robust pilots and rigorous feasibility assessments.
- Remove cost barriers by reducing out-of-pocket expenses and consider providing school lunches, especially for children from poor families and communities.
- Enable the use of the mother tongue in the early education.

Recommended Principle 2

Prioritize one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education for all children.

- To bolster access and ensure full coverage of all children, introduce alternative and flexible pre-primary models, such as mobile pre-primary schools, non-formal kindergartens, community-based programmes and school readiness programmes.

- Conduct public campaigns promoting the benefits of early education and age-appropriate education.
- Provide transportation to pre-primary centers for children in geographically isolated areas.

Recommended Principle 3

Put in place policies that ensure that all children start primary school education at age 6.

- Design or revise policies and legal provisions to ensure that children enrol in primary school at the age of 6.
- Strengthen mechanisms to ensure the timely enrolment of children by strong coordination between local authorities, registry offices, pre-primary institutions and primary schools.
- Publicise widely enrolment periods and registration processes for the first grade of primary school. Disseminate information in various formats through different channels. Health centres, play groups, primary-schools, public institutions, radio and local TV programmes are some of the many possible ways to inform parents of the necessity to enrol their 6 year-old child in primary school.

Recommended Principle 4

Ensure a smooth transition to schooling, by building continuities in age appropriate curricula and learning environments between pre-primary education and the first two or three grades of primary school.

- Build the pre-primary stage into the overall national education strategic and curricular frameworks to ensure coherence with the primary cycle.
- Strengthen the collaboration between pre-primary institutions and primary schools: teacher exchange and classroom observation as well as primary school visits by pre-primary children and their families.

Recommended Principle 5

Promote the professionalization of early education teachers and staff through the development of qualification frameworks, pre- and in-service training opportunities and improved working conditions.

- Ensure that teachers and staff involved in early childhood education have the appropriate qualifications, opportunities for professional development, and guidance and mentoring that are in line with the specificities of early childhood learning and development.
- Strengthen the skills of early educators in the early identification of children's learning needs and in open and regular communication with parents and families.

Recommended Principle 6

Involve and empower parents to be partners in the development and education of young children.

- Encourage family and community involvement in early childhood services.
- Support parenting and family learning at home and in early education facilities.
- Develop programmes to encourage the participation of fathers in the learning and development of young children.

Recommended Principle 7

Establish standards and monitor the coverage, quality and outcomes of inclusive early childhood education systems.

- Develop early childhood education standards for all early childhood education and care services to promote evenness in quality across different forms of provision, to guide and support professional staff, and to facilitate communication between staff and families.

4. Every child supported by effective and efficient governance

Recommended Principle 1

Ensure that decentralization is supported by clear identification of responsibilities and adequate capacity, and that proper oversight mechanisms are established at all levels for a greater enforcement of national legislation and policies pertaining to equity and inclusion. The state should remain the primary duty bearer for the realization of the right to education for all children.

- Harmonise legislation and clarify roles and responsibilities of structures and actors at all levels of the system (ministries, decentralised authorities, municipalities, school boards); Develop clear oversight mechanisms.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms at national and decentralised levels, ensure financial efficiency and monitor results and changes.
- Retain state responsibilities in ensuring that funds distribution counteract inequality and reach the poorest regions so that minimum standards are met everywhere.
- Monitor public finance reforms and/or education spending to assess their impact on marginalized children.

Recommended Principle 2

Redirect the resources liberated from the demographic dividend to improve the quality and equity of education systems; and increase national education spending as percentage of GDP to a limit that allows sufficient investment in education quality and equity

- Ensure that savings made from financial efficiency and from rationalised networks and staff deployment are reinvested in education.
- Discourage the construction of new special schools for children with disabilities, which are not cost effective; the cost of accessibility in new buildings is less than 1% of the overall cost.

Recommended Principle 3

Allocate additional resources to students, schools and regions with the greatest needs and improve financial incentives

- Ensure that schools with higher percentages of vulnerable children and schools in the most disadvantaged areas receive additional funding to successfully implement inclusive education.
- Ensure that per capita funding formula favour vulnerable children; utilize a mix of flat grants with additional weighted formulas for poverty and resource-based formulas to fund services based on school needs to meet inclusion for all children.
- Reallocate funding from higher education, which is often regressive[1] and ensure that subsidies in pre-primary school and higher education are allocated on the basis of need and/or merit.
- Enhance school autonomy (budget formulation and decision-making), which can be positively correlated with higher performance results
- Raise funds from the private sector, particularly for TVET and higher education.

Recommended Principle 4

Increase capacity of administrators, managers, school directors parliamentarians, and elected members of municipality councils particularly at the lowest level of administration, through training, knowledge sharing and coordination mechanisms.

- Build leadership and management capacities of all personnel in the system, including school administrators; harness the potential of distance learning to reduce training costs and promote mentoring and coaching schemes for less experienced staff.
- Disseminate knowledge from best practices and advocate for key changes in education to inform the political decisions of elected bodies; support capacity development of Parliamentarians.

1 Meaning that students with higher poverty rates actually receive less funding than more well-off students.

Recommended Principle 5

Improve overall financial management, anti-corruption measures and accountability through better use of information, transparency and participation of parents, communities, practitioners and the civil society.

- Increase transparency across the system by developing and enforcing clear rules and regulations;
- Clarify and strengthen the role of supervision agencies, including the Inspectorate and Audit services;
- Improve computerisation and automation of information and management systems and more effective tracking of expenditure;
- Make financial information more accessible to all stakeholders and ensure it is better disseminated and used, including by parents and local communities.

Recommended Principle 6

Develop mechanism to ensure that young people, especially from marginalized groups, are included in decision-making processes at all levels.

- Promote the participation of young people and youth organizations in decision-making processes from the school to the state level; develop guidance on creating opportunities for children to be heard and on supporting meaningful participation in democratic processes.
- Create advisory groups of children and community members from marginalised groups to provide guidance to governments on difficult issues, such as segregation, transitions between stages of education and tackling dropout.

Recommended Principle 7

Improve teacher recruitment, deployment, retention, payment, motivation, status and working conditions.

- Improve social status of teachers from early childhood education to upper-secondary; improve teacher working conditions and reform teacher salary and compensation schemes, with a focus on schools in rural and marginalized areas.
- Develop mechanisms for recruiting and retaining good quality teacher candidates by making admission criteria in teacher education programmes more rigorous and developing adequate transition to work and retention strategies.
- Recruit, train and retain quality school managers and equip them with adequate knowledge and leadership skills to develop and manage inclusive schools, to manage learning, to run drop-out prevention programmes and to meaningfully engage with parents and the community.
- Increase job differentiation between new and experienced teachers to improve effectiveness; generalise and improve mentoring and induction programmes for new teachers; and deploy experienced teachers in early grades and disadvantaged schools.
- Improve the professionalization of teachers through the development of teacher standards.

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Find out more at:

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