



## Summary of the Slovenian National Adaptation Plan

### 1) Presentation of the National Adaptation Plan (purpose, topics addressed, structure)

The STAIRS project aims to build upon existing national (Hungary, Czechia, Croatia, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal) and wider European efforts to ensure social inclusion in education. It focuses on developing collaborative approaches amongst stakeholders at the school, local and national level in order to provide equal educational opportunities to all students.

In Slovenia, the project partners Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) and the Educational Research Institute (ERI) decided to focus on strengthening the social inclusion of two target groups in the educational system: 1) students with low socio-economic status (SES), and 2) students with special educational needs (SEN) in the vocational education.

In collaboration with national experts (project partners CPI and ERI cooperated with six experts working in different fields of education and facing different aspects of inclusion) we broadened and deepened our understanding of (national) challenges in ensuring social inclusion in the education of students with low SES and SEN, analysed good practice examples from other countries (Ireland, Portugal) and based on case studies of good practices created the present National Adaptation Plan (NAP), which is intended to use the identified good practices or individual, specific elements of them in the Slovenian national context. The NAP is intended to support various stakeholders in their efforts towards achieving (even) greater social inclusion of students with low SES and SEN.

The NAP is composed of four central chapters. The first chapter presents the Slovenian current state and focus in the STAIRS project related to ensuring social inclusion in education, as defined in the National Report on Social Inclusion, which was created in the first year of STAIRS (Vidmar et al., 2020). The second chapter is devoted to the presentation of the STAIRS study visits organized by the Ireland and Portugal partners. It describes their purpose and the process of collaboration with participating national experts. The third chapter consists of proposals on how to use good practices from Ireland and Portugal or their specific elements in the Slovenian national context. The fourth chapter describes preliminary recommendations for the use of the good practices in a wider European area and context. The fifth chapter is the appendix which is composed of materials used in the STAIRS project and chapter six includes the cited literature.

The purpose of the present document is to present the NAP based on proposals that aim to strengthen national efforts for ensuring social inclusion in education. The goal of the NAP is to encourage discussions amongst professionals connected to inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of students.

### 2) Proposals for ensuring (more) social inclusion in education in Slovenia

The NAP is represented by proposals, that are based on theoretical dispositions, current state of social inclusion in education in Slovenia, and the Ireland and Portugal good practices, developed within four identified priority areas:



### **1. Inclusive attitude and sensitivity to social inclusion**

- Proposal nr. 1 – Develop a legislative framework proposal that will enable effective support for students with low SES in practice.
- Proposal nr. 2 - Introduce a national expert discussion on the possibility of systemic identification of schools with a high proportion of students with low SES.
- Proposal nr. 3 - Introduce a national expert discussion on the possibility of providing systemic support to schools with a high proportion of students with low SES.
- Proposal nr. 4 - Examining the possibility of disburdening school counsellors in order to ensure their focus on topics of social inclusion.

### **2. Identification and supporting students with low SES**

- Proposal nr. 1 - Examine possibilities of transferring good practices of working with a specific student from primary school to secondary school.
- Proposal nr. 2 - Empowering low SES students by encouraging and developing their socio-emotional competencies.
- Proposal nr. 3 - Strengthen cooperation with parents in order to ensure the social inclusion of students.
- Proposal nr. 4 - Promoting the three-level support model of working with students with low SES in school practice.
- Proposal nr. 5 - Examining possibilities of setting up centres based on the examples from Youthreach for youth who left school and students at risk of early school leaving.

### **3. Empowering teachers to work with students with low SES and SEN**

- Proposal nr. 1 - Reduced teaching obligation for a teacher mentoring a beginner teacher.
- Proposal nr. 2 - Possibility to include teachers in intervision or supervision groups.
- Proposal nr. 3 - Examine the possibility of developing national programs to strengthen teachers' competencies in teaching reading and mathematics literacy.
- Proposal nr. 4 - Examine the extent of learning content on the topic of social inclusion in initial training study programs and adding additional content.

### **4. Cooperation, networking of various stakeholders in supporting students with low SES and SEN**

- Proposal nr. 1 - Examining possibilities of establishing networks between schools, universities, research centres with the aim of responding to challenges of social inclusion.
- Proposal nr. 2 - Mobile teacher/project worker working with vulnerable students and parents in their homes as a means of connecting the home and school environment.
- Proposal nr. 3 - Research possibilities of establishing multi-professional teams in schools to deal with issues of social inclusion.
- Proposal nr. 4 - Creating a national repository for interinstitutional exchange of good practices and other relevant content in the field of social inclusion.



### **3) Further steps in the implementation of the National Adaptation Plan in the Slovenian educational system**

The sustainability of the presented initiatives requires, above all, the commitment of a wide range of stakeholders involved.

The Educational Research Institute will carry out its mission by continuing theoretical and empirical, basic and applied, national and international research and presenting their results in public debates and scientific publications, especially in cooperation with other national and international experts, public policy makers and practitioners.

The Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training will further strive to empower teachers and other professionals of vocational and technical schools (principals, school counsellors) to develop inclusive education, to identify and support students from vulnerable groups. It will continue to support schools in planning and implementing activities related to the further development of inclusion. It will disseminate successful models and good practices for working with students with various deficits and promote the development of a culture of cooperation both within school and between schools.

Based on existing research, the current situation in Slovenia and the good practices of Ireland and Portugal, we find that practitioners (schools, principals, school counsellors, teachers) require appropriate and stable systemic conditions for the full realization of their mission. Their commitment, experience and knowledge of special challenges in the practices of Slovenian schools, together with the good practices of Ireland and Portugal, can represent important insights for further systemic regulations of the field in Slovenia. Based on the results of the STAIRS project, this should provide additional support to schools where the challenges of social inclusion are most acute, cross-sectoral cooperation, which often cannot be achieved in Slovenia due to personal data protection, improvement of working conditions of school counsellors, empowering teachers to work with identified vulnerable groups of students and special direct forms of support.

The key in all of this is to have an inclusive attitude and sensitivity towards social inclusion by all involved stakeholders, so that despite good intentions, social inclusion measures do not become their opposite - measures of marginalization and stigmatization.

We are facing many challenges that we will only be able to overcome on the basis of the values we strive for - mutual recognition, open communication, respect and inclusion. We want the national adaptation plan of the STAIRS project to be a reflection and one of the steps towards achieving these goals.

### **4) Key messages for creating the European Adaptation Guidelines**



The key messages for ensuring greater social inclusion in education that could be included in the formulation of the European Adaptation Guidelines, based on the National Adaptation Plan, are the following:

1. Strengthen sensitivity to social inclusion in education at the European level and develop guidelines for the education of diverse risk groups.
2. Highlight which knowledge, skills, and competencies are helpful to students from high-risk groups to overcome social exclusion.
3. Develop a set of core competencies that teachers and other educational professionals need to possess when working with at-risk groups.
4. Continue efforts of networking and sharing of good practices of member states on a systemic level and practical level.

The key messages highlighted are just some of the starting points that, together with the messages of other countries' national adaptation plans, will contribute to the development of the European Adaptation Guidelines of the STAIRS project.