



Information gathering template prepared for the Global Education Monitoring Report 2021 - Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia - Inclusion and education: All means all.

Belarus

This profile has been commissioned by NEPC as an input for the 2021 regional report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. This version is a working draft and will be subject to further copy-editing. Its content has not been edited nor verified by the GEM Report team. The views and opinions expressed in this paper, including anecdotal evidence from interviews, are those of the interviewees or researchers of this profile and should not be attributed to the Global Education Monitoring Report, to UNESCO or to NEPC. The information in this document was current in June 2020. The profile can be cited with the following reference: “Profile commissioned by NEPC for the Global Education Monitoring Report 2021 - Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia - Inclusion and education: All means all”. For further information, please contact gemreport@unesco.org.

PROFILE PREPARED BY HANNA SIAROVA

2021

Introduction	2
Survey reply and respondents	4
Country system overview	6
Section 1: Laws and Policies	18
Section 2: Governance and Finance	25
Section 3: Data	39
Section 4: Curricula, learning materials and assessment	45
Section 5: Teachers and support personnel	57
Section 6: Schools	68
Section 7: Communities, parents and students	78

Introduction

The template for the Profiles was a survey designed to collect information from countries in order to collect structured information to be used as the basis for the GEM Regional Report analysis work.

The survey respondents were specifically requested to not focus exclusively on children with disabilities, but include information on all of the groups considered to be vulnerable to exclusion or at risk of being marginalised, stereotyped or subject to discrimination, including for reasons such as gender, location, poverty, ethnicity, language, beliefs and religion, migration or displacement status, sexual orientation or gender identity expression.

The overall goal for the Profile was that the information provided in relation to each country identifies:

- 1.challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for the implementation of inclusion in education policies;
- 2.the ways in which countries monitor inclusion and exclusion in education (at individual and system levels);
- 3.challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for supporting inclusion in education created by sectors other than education and arrangements needed to co-ordinate work among government sectors, tiers of government and with other stakeholders to overcome overlapping dimensions of exclusion;
- 4.key policy solutions that are being implemented and key drivers of policy change.

The Profile begins with background information on the people completing the template.

The next section provides a short descriptive overview of the country's system of inclusive education.

This is followed by main sections presenting quantitative and qualitative data linked to each of the seven themes for the report:

- 1.laws and policies;
- 2.governance and finance;
- 3.data;
- 4.curricula, learning materials and assessment;
- 5.teachers and support personnel;
- 6.schools;
- 7.communities, parents and students.

Each section begins with a key guiding question (marked in italic text) that frames the overall information provided. This is followed by the specific questions on the main issues for the topic that should be answered.

Sections 1 and 2 focus on information relating to legislation and policies.



Section 3 focuses upon available data and the aims and procedures for data collection.

Sections 4 to 7 focus on information relating to policies and policy implementation in practice.

The information provided focuses on compulsory education (i.e. potentially -pre-primary, primary and lower secondary, and possibly upper secondary education). Only specific issues related to inclusion in early childhood education and post-compulsory education were considered when necessary.



Survey reply and respondents

Has the information in this profile been discussed with and validated by a government representative?

No. The government of the Republic of Belarus does not generally welcome critical reviews of its activities and programmes, other than what is provided in the official state sources.

Which other people have been key informants? What is their professional role?

Director of general education school (Interview 1)

Director of the Regional Centre of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation (Interview 2)

Methodist teacher at the centre of additional education (Центр творчества молодежи), whose workers are organizing social adaptation activities, as well as homeschooling for children with disabilities (Interview 3)

Agnia Asanovich, Independent consultant, former communications at UNFPA Belarus, former project officer at sport-rehabilitation centre 'Egalite' (*peer-reviewer of this template*)

Useful materials were shared by the Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities (www.disright.org) and Levania centre focusing on difficulties in children's development (www.levania.by).

What was the main challenge during the preparation of the profile?

- Fragmentation of available information. Some research and monitoring is done by NGOs and DPOs on different aspects of situation of vulnerable groups; however education is often just a side topic in such reviews.
- Lack of transparency in official data available. For instance, some statistics that is reported in state party reports to the UN committees is often not available on official statistical portals, and according to NGOs, the government is not collaborating in sharing information.
- Lack of official monitoring and evaluation reports on the implementation of the Concept of inclusive education in the country (even though it is foreseen by the Concept itself).
- There is almost no scientific research on the topic. Only a few normative reviews of official directions of development of inclusive education in the country have been prepared by university professors.

Please list the 5 most informative sources on inclusion in education (academic papers, policy reviews, evaluation studies etc.) for the country published since 2015 and provide links to the originals:

1. Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1I-SFBy7I [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)]

2. UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at:

https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

3. Lisovskaya, T and Zhuk, T. (2019), Tolerance and inclusive competence as the main components of an inclusive culture, SHS Web of Conferences 70, 10006 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20197010006>
4. Zhurakovsky et al. (2017), Situation analysis of children and young people with disability in Belarus. Analytical report, Minsk 2017. Available at: <https://case-belarus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/oopdii1.pdf> [Обзор о положении детей-инвалидов и молодых инвалидов в Беларуси]
5. Alternative report of the coalition of Belarusian NGOs on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Belarus, 2019. Available at:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bvQ5T1U1tcZHDi5jQoX7R714YjH1tN_o/view
6. Levania Centre (2016), Monitoring report on inclusive education. Available at: <http://levania.by/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8B%D0%B8%CC%86-%D0%BE%D1%82%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%82-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B8%CC%86-2016.pdf>
7. State party report submitted by Belarus to the Committee on the Rights of the Child under article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2018. Available at:
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fBLR%2f5-6&Lang=en
8. State party report submitted by Belarus under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018. Available at:
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fBLR%2f1&Lang=en
9. Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published.
10. Republican resource centre on inclusive education <https://iio.bspu.by/respublikanskii-resursnyi-centr-inklyuzivnogo-obrazovaniya> (mainly collects pedagogical materials on working with children with special psychophysical development).
11. Centre for regulation of special education under the Ministry of Education (stopped functioning in 2017):
<http://asabliva.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=5801>

If internal, non-public or working documents were used, please add a note here.

Country system overview

Provide a brief (maximum 1 page) narrative of the country's compulsory educational system. Specifically, provide information about:

a. the different types of schools, institutions and educational provision within the system and the age range / ISCED levels of learners they cater for

The key documents defining the functioning of the education system in the country are:

<u>The Education Code (2011)</u>	provides for legal regulation of all levels of education and for continuing education. It not only regulates the learning process but also determines the distribution system and provides for the social protection of students, including the protection of the rights of people with a disability. The code is currently undergoing revision. The key planned amendments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Increasing the length of the compulsory education (from 9 grades to 11 grades);- Introducing the concept of inclusive education (in line with the 2015 Concept on the development of inclusive education). Currently the Code foresees two different streams: general education and special education.
<u>The State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016–2020</u>	This is the guiding strategy document for the education sector developed for each 5-year period. It covers all education levels, including general, VET, and higher education and special education. The programme envisages a collection of measures aimed at increasing the quality and accessibility of education according to the needs of the innovative economy, including the formation of a 'cloud' informational and educational environment containing quality resources and services that are based on modern information technologies.

According to the 2011 Education Code (last amended 23.07.2019)¹, the Belarus education system consists of formal, continuing (*дополнительное*) and special education provision. Formal education is divided into pre-school, general secondary (*общее среднее образование*) (it includes basic (stage I (grades 1-4) and stage II (grades 5 – 9) and secondary (stage III (grades 10 – 11 (or grades 10 – 12 in evening schools), vocational, specialised secondary, higher, and postgraduate education. Until today basic secondary education (grades 1-9) is compulsory, however, the new edition of Education Code (which is currently under revision) will make all three stages of general secondary education compulsory (i.e. grades 1-11)². Basic education starts at the age of 6.

¹ Education Code of the Republic of Belarus (2011, amended in 2019), Available at: <http://www.pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=hk1100243>

² News article, September 2, 2019, <https://udf.by/news/society/198361-minobr-sdelaet-objazatelnyim-vseobschee-srednee-obrazovanie-v-11-klassov.html>

After completing general secondary education, about 55% of graduates continue their studies in higher education, about 25% go to specialised (professional) secondary schools, and about 17% proceed to technical vocational schools. There is possibility to enrol into vocational or specialised secondary school after completing basic education (9 grades). This two-level (pre-university) VET system explains the high participation rates in VET³. Over the past five years, student enrolment numbers have been falling in both vocational and secondary specialised education, as well as in higher education. This can be explained by the decreasing number of young people in the 15–19 and 20–24 age groups. At the same time, enrolment numbers have been increasing in pre-school and general secondary education⁴. The gross enrolment rates in general secondary education are close to 100%⁵.

In 2018/2019 academic year, there were 3035 general secondary education providers in Belarus, including 1563 schools (*средняя школа*), 206 gymnasiums (including gymnasiums-boarding schools), 27 lyceums (including specialised ones), 876 education-pedagogical (*учебно-педагогический комплекс*) centres and 190 special education providers⁶. Most of them were state-owned. There were only 16 private schools in Belarus (2018/2019 academic year).

Special education is targeted at students with special psycho-physical needs. It aims to create special conditions for the development and correction of students' physical and/or mental disorders through the provision of specific pedagogical, medical, and social assistance (according to the 2011 Education Code).

According to the 2011 Education Code, special education includes different institutions from centres for correctional and developmental education and rehabilitation; special pre-school institutions; special general education schools, auxiliary schools and boarding schools. Persons with special psycho-physical development can be admitted to pre-school, general basic, and general secondary education (but the share of such learners should not exceed 20% of all learners) with the consent issued by the governmental Correction and Development Education and Rehabilitation Centre and its local executive and administrative body, while admission requirements to vocational, specialised secondary, higher and post-graduate education is regulated by the Ministry of Health⁷. Often education to children with disabilities is provided by the centres of additional education (non-formal education regulated by the 2011 Education Code). Professionals from such centres also provide possibility of home-schooling for children with disabilities.

³ ETF (2018), Education, training and employment developments, Belarus. Available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Belarus%202018.pdf>

⁴ ETF, Mapping youth transitions to work in Eastern Partnership countries, Belarus country Report, 2018. Available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2018-12/Youth%20transition%20Belarus.pdf>

⁵ <http://uis.unesco.org/country/BY>

⁶ Education in Belarus. Statistical Book 2019. Available at: https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_compilation/index_13888/

⁷ Law of the Republic of Belarus on education of persons with peculiar psychophysical development, 2004. Available at: http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/belarus_law_special_education.pdf

The 2015 Concept of the Development of Inclusive Education⁸ aims to foster the integration of students with special needs in mainstream education. With this purpose, the proportion of learners with special needs integrated in regular settings has been increasing. In general secondary education, more than 5000 special classes or integrated classes have been established. At the preschool level, there are 2,887 special or integrated education and learning groups. In the 2018-2019 academic year, there were 238 special education institutions: 141 centres for special education and rehabilitation, 47 special pre-primary institutions, and 50 special boarding schools. The number of special boarding schools has decreased by almost 40% in the last 10 years⁹.

b.the different authorities responsible for different types of provision etc.

Belarus' education system is rather centralized. The President, the Government and the Ministry of Education in corpore with numerous republican/national departments are in charge of the development and provision of education in the country. The President and the Government (the Cabinet of Ministers) forms education policy at the national level. It adopts laws and decrees on policy changes. The Ministry of Education implements education policy and ensures the quality education provision. It also adopts and implements legal acts other than laws and declarations (e.g., educational standards (set in consultation with Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection), educational programmes for different levels (curriculum), pedagogical qualifications, preparation and publishing of education materials, etc.). In agreement with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education sets the rules for early identification of children with special needs. The work of the Ministry of Education is supported by National Academy of Science and republican departments of education, reporting directly to the President, as well as national consultation committees.

The municipalities set and implement the local education plans that are in accordance with the national documents. The municipalities are responsible for ensuring general secondary education, vocational and specialised secondary education, organizing non-formal education, and they also have a reporting role. The school organizes the education process (by school director and teachers' committee). The MoE regional (областные) resource centres also provide methodological support to schools. Formal education is typically provided by public entities. However, private sector education providers are recognised and regulated by national legal acts .

In the field of special education and inclusive education, the Ministry holds the responsibility of management and coordination of the activities of the republican governmental authorities and local executive and administration bodies. The latter decide the admission of students with disabilities to special education, in agreement with the

⁸ The Concept of the development of inclusive education for people with peculiar psychophysical development in Belarus, 2015. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8Z6B4zGkP6KZ0cwR2JkY1RJM3M/view?usp=sharing> [Концепция развития инклюзивного образования для лиц с особенностями психофизического развития в Республике Беларусь]

⁹ Initial report submitted by the Republic of Belarus to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD/C/BLR/1, 2018. Available at: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsuIfEtZip61ESqZNm2r9zXnIM41O3%2bTSF6K%2bNqC30fD6uE0czSfU%2fxwT7SwUOVcFf6MtGm7gxrAVVTyC4EaNT%2b36S8GUOH0dOKgiDA2bbBGNE>

governmental Correction and Development Education and Rehabilitation Centre, and to education in health institutions in their district.

c.any major external support programmes provided in the past 5 years e.g. bilateral - GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation) and USAID; or multi-lateral e.g. UNICEF, European Union, ADB (Asian Development Bank).

European Union

During the period 2007-2019, Belarus received over 680M Euro as part of the EU development aid, one third of it being from the European Commission, while the biggest country donors are Germany, Poland and Sweden¹⁰. Most of the support received was allocated to the development of higher education (linked with Belarus joining Bologna process in 2015), media and freedom of speech, democratic participation and civil society, human rights, environmental policy.

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is currently the key EU financial instrument for bilateral cooperation with Belarus. The three priority sectors under the Multi-annual indicative programme (2014-2017) of the EU's bilateral cooperation with Belarus were social inclusion, environment and local/regional economic development.

The strategic framework for EU bilateral cooperation with Belarus for the period 2018-2020 was set out in the Single Support Framework and focused on economic development and market opportunities, strengthening institutions and good governance, connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change, mobility, and people-to-people contacts.

Examples of education and inclusion related projects are:

-Employment, Vocational Education and Training in Belarus (outfitting of resource hubs) (4 270 000 Euro, Period: 2018-2022)

-EU4Youth: "School Garden" for agricultural entrepreneurship aimed at supporting rural areas and facilitating the development of vocational agrarian education in rural areas (€ 1 579 000 Time: 2018 – 2022)

-Employment and Vocational Education and Training in Belarus (€ 5 400 000 Time: 2017 - 2021)

-"Agenda-50" The rights of person with disabilities: agenda for Belarus (€ 408 159 Time: 2016 - 2019)

-ObRaz – Education and Development in Inclusive Arts (800000 Swedish kroon, 2020)

-The European Union Delegation in Belarus commissioned HealthProm and the Belarus Children's Hospice to run a project aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of children with complex disabilities (CWD) and life-limiting conditions (CWLLC) in Belarus in accordance with EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child guided by the general principles of the UNCRC and UNCRPD. Project evaluation is available here.

The list of all projects funded by the European Union in Belarus can be found here: <https://euprojects.by/>

USAID

¹⁰ See e.g. https://euaidexplorer.ec.europa.eu/content/explore/recipients_en

The key directions of USAID in Belarus¹¹ are:

- Private Sector Development and Entrepreneurship (including Start-Ups and Business education);
- Civil Society Development (the key USAID programme under this strand is Capacity Building for Civil Society Organizations (CBCSO))
- Improving the Lives of Vulnerable Groups (key programmes are Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities and Countering Trafficking in Persons).

UN Agencies

UN (mainly UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA) have been active in assisting Belarussian government and civil society in achieving SDGs.

UNFPA's work in 2015-2020 programming period focused on advancing gender equality and sexual and reproductive health in the country, as well as the rights of people with disability, mainly through advocacy, knowledge management and technical support to policy development and law formulation (programme budget was 3.7 million USD).

UNICEF work in Belarus focused on enabling caring family and safe environment for every child; development and engagement of adolescents and young people, promotion of early childhood intervention and inclusion of children with disabilities, improvements of monitoring system and the quality of statistical data on children, knowledge generation and partnership¹².

For the 2016-2020 programming period (with the budget 4,465,000 USD) UNICEF supported the implementation of National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development until 2030, the 2012-2016 National Plan of Action on the Improvement of the Situation of Children and Protection of their Rights, the 2016-2020 National Action Plan on Ensuring Gender Equality, the 2016-2020 State Programme on HIV Prevention, and the 2014-2018 Inter-sectoral Plan on Child Injuries Prevention. For instance, with the support of UNICEF, the peer-to-peer education system regarding the development of healthy lifestyle skills among adolescents has been institutionalized and integrated into the general secondary education system. UNICEF initiated development of a network of adolescent and youth friendly centres, as well as provided the state with its expert and technical assistance in the process. Now there are 55 centres of this kind functioning all over the country.

World Bank

According to the Country Partnership Framework for Fiscal Years 2018–2022 the World Bank Group's assistance to Belarus focuses on (i) creating opportunities to expand the private sector and promote more efficient public investment; (ii) maintaining the country's human capital edge; and (iii) improving the contribution of infrastructure to climate change management, economic growth, and human development. Since 2018 WB is implementing Education Modernization Project aimed at investing in school infrastructure and equipment (budget US\$ 102.30 million). With the additional financing, the project will be scaled-up to help a total of 65,000 schoolchildren from small towns and

¹¹ More information can be found here: <https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work/europe-and-eurasia/belarus/our-work>

¹² See more at: <https://www.unicef.by/en/unicef/nasha-rabota/>

villages across Belarus to study in rehabilitated schools with new laboratory equipment. Moreover, innovative centres on science education will be set up in selected schools to promote collaborative learning and science education¹³.

Furthermore, with the WB support Belarus participated in PISA 2018 for the first time. The Education Modernization Project will support Belarus to take part in PISA 2021 and 2024 and provide for more comprehensive analysis of the testing results. It also aims to strengthen the education management information system (EMIS).

World Bank Institutional Development Fund (IDF) grant was used by the government to pilot per-student financing (PSF) for schools in 2015. Based on successful piloting, the Government has rolled out PSF nationwide in all general secondary schools since 2019, currently expanding PSF to preschool institutions¹⁴.

Are there specific features of the compulsory education system that impact on inclusion that should be kept in mind when reading the country response?

Area	Yes/No	Description of the feature
Early tracking of learners into a particular educational pathway	No	2011 Education code specifies that in general secondary education (grades 1 – 11) transition between grades happens automatically. Many schools apply streaming practice – re-distribution between classes according to certain specialization, e.g., math class, science class, humanities class (starting from Stage II (5 th grade). Usually children can transfer between classes according to their wishes and interests, but in some cases their performance in certain subjects (relevant for specialization) is considered when making the final decision on parallel classes composition. It often happens that learners complete their educational career (all 11 grades) within one school. However, those willing to transfer to a specialized school (e.g., sport or art) or a gymnasium (with more in-depths focus on specific subjects) will need to go through admission tests defined by the schools in accordance with the Education Code.
‘Double-shift’ patterns to the school day (i.e. learners attend for either a morning or afternoon session)	Yes	2011 Education Code specifies that education process can be organized by shifts. It depends on the capacity of schools and number of learners the school caters for. In 2018/2019 academic year, 53% of schools in the cities were operating in double-shifts, while only 5.5% of rural schools had double-shifts ¹⁵ .

¹³ Information about WB Education Modernisation Project in Belarus at: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P166719?lang=en>

¹⁴ Press release ‘Belarus to Improve Quality of School Education, with World Bank Support’, APRIL 18, 2019. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/18/belarus-to-improve-quality-of-school-education-with-world-bank-support>

¹⁵ Education in Belarus. Statistical Book 2019. Available at: https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_compilation/index_13888/

Grade retention	No	<p>2011 Education Code specifies that transition to the next grade happens automatically. Those learners who received unsatisfactory test results at the end of the year, have the possibility to re-take the test.</p> <p>Theoretically there is a possibility for grade repetition foreseen in the Code if the pupils have missed more than 40 days of schooling (he or she then considered not having passed the necessary minimum of education programme). However, schools are actively preventing absenteeism and if a child is not able to attend schools (e.g., due to injury), they have the possibility to follow individual learning plan via home-schooling.</p>
Multiple languages of instruction	Yes	<p>According to 2011 Education Code, one of the goals of education policy is to ensure the equality of Russian and Belarussian language. The Code further specifies that both languages are main languages of instruction and that the learner has the right to choose whether to study in Russian or Belarussian. The government is responsible for ensuring that schools, classes or groups (including learning materials) with instruction in Russian and Belarussian are available. However, regardless of the language of instruction, it is mandatory for all learners to study both Belarussian and Russian plus one foreign language (this requirement can be lifted for learners with special education needs and foreign citizens who are temporary based in Belarus), as specified in the Code.</p> <p>Regardless of the guarantee of equality of language by the law, this does not happen in practice. The recent statistics shows that the share of children studying in Belarussian between 2005/06 and 2018/19 academic years decreased from 23.3% to 11.1%, while in Russian - increased from 76.7% up to 88.8%. 90.6% of students studying in the Belarussian language received education in rural schools; 91.8% of students studying in Russian lived in cities. In addition, in the 2012/13 academic year, 670 children studied in Polish and 57 in Lithuanian; by the 2018/19 school year, the number of children studying in languages other than state ones has grown to 1.1 thousand students¹⁶.</p>

¹⁶ Education in Belarus. Statistical Book 2019. Available at: https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_compilation/index_13888/

Policies on access to compulsory education in local schools	No	2011 Education Code states that access to compulsory education is granted upon the demonstration of ID (birth certificate or passport) and health certificate. In practice this can result in rejection in admission to some groups of learners (children with disabilities or undocumented migrants). Some schools (gymnasiums and specialised sport/art schools) apply additional admission criteria – entry tests on specific subjects. Learners are then enrolled based on the test results on a competitive basis. In case of boarding school-gymnasiums, some groups of learners (orphans, children from large families, children from rural areas) are guaranteed admission if their entry grade is not lower than 6 regardless of competition.
(others ...)		

In the country's system which groups are considered to be vulnerable to exclusion from education? Who has identified these groups as being vulnerable to exclusion?

The 1993 Child Rights Act identifies the following groups, which are vulnerable and need special protection:

- Orphans and children left without parental care, children living in institutions (Art 29);
- Children with disabilities and special psychophysical development (Art 31);
- Refugee children (Art 34).

The Act also guarantees the protection of children in emergency situations (such as war, natural disasters and in case of placement into juvenile correctional institutions). However, the Act does not explicitly specify that these groups are vulnerable to exclusion from education.

The 2011 Education Code acknowledges that the following groups of children need additional support to make sure that they are included in education:

- Children with worsening health problems;
- Children with disabilities and special psychophysical development (the Code guarantees the right to special education for such children);
- Children in socially vulnerable situation and those in need of special development conditions (this is mostly referred to children in troubled families¹⁷, street children and those at risk of being juvenile offenders). However, the Code

¹⁷ The situation of this children is regulated by the President Decree No 18 'About additional measures for state protection of children in dysfunctional families', 2004. Available at: <https://28vitebsk.schools.by/pages/dekret-no-18-o-dopolnitelnyh-merah-po-gosudarstvennoj-zaschite-detej-v-neblagopoluchnyh-semjah> However, NGOs report that this Decree does not specify clearly the criteria according to which children can be identified as being in socially vulnerable position, which leads to frequent cases

does not specify on how the right to education can be guaranteed to young offenders who are in prisons. NGO reports demonstrate that their access to education is very limited¹⁸.

The National Action Plan to Improve the Situation of Children and Safeguard Their Rights 2017–2021 (the National Children's Rights Plan) in addition highlights special measures for **children and young people with behavioural problems** (substance abusers and bullies).

Besides these groups of children, NGOs and UN Agencies highlight the need for protection of the rights of other groups of children, whose rights to education are not always guaranteed (even though all of them are entitled to education by 2011 Education Code).

According to UNICEF (2019), the highest level of **low-income population** was within the 0-17 years of age group, resulting in 11.3% of the total number for this population group, thus demonstrating the need to revise the system of social support for families with children. The risk of poverty remains higher for children with two or more siblings, children with disabilities and children in single-parent households. Poverty is often associated with reduced levels of care and more difficulties in education process, with the risk of drop-outs. **Children in rural areas** are more disadvantaged in terms of income levels and access to good quality education (especially pre-school)¹⁹. Children, who are **victims of domestic violence** are also one of the vulnerable groups and can be falling out from education process (if mental health support and shelter is not immediately provided)²⁰. NGOs report that Belarus has very limited offer of shelters for women and children, who are victims of domestic violence and necessary psychological and material support is not available²¹.

Unaccompanied children and children separated from their parents, as well as migrant children with families, face serious violations of their rights, including immigration detention, separation from families and arbitrary expulsions. The return of children among the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is governed by the outdated Agreement on the cooperation of Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the return of minors to their states of permanent residence in 2002 (Chisinau Agreement). In accordance with the Agreement, migrant children found in the territory of one state are sent to detention centres and returned to their

of children being taken out from their families and places in institutions or for adoption. See e.g.: https://nash-dom.info/lib/browse/information_rapporteur#_ftn6

¹⁸ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Belarus, 2018. Available at: <https://nash-dom.info/lib/browse/alternativnaya-informatsiya>

¹⁹ Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for Children and Adolescents: Baseline Report / Minsk, UNICEF Office in Belarus, 2019, 42 p. Available at: https://www.unicef.by/uploads/models/2020/03/achieving_the_sustainable_development_goals_for_children_and_adolescents.pdf

²⁰ UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

²¹ Alternative report on the implementation of the gender equality and women's rights in Belarus. 2019. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs. Available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UYcuXtJyhtnym84vrfyFyz8_fyCsc-6y/edit

country of origin in similar detention centres. In Belarus, these norms lead to persistent violations of the rights of the child, including prolonged detention of immigrants, lack of education and family environment²².

Furthermore, NGOs report frequent cases of discrimination against **Roma population** in Belarus, who are often refused employment and are more at risk of poverty, which also puts Roma children at risk. Poverty is the main reason of Roma parents to be deprived from parental rights and their children being placed in institutions²³. About 11% of Roma children of school age do not attend school due to lack of parental decision and control, poor performance, lack of funds for the purchase of school clothes and supplies²⁴. Roma children are often refused access to education or discriminated in schools (as victims of hate crimes).

Hate crimes against **LGBTQ community** are also often reported by NGOs²⁵. Belarus society is quite conservative and children from LGBTQ community are often subject to discrimination from peers and teachers themselves, which can be the reasons for absenteeism and drop-out²⁶.

Children with HIV are often refused enrolment in non-formal education sport activities, as well as participation in summer schools and other non-formal education activities²⁷ and are often stigmatised in the society.

Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) narrative overview of the historical development of inclusion of vulnerable groups in education in the country.

The 1944 Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, as amended in 2004, enshrines the right to accessible and free general, secondary and vocational-technical education for all. Accessibility to secondary special and higher education is guaranteed, according to the individual's capabilities (art.49). Equality of all children "independently of origin, racial, national and civil identity, social and material status, sex, language, education, religion, place of residence, state of health and other factors connected with the child and its parents" is reiterated in the 1993 Rights of the Child Act, as amended in 2008 (art. 6). The latter also provides the right to free general secondary, professional technical education, and free special secondary and higher education on a competitive basis for every child (art.23). Access to free education regardless of nationality is also guaranteed by the 2011 Education Code (Art 3). The same law also stipulates that education should be of high quality and accessible to all.

In 2017, the National Action Plan to Improve the Situation of Children and Safeguard Their Rights 2017–2021 (the National Children's Rights Plan) was adopted (Decision No. 710/2017) to lay the legal foundations for the implementation of Convention on the Rights of the Child in Belarus, with support from UNICEF. Among its objectives, the Plan aims to foster the right of children to early childhood development, to quality education and to receive

²² Anti-Discrimination Centre (2018), Migrant Children in CIS Countries: Lack of Adequate Legal Norms Regulating Cooperation Between the Countries Involved. Available at: <https://adcmemorial.org/en/publications/migrant-children-in-cis-countries-lack-of-adequate-legal-norms-regulating-cooperation-between-the-countries-involved/>

²³ Anti-Discrimination Centre (2017), Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the elimination of all the forms of discrimination in Belarus.

²⁴ Monitoring of Roma integration, 2016. Available at: http://romaintegration.by/?page_id=7

²⁵ Human Constanta (2019), Hate Crimes in Belarus. Policy Brief.

²⁶ See e.g. press releases of Makeout, NGO supporting the rights of LGBTQ community in Belarus. Available here: <https://makeout.by/>

²⁷ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Belarus, 2019. Prepared by the Coalition of NGOs. Available at: https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/by_alternative_report_crc.pdf

education in the family and community environment, under the supervision and coordination of the Ministry of Education.

Disability

Until recently, formal national policy in the area of disability has been limited. Whilst the Government has, in recent years, implemented a number of national initiatives aimed at providing services and support to children and adults with disabilities, such as the National Programme to create a “barrier-free environment for people with physical disabilities, 2011-2015, the absence of a cohesive national strategy on disability resulted in many of these programmes remaining fragmented. In November 2016, Belarus ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). A new social protection strategy was also adopted by the Government in 2016, which for the first time outlines a formal commitment to the social integration of people with disabilities. Despite these advances, societal and cultural awareness of disability remains a challenge in Belarus. People with disabilities, including children, remain highly marginalized due to persistent social stigma and segregationist practices²⁸. It is also important to mention that for a long time and even still today the medical discourse dominated over human rights discourse when developing policies and regulations on the situation of people with disabilities in Belarus.

With the aim to domesticate the CRPD, ratified it in 2016, the National Plan of Action to Implement the CRPD 2017–2025 was approved in June 2017. To realize the rights of persons with disabilities to inclusive education, the National Plan requires the adjustment of the curriculum to the learners’ characteristics by developing individual education plans. It further intends to equip education institutions with the necessary devices and to alternative learning modalities, such as distance learning.

Concerning education, the 1993 Rights of the Child Act, as amended in 2008, mandates the state to guarantee children with disabilities and children with physical or psychological development impairments free “pedagogical, medical, social and psychological assistance”. The latter are provided with special education conditions, along with remedial assistance, while persons with disabilities are entitled to choose the most appropriate form of education (art.31), in practice this right is still not entirely realised (as discussed in the following chapters). While the 2004 Law on education of persons with peculiar psychophysical development (discontinued) regulated the provision of special education in the country, addressing physical and mental development, the 2011 Education Code enshrines the right to education, including vocational training, and free correctional pedagogic assistance under appropriate conditions. According to the Code, persons with disabilities are entitled to free psychological, medical and pedagogical support, to benefit from adequate transportation services to school, to receive free textbook and learning materials and free accommodation and food (art.31).

The 2015 Concept of the Development of Inclusive Education for Individuals’ Special Developmental Needs, despite the broad definition of inclusive education, mainly targets children with special psycho-physical development and their integration into regular education under certain circumstances. Likewise, the State programme on Education

²⁸ Foster Mustarde, L. and Hutton, T. (2017), Background Analysis: Contexts of child disability in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Available at: <https://eap-csf.eu/contexts-of-child-disability-in-belarus-moldova-and-ukraine/>

and Youth Policy 2016–2020 aims to ensure access to education, including supplementary education, to all children and young people. It promotes inclusive education for learners with special education needs by increasing the number of education institutions offering an adequate environment and by expanding early childhood interventions.

Gender

The 1944 Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, as amended in 2004, contains a gender equality provision, recognizing women's equal rights to benefit from education and vocational training opportunities (art.32).

The government adopted the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2017-2020 to accomplish the sustainable development goals and pursue gender equality and empowerment. The National Plan acknowledges the importance of integrating gender in education. Beyond conducting gender awareness campaigns, the Plan also intends to examine teaching and learning materials and to carry out capacity building activities for professionals working in education institutions.

Ethnic and linguistic groups

The 1944 Constitution of the Republic of Belarus enshrines the right to use the native language and to choose the language of communication. It further mandates the state to ensure freedom to choose the medium of education and teaching (art.50).

Belarusian and Russian have equal status as education languages, as recognized by the 2011 Education Code. The 1992 Law on National Minorities, as amended in 2007, lays down the right to choose a language for communication and right to decide the language for upbringing and education, in line with the constitutional provision. The state in turn assists with creating the conditions for the development of education and cultures of the national minorities.

Gifted and talented children

The 2009 Law on Foundation of the State Youth Policy sets among its priorities the support to gifted and talented youth. Gifted learners receive comprehensive social support from the Special Fund for the Social Support of Gifted Students and the Special Fund for the Support of the Talented Youth.

Refugees

In line with the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the Refugee Act was amended in 2016 to safeguard minors forced to migrate. According to art.15 of the Act, foreign minors have the right to access preschool, general secondary and specialized education as citizens, if they have been granted the refugee status, subsidiary protection or asylum.

Section 1: Laws and Policies

What is the framework of legislation, policy and guidelines for supporting the development of an inclusive education system?

Have international/UN conventions/declarations to protect the rights of groups who are potentially vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion been integrated into national and/or regional law?

Convention/declaration on	Law	Comments
Child rights (UNCRC) – ratified in 1990	1993 <u>Rights of the Child Act</u>	The Law enshrines the main provisions of the Convention, however, it does not mention all rights that are set in the Convention, such as the right to preserve one's individuality (Article 8), the right to physical and psychological rehabilitation and social reintegration (Article 39), and the rights of an ethnic child religious, linguistic minorities or indigenous people (art. 30) ²⁹ . The Law does not either enshrine the principles of the 'best interest of the child'. It rather refers to the 'legally protected interests', which does not fully grasp the above principle ³⁰ .
Disability (UNCRPD) – ratified in 2016	<u>National Action Plan to Implement the CRPD 2017–2025</u>	However, the new plan does not address all the provisions of the Convention, e.g. ensuring independent lifestyle, rehabilitation, social support and assistance, elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities ³¹ . In line with the international commitments, the <u>1224/1991 Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities</u> is <u>expected to be amended</u> to include the concepts of reasonable accommodation and universal design, together with a re-thought approach to disability that moves away from the medical one. The new Law on Social Integration of people with disabilities is under development at the moment.
Gender (Convention on discrimination against women CEDAW) ratified in 1981	<u>National Action Plan on Gender</u>	Belarus does not have a separate law against gender discrimination, though the Constitution and industry-specific laws ban any discrimination, including on the basis of gender,

²⁹ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Belarus, 2018. Available at: <https://nash-dom.info/lib/browse/alternativnaya-informatsiya>

³⁰ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Belarus, 2019. Prepared by the Coalition of NGOs. Available at: https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/by_alternative_report_crc.pdf

³¹ See e.g. press release 'Convention on the rights of people with disabilities: 9 things that one should know'. Available at: <https://spring96.org/be/news/91945>

	<u>Equality</u> 2017-2020	and the National Strategy on the Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for the Period until 2030 states that “gender equality is necessary for society’s sustainable development and is one of the current challenges for realizing human rights and ensuring social fairness”. However, numerous NGOs report very slow progress in addressing gender discrimination in the country, and in particular the issue of violence against women ³² . Belarus either has not still joined the <u>Istanbul Convention on preventing and combatting VAW</u> and domestic violence.
Ethnicity or language (UN Declaration on Rights of persons belonging to National, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities)	The 1992 <u>Law on National Minorities</u> , as amended in 2007	lays down the right to choose a language for communication and right to decide the language for upbringing and education, in line with the constitutional provision.
CERD - International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratified in 1969)	1944 <u>Constitution of the Republic of Belarus</u> , as amended in 2004	Up until now there is no explicit anti-discrimination law. The lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation continues to be one of the reasons why many vulnerable groups, including children, are not able to fully exercise their rights guaranteed by international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child ³³ .

Provide an overview of general education legislation impacting on the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups:

Name and link ³⁴	Year and status (enacted, under preparation etc.)	Description of key content
<u>The Education Code (2011)</u>	2011, last amended in 2019. The code is currently undergoing revision.	provides for legal regulation of all levels of education and for continuing education. It not only regulates the learning process but also determines the distribution system and provides for the social protection of students,

³² Alternative Report on Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women by Belarus. Prepared by the Anti-Discrimination Centre Memorial with the assistance of Her Rights Center For the 65th session of the UN CEDAW, 2016. Available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/BLR/INT_CEDAW_NGO_BLR_25387_E.pdf

³³ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Belarus, 2019. Prepared by the Coalition of NGOs. Available at: https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/by_alternative_report_crc.pdf

³⁴ A number of Decrees of the Government related to assessment of pupils, subjects to be tested, reporting standards, education councils, teaching materials, etc can be found here: <https://edu.gov.by/sistema-obrazovaniya/glavnoe-upravlenie-obshchego-srednego-doshkolnogo-i-spetsialnogo-obrazovaniya/srenee-obr/normativnye-pravovye-dokumenty/postanovleniya/>

		including the protection of the rights of people with a disability. The code is currently undergoing revision.
<u>The Act on the Fundamentals of State Youth Policy</u>	2009 (last amended in 2012)	The concept of national youth policy is aimed at creating legal, economic and organizational conditions and guarantees for the self-realization of young people, the development of youth associations, movements and initiatives.

Provide an overview of education policy or guidelines impacting on inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups:

Name and link	Year and status (enacted, under preparation etc.)	Description of key content
<u>The State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016–2020</u>	Enacted in 2016	<p>This is the guiding strategy document for the education sector developed for each 5-year period. It covers all education levels, including general, VET, and higher education and special education. The programme envisages a collection of measures aimed at increasing the quality and accessibility of education according to the needs of the innovative economy, including modern information technologies.</p> <p>The programme contains a sub-programme “Development of Special Education”, which addresses core barriers to advancements of inclusive education such as capacity building, making more schools accessible, research in assessment and programming for adolescents with disabilities/SEN, expansion of services and supports available in communities to reduce a need in institutionalization, and providing modern equipment and technologies to schools.</p>

Please describe any specific plans and strategies designed to support inclusion in education (e.g. national strategy on migrant learners):

Name and link	Year and status (approved, under preparation etc.)	Description of the focus

The 2015 <u>Concept of the Development of Inclusive Education for Individuals' Special Developmental Needs</u>	Adopted in 2015	Sets the tasks, priority areas and mechanisms for the development of inclusive education of students with special needs in the Republic of Belarus. The key directions include improving accessibility of education, development of inclusive culture and practices in schools, preparing teachers and investing in research.
--	-----------------	---

Is there a definition of inclusion in education?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

In the 2015 Concept for the Development of Inclusive Education for Individuals' Special Developmental Needs of the Republic of Belarus, inclusive education is defined as the educational process including all students in the general educational system, regardless of their psycho-physical, cultural, social, linguistic characteristics and abilities. All learners can study in general and higher education institutions that take into consideration their special education needs and provide them with the necessarily support. Inclusive education implies a systemic approach, involving all levels of education, complex institutional relations and coordination activities. It requires adaptation of the learning environment, and building relationships based on understanding, acceptance and respect.

Referring to the international practice, the Concept mentions gifted and talented children; students with behavioural disorders and deviant behaviour; those belonging to minorities and migrant families, refugees, and forced migrants; socially disadvantaged children and learners with special psycho-physical development. However, **despite the broad definition of inclusive education**, the activities implemented under this Concept **mainly target children with special psycho-physical development** and their integration into regular education under certain circumstances. Rights of other groups of learners are not referred to in the Concept.

If no, please give further information

Is there a definition of vulnerable groups?

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

If no, please give further information:

As mentioned earlier, there is no explicit definition of vulnerable groups. However, several education policy documents (Education Code, State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016 – 2020) highlight the groups of learners that may need additional support and protection, such as children with disabilities and special needs, homeless children, orphans and children left without parental care, children in dysfunctional families.

Is there a definition of special educational needs?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

According to the 2015 Concept for the Development of Inclusive Education, special education needs are defined as the need for special conditions, methods and additional training support due to specific characteristics (physical, mental, social, linguistic, etc.) and abilities of the learner.

If no, please give further information:

Please provide information on any future developments planned for inclusion in education.

According to the Conceptual directions of the development of education in Belarus until 2030, the key steps to be taken by Belarus in the future are:

- transition to compulsory general secondary education (Grades 1-11);
- updating the content of educational programmes of general secondary education (according to the national plans the content should be reviewed in the view of gender, inclusiveness of people with special needs, etc.);
- improving the accessibility of schools (modernising school infrastructure and equipment);
- creation of an independent assessment system for the quality of general secondary education;
- improving the system of data collection on students' learning;
- improving the final certification of students;
- improving the system for identifying, tracking, and supporting gifted and talented youth.

Please provide information on any reports, evaluations and/or reviews of legislation and/or policy relating to inclusion in education, since 2015. This could include official and parallel reports on UNCRPD etc.

•Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1l-SFBy7l [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)]

•Alternative report of the coalition of Belarusian NGOs on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Belarus, 2019. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bvQ5T1U1tcZHDi5jQoX7R714YjH1tN_o/view

•Levania Centre (2016), Monitoring report on inclusive education. Available at: <http://levania.by/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8B%D0%B8%CC%86-%D0%BE%D1%82%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%82-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B8%CC%86-2016.pdf>

•State party report submitted by Belarus to the Committee on the Rights of the Child under article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2018. Available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fBLR%2f5-6&Lang=en

•State party report submitted by Belarus under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018. Available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fBLR%2f1&Lang=en

What are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hindrances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to laws and policies in the country?

—At the moment, the notion of ‘inclusion’ or ‘inclusive education’ is absent in the legislation of the country. In 2015 the Concept on the development of Inclusive Education was adopted (as stated above), however, this document is not legally binding. Currently, the 2011 Education Code is being revised to introduce, among others, the concept of inclusive education.

While all the teachers and schools have been informed about the Concept, in practice inclusive education approaches are still implemented at the level of experimentation and innovation projects.

—The lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation continues to be one of the reasons why many vulnerable groups, including children, are not able to fully exercise their rights guaranteed by international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child³⁵.

—No explicit reference to the rights of national minorities (Roma children in particular), undocumented migrant children, refugees and LGBT groups to education in key legislation and policy documents shaping inclusive education (Education Code, State Programme on Education and Youth Policy, Concept on Development of Inclusive Education). As a result, there are no specific mechanisms ensuring the quality of education for these groups and existing measures on inclusive education are mainly targeting children with disabilities and special psychophysical development.

—Incompleteness of the regulatory and legal framework governing all aspects of inclusive education (the system of financing of inclusive education, assisting students with special educational needs in the educational space, the filling of classes, the system of assessing the learning achievements of students, the organization of correctional and pedagogical work, etc.)³⁶;

—Regardless of the fact that education for people with disabilities and special education needs is guaranteed by Education Code and the Act on the Rights of the Child, existence of parallel discriminatory legislation limits access to education of these groups of learners.

For instance, Levania Centre (2018) points out that actual Resolution of the Ministry of Health of December 22, 2011 No. 128 “On determination of medical indications and contraindications for education” directly contradicts the above norms and limits the right to education based on health status of the child. It often happens that based on such medical indications children with special needs, without actual assessment of their abilities, are not admitted into mainstream education and directed into segregationist special schools³⁷. This proves that medical discourse still prevails of the human rights approach, when it comes to regulations of the situation of children with disabilities in the country.

³⁵ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Belarus, 2019. Prepared by the Coalition of NGOs. Available at: https://belhelcom.org/sites/default/files/by_alternative_report_crc.pdf

³⁶ Radyhina, V. and Turchanka, I. (2017), Development of Non-Discrimination Ideas in Education in European Countries and Belarus, Eastern European Journal of Transnational Relations, 2017 Vol. 1 No. 1. DOI: 10.15290/eejtr.2017.01.01.05

³⁷ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHW_3wKvL6Wcd1I-_SFBY7I [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)]

Based on the law, the decision of the psychological-medical-pedagogical commission on the education pathway of the child with SEN should be agreed with the parent. However, if the parent disagrees, the commission often demonstrates disinterest in further dialogue and cooperation with the parent and uses the administrative resource for pressure. For example, if a parent refuses to send the child to a specialized school, the commission may recommend education in a regular school, but on a general basis. Since, without providing additional support (personal assistant, reduced number of children, etc.), a child cannot objectively attend a general school, parents are forced to agree to a specialized school or home-based education³⁸.

³⁸ Ibid.

Section 2: Governance and Finance

How far are inclusive principles underpinning policies at national and local levels effectively supported by governance and financing mechanisms?

Is there formal collaboration across ministries on inclusion in education?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, in which areas does this take place and who is involved?

In Belarus there are various types of mechanisms for coordinating activities among ministries. They include interdepartmental working groups formed to undertake specific tasks; meetings; councils; organizing committees; and so on. However, very limited information is available on how such consultations take place and on which topics³⁹.

Area	Yes/No	Description: what mechanism, who is involved and how
Policy development, implementation and coordination	Mainly Ministry of Education and to some extent through existing councils	<p>There is almost no information on how collaboration across Ministries takes place in regard to inclusive policy development and implementation. For instance, at the moment the 2011 Education Code is being revised (among others with the aim to include the concept of inclusive education), but it is not clear who is taking part in this process, besides the Ministry of Education. According to the <u>Activity Plan of Implementation of the Concept of Inclusive Education for 2016-2020</u>, it is done solely by the Ministry of Education. NGOs often report that the process of revision of legislations is often happens behind the closed doors and is not open to civil society organisations⁴⁰.</p> <p><u>The State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016–2020</u> however, was developed in collaboration with a number of Ministries (mechanisms are not clear) and it also states that the sub-programme on development of special education needs to be implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Architecture and Construction in the process of developing barrier-free environment in schools.</p> <p>There have been specific Councils created to coordinate the implementation of major UN Conventions, which may also cover education topics in their discussions. For instance:</p>

³⁹ State party report submitted by Belarus to the Committee on the Rights of the Child under article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2018. Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fBLR%2f5-6&Lang=en

⁴⁰ Alternative report of the coalition of Belarusian NGOs on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Belarus, 2019. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bvQ5T1U1tcZHDi5JQoX7R714YjH1tN_o/view

		<p>To coordinate all state bodies engaged in the disability prevention and rehabilitation activities, a <u>National Interdepartmental Council on Disability</u> was set up in 2009. The <u>Council</u> operates at all government levels and involves also representatives from the civil society. However, NGOs report that this Council meets only twice a year and is not effective at ensuring the rights of people with disabilities⁴¹.</p> <p>With reference to gender policy, the <u>National Council</u> on Gender Policy acts as an interagency advisory and coordinating body composed of the heads of central government agencies, local executive and administrative authorities, National Assembly deputies, representatives of the Supreme Court and public and international organizations and also four representatives from NGOs.</p> <p>With the help of UNICEF, there are efforts to promote inter-ministerial dialogue (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education) on de-institutionalisation reform⁴².</p>
Identification of needs / referral for services	Mainly Ministry of Health	<p>To ensure timely early intervention, a <u>roadmap for early childhood interventions</u> (ECI) was set up in 2015 through collaboration between UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, targeting the most marginalized children. The national ECI regulation ensures the universal access of all young children to the closest ECI centres. <u>As of 2018</u>, 138 centres for early comprehensive care operate in the country. These centres are coordinated by the Ministry of Health.</p> <p>Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation were established in all regions across the country to provide an integrated system for psychological, medical and educational assistance to children and adolescents with special needs. In addition to assessments, early comprehensive care programmes, and social rehabilitation, centres provide special educational programmes at pre-school and general schools levels. Experts from centres provide methodological support to teachers</p>

⁴¹ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020).

⁴² UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

		<p>working with students with SEN in mainstream schools These centres are coordinated by the Ministry of Education⁴³.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education also issued <u>methodical recommendations</u> (2017) on collaboration of different departments (under MoE, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs) on identification of families and children at social risk, monitoring their situation and sharing data.</p> <p>According to the data from interviews, there are local guidelines on cooperation between different sectors (e.g., healthcare departments, Centres for Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation, social services (such as 'Warm House' (Теплый дом)).</p>
Data sharing	N/A	To date no clear mechanisms have been identified
Monitoring and evaluation	To some extent	<p>Most of the state programmes (e.g., <u>The State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016–2020</u>) foresee integration of monitoring and evaluation activities into their implementation. However, there is no transparency in how they are conducted and by whom. In many cases, there are no monitoring reports publicly available (except for short summaries⁴⁴).</p> <p>Interestingly, the <u>Activity Plan of Implementation of the Concept of Inclusive Education for 2016-2020</u> does not foresee any monitoring activities.</p> <p>State monitoring on the implementation of the UN Conventions takes place in collaboration between different ministries (e.g., the report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child has been prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Supreme Court, the Office of the Procurator General, the Investigative Committee, the National Centre for Legislation and</p>

⁴³ Decree N 233 of the Ministry of Education on establishment of Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation, 2011. [Постановление Министерства Образования Республики Беларусь 16 августа 2011 г. N 233 Об утверждении положения о центре коррекционно-развивающего обучения и реабилитации и признании утратившими силу некоторых нормативных правовых актов Министерства Образования Республики Беларусь (в ред. постановления Минобразования от 04.10.2013 N 92)]

⁴⁴ See e.g., Information about implementation of the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016-2020. Available at: <https://edu.gov.by/gosudarstvennaya-programma-obrazovanie-i-molodezhnaya-politika/obrazovanie-i-molodezhnaya-politika-na-2018/>

		Legal Research, the National Statistical Committee and the Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs), but it is not clear how such collaboration takes place. NGOs report that there is no transparent and reliable system of monitoring and evaluation of the situation of children, and the evaluation of the implementation of the UN conventions is not independent ⁴⁵ .
Quality assurance and accountability	N/A	To date no clear mechanisms of collaboration have been identified
(others ...)		

NGOs further report that coordination between Ministries on the situation of children with disabilities is insufficient. There is sectoral responsibility of such children in Belarus, usually shared between Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Health. However, there is no coordination between the Ministries and no effort to establish single inclusion department⁴⁶.

Are there shared responsibilities between central and local governments on inclusion in education?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, in which areas does this take place and who is involved?

Area	Yes/No	Description: who is involved and how
Policy development, implementation and coordination	Partly	In the field of special education and inclusive education, the Ministry holds the responsibility of management and coordination of the activities of the republican governmental authorities and local executive and administration bodies. The latter decide the admission of students with disabilities to special education, in agreement with the governmental Correction and Development Training and Rehabilitation Centre, and to education in health institutions in their district. Furthermore, funding to schools is allocated partly from republican and partly from municipal budgets. Municipalities can decide on additional financial resources to schools to support inclusion (upon their requests).
Identification of needs / referral for services	No	Happens at the municipal level via Regional Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation.

⁴⁵ Alternative report of the coalition of Belarusian NGOs on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Belarus, 2019. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bvQ5T1U1tcZHDi5jQoX7R714YjH1tN_o/view

⁴⁶ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020).

		<p>These centres conduct psychological-medical-pedagogical assessment of children with special education needs and give suggestions to parents on the type of education institutions their children can be enrolled. In practice, it often happens that children which would be able to study in mainstream education, are directed to special education institutions and parents are not often able to argue about the decision⁴⁷. Municipal departments of education also have experts in special education, which are coordinating the work of the correctional centres and schools with integrated classes.</p> <p>Every school offers social-psychological service, to which parents and children can always address directly and receive necessary support.</p>
Data sharing	Yes	<p>Education Code specifies that municipal education departments share the responsibility in collecting key education data and are responsible for providing it to the Main Analytical-Information Centre under the Ministry of Education. The Centre has a <u>specific database on children with special psycho-physical development</u> (it attempts to aggregate the data on numbers of such children from different sources – regions, MoE, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Sport).</p>
Monitoring and evaluation	No	<p>Monitoring and evaluation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, conducted annually by the National Education Institute via representative assessment studies.</p> <p>Every year there can be different topic/aspect of monitoring – accordance with the education programme, social-pedagogical service at school, childhood protection, etc.</p>
Quality assurance and accountability	No	<p>Ensuring the quality of education provision is the responsibility of Ministry of Education, Quality Assurance Department⁴⁸. The schools need to be accredited every 5 years by a special quality assurance commission. However, these are usually formal procedures and the questions of inclusion are not touched upon</p>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ МИНИСТЕРСТВА ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ от 29 декабря 2009 г. № 75 "О некоторых вопросах осуществления контроля за обеспечением качества образования"

		during such accreditation processes (unless it is a specialised education institution). Schools are also obliged to conduct self-evaluations (as stated in the 2011 Education Code). The frequency of such self-evaluations is defined by the educational institutions themselves.
(others ...)		

Are non-governmental organisations and/or associations involved in governance processes?

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please describe their involvement:

If no, please give further information:

The MoE has established Public-consultation committee on the issues of education, which gathers municipalities, experts, researchers, practitioners, representatives of CSOs. In its official reporting, the government states that NGOs and CSOs organisations are actively involved in policy development and implementation (see e.g. reports to UN Agencies). However, alternative NGO reports demonstrate that such consultations are not effective and very limited. There is no wide collaboration with civil society on the new proposed or revised legislation related to the situation of children. For instance, the discussion of changes to the Education Code, which is the fundamental regulatory act governing the entire educational space, is closed to experts and representatives of NGOs. There are no public hearings of changes to the Code. In fact, representatives of civil society are deprived of the opportunity to participate in this process⁴⁹.

Are there any accountability mechanisms to promote the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, what is the focus of the mechanisms?

Area	Yes/No	Description of the focus/actors involved (e.g. state/non state)
Appeal process for rights violations	To some extent	National Commission on the Rights of the Child (and its representatives in the regions) is responsible for ensuring that children's rights are realised (in line with the CRC) and consults population on the cases of rights violations (citizens can file their cases directly with the Commission, their cases will be reviewed either by the Commission itself or directed to relevant services (psychological support,

⁴⁹ Alternative report of the coalition of Belarusian NGOs on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Belarus, 2019. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bvQ5T1U1tcZHDi5JQoX7R714YjH1tN_o/view

		<p>police, etc.). However, according to the independent reviews the Commission is not autonomous and independent (but part of state apparatus). Its work is rather formal (consultation of citizens happens just once a month and there is no transparent reporting on the results of its work)⁵⁰. Belarus does not have an independent Child Rights' Ombudsman institute.</p> <p>The government however has also attempted to create a <u>children's rights portal</u> (Детский правовой сайт), which is child-friendly, where children can find direct legally valid information on the organisation of education, their responsibilities and protection of their rights. However, the portal does not appear to be very easy to navigate and provide information sensitive to children of different ages. Some children's rights (e.g., protection from all forms of violence and right to family) are not comprehensively guaranteed by the law and therefore, cannot be argued in court or law enforcement agencies. Belarus does not yet have comprehensive legislation on domestic violence against women and children and there are loopholes in decrees aimed to protect children in socially vulnerable situations, resulting on children unrightfully taking out from their families and placed into institutions. There is an established procedure for appealing decisions taken by local executive and administrative authority committees on the rights of minors declaring children to be in need of state protection; however, it is bureaucratic and not effective.</p>
School inspection	Yes	<p>The school inspection is undertaken by the Quality assurance department of the Ministry of Education and focuses on the conformity of the education offered at particular institution to national education standards and education programmes (curricula). Schools have to pass accreditation every 5 years.</p> <p>Until now, there have not been state standards on inclusive education (with the exception of <u>experimental educational</u></p>

⁵⁰ Alternative report of the coalition of Belarusian NGOs on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Belarus, 2019. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bvQ5T1U1tcZHDi5JQoX7R714YjH1tN_o/view

		<p><u>programmes</u> that were piloted in a few schools as part of the implementation of the Concept on Inclusive Education). <u>General education standards for 2018/2019</u> do not have any reference to inclusion and inclusive practices. However, they do refer to tolerance, intercultural communication and basic human values as one of the important learning outcomes of general education programmes. According to the interviews, these aspects are not explicitly addressed during the school inspection processes.</p> <p>Special education institutions follow <u>Educational standard for special education</u> and <u>Education programmes for special education</u> and are assessed accordingly.</p>
Other quality assurance processes (e.g. standards for teaching, support services etc)	Yes	<p>The <u>Concept of Development of teacher education</u> in 2015-2020 specifically refers to the need to ensure capacity of teachers to deliver inclusive education and to work with children of different backgrounds and with different needs. In addition, the Ministry of Education issues numerous instructions and recommendation letters to guide educational institutions in implementing education process. For instance, there are <u>instructions for the creation of special groups and integration classes</u> in mainstream schools (adopted in 2011).</p> <p>The Inclusive education resource centres were created within the existing network of correctional developmental centres at the regional level, and currently provide methodological support for diagnostics and the development of individual learning/rehabilitation plans to similar centres at the district level⁵¹. They aim to provide ongoing methodological support to schools in their transition to inclusion.</p>
Monitoring and evaluation (e.g. data collection on attendance, participation, achievement, funding)	Partly	<p>In general, information on the situation of children belonging to minority groups, in particular Roma children, and stateless children is missing and not systematically collected.</p>

⁵¹ UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

		<p>A modern data collection system on children with disabilities has not been established. UNICEF has conducted a disability household survey in 2018 which provides more comprehensive information on the situation of people with disabilities, and there are also plans to develop a universal data portal on child-related statistics, co-financed by the World Bank. At the moment, Ministry of Education collects some statistics (disaggregated by gender and regions) on participation of children with special psychophysical development in education (via its Analytical-Information Centre), but there is no data on achievements or other learning processes of such children.</p> <p>Progress has been made in collecting, analysing and presenting gender statistics. The National Statistical Committee has developed a set of statistical indicators for gender, based on the indicators used by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and adapted according to the national context.</p> <p><u>National Education Institute</u> (under the Ministry of Education) conducts annual representative studies to monitor the quality of education; however, to date these studies did not focus on the questions of inclusion – but rather on achievements of general population in specific subjects or personal development.</p>
(others ...)		

Please describe the general mechanisms for funding schools. Give details on: which institutions provide funding; what they provide; how they provide it and to whom, which mechanisms they use to allocate resources; and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Expenditure on education has priority status on the government agenda. Approximately 5% of GDP is allocated annually for the financing of education, which is comparable with the corresponding indicator for developed countries⁵².

Funding mechanisms	Description of who, what, to whom and how
--------------------	---

⁵² <http://uis.unesco.org/country/BY>

<p>Regulatory funding (нормативное финансирование) scheme based on a number of pupils registered in the school (per-student financing)</p>	<p>The schools are financed from municipal and republican budgets. Until recently the schools were financed based on the number of professional staff employed by the school (based on estimated financing scheme). However, since 2019 the government introduced per-student financing scheme nationwide, which first was piloted in 2015 with the support of World Bank IDf. Currently the government is expanding PSF to preschool institutions⁵³. Stakeholders believe that such financing scheme will allow to equalise the position of small and large schools and re-distribute resources between schools more efficiently⁵⁴. Acknowledging that rural schools per se have less pupils than urban schools, to support rural schools the norm for rural schools is higher (3808,76 BYR per student in rural schools, against 1667,92 BYR in urban schools. These norms have been increased for 2020: 4463,87 BYR and 1954,8 BYR respectively⁵⁵). The government has been also attempting to optimise the schools network in the country and shut down schools with very few pupils, which put barriers to accessibility of education for children residing in small villages.</p> <p>The government also provides coefficients for adjusting the level of per-student financing to different types of schools, taking into account the needs and local contexts (e.g., there are special coefficients for schools which have integrated or special classes/groups with children with SEN, for SEN students that need to receive additional extra-curricular support, for students coming from Chernobyl disaster affected areas, for special schools, for boarding schools, for health institutions providing education to pupils with disabilities, for orphanages, which provide education services)⁵⁶. However, to what extent the coefficients are adequate to ensure that schools have necessary funds to cover the needs of pupils with SEN has not been yet assessed.</p> <p>Furthermore, there are no additional funds/coefficients foreseen for other pupils with diverse needs (such as national minority pupils, immigrant pupils, refugees and undocumented minors, etc.).</p> <p>The budget calculated based on per-student financing method aims to cover the following expenses of the school: salaries of professional staff (teachers and other personnel), education process (teaching and learning materials and equipment, renovation of equipment, business trips, and other current expenses). Municipalities</p>
--	---

⁵³ Press release 'Belarus to Improve Quality of School Education, with World Bank Support', APRIL 18, 2019. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/18/belarus-to-improve-quality-of-school-education-with-world-bank-support>

⁵⁴ See e.g. Levanina centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHW_3wKvL6Wcd1I-SFBy7I [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)]

⁵⁵ <http://pravo.by/novosti/novosti-pravo-by/2019/september/40015/>

⁵⁶ Decree of the government 975/2018 on the financing of the organisations of general education. Available at: <http://pda.government.by/upload/docs/file3b94768874ac8a6b.PDF> [Постановление Совета министров Беларуси от 29 декабря 2018 г. №975 «О финансировании государственных учреждений общего среднего образования»]

	<p>provide additional budget to schools to cover building maintenance, modernization of school infrastructure, purchase of new equipment, utility payments). Theoretically, this budget can be spent on modernisation of school buildings and creating barrier-free environment; however, in practice these funds are very limited and schools often have to fundraise themselves (according to the interview data).</p> <p>Guaranteed and targeted support aimed at social protection of specific groups of pupils in schools is also financed separately from the municipal budget. In addition, the schools have the right to request additional financial support from municipalities (in case they have left-over funds). Municipalities decide on how these left-over funds are distributed⁵⁷.</p>
--	---

Do schools have flexibility to use funding allocations to support the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups?

X No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please describe the flexibility:

If no, please give further information:

All the funds received by the school are basically used for teacher salaries and learning materials and equipment (per [Decree 975/2018](#)). The schools have to report on the way funds were used and to which purposes. There is an indexation for providing additional funds for some vulnerable groups (like pupils with disabilities and SEN, orphans, those from Chernobyl affected disaster areas, rural areas), but not all. Municipal budget also covers guaranteed social support to certain groups (generally the same above and those living in poverty), but there is no special support to refugee children or Roma minority, for instance. For such purposes, schools can seek for alternative sources of funding (e.g., parental contributions or businesses).

Please describe the specific mechanisms for funding the inclusion of vulnerable learners and their families in education (e.g. benefits, cash transfers, scholarships). Give details on: which institutions provide funding; what they provide; how they provide it and to whom, which mechanisms they use to allocate resources; and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Funding mechanisms	Description of the who, what, to whom and how
Fees for learning materials (books, manuals)	<p>The right to free learning materials is granted to families, which have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one or both parents are with disabilities (I and II category), - children with disabilities. - children with oncological diseases or tuberculosis. <p>Families with 3 or more children are paying reduced fee.</p> <p>These benefits are financed from municipal budgets directly to schools.</p>

	<p>The current fees for schools books to be paid by parents are 0.5 of basic amount (which is 27 BYR in 2020).</p> <p>Source: Government Decree 839/2011 on the fees for learning materials [Постановление Совета Министров Республики Беларусь от 24 июня 2011 года № 839 «О размере и порядке взимания платы за пользование учебниками и (или) учебными пособиями и порядке предоставления их в бесплатное пользование»]</p>
Cash transfers to low-income families	<p>Low-income families receive assistance in preparing children for school within the framework of the state targeted social assistance (in the form of one-time or monthly social benefits).</p> <p>Families can apply for such assistance to local executive and administrative body at their place of residence⁵⁸.</p>
State targeted social assistance	<p>Can be given in the form of one-time or monthly payments for basic products and school materials; social compensation payments for clothes of children with disabilities; social benefits for purchasing food for children 0-2 years old.</p> <p>Families whose income is lower than the country's established minimum cost of living (BYR 239. 87 as of 22 January 2020) are entitled to such support. Also families which are in a difficult life situations have access to this assistance. Types of difficult life situations are defined by law and include: reaching 80 years old, acquiring disability, force-majeure situations which caused damage of property, long-term illness which requires expensive medicine.</p> <p>The <u>Presidential Decree 41/2012</u> on targeted social assistance states that citizens of Belarus, foreign citizens and stateless persons are entitled to such assistance. Such assistance is given directly to families from municipal budgets.</p>
Social protection measures	<p><u>Education Code 2011</u> foresees specific social protection measures for pupils in need, such as free food in schools, scholarships and cash transfers, provision of clothing, free transport, provision of places of living (for VET and HE levels).</p> <p>These are financed from republican and local budgets and can be paid either to education institutions organising the service or directly to families.</p>

According to the recent research, in 2018, 30% of children population in Belarus received some kind of social assistance from the state⁵⁹.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of funding and resourcing relating to inclusive education.

⁵⁸ Comment of the Ministry of Labour (2017). Available at: <http://www.mir.pravo.by/library/news/different/kommentariy-ministerstva-truda-i-sotsialnoy-zashchity-ob-okazanii/>

⁵⁹ Research Institute RPM (2018), Poverty and socially vulnerable groups in Belarus. Support for families with children and its effects. Available at: <http://www.research.by/analytics/poverty/2018/> [Бедность и социально уязвимые группы населения в Беларуси. Поддержка семей с детьми и ее эффекты]

Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1l-SFBy7l [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)] – *main conclusions are referred to in the next point.*

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to governance and finance issues in the country?

- In the current financing system, there are no incentives to stimulate the adoption of inclusive education measures. In reality, when children with special needs go to regular schools, their special assistance and support is limited due to poor preparedness of the teaching staff and poor material equipment of the institutions themselves. This does not allow for high-quality education and training of children with disabilities (especially more severe cases of disability). In this regard, children are forced to get education in the centres of correctional and educational education and rehabilitation or at home.

- Experts believed that the previous form of financing (based on number of employees) incentivised schools to keep large numbers of teachers and personnel to get more funds (regardless of the number of pupils). The new form of financing is believed to be fairer and more equitable. However, the risks are that it can incentivise schools to enrol more pupils – which can further aggravate the burden and workload of teachers and their ability to pay individual attention to children with additional needs. Furthermore, in the currently being prepared revised version of the Education Code there will not be any regulations on the maximum numbers of pupils allowed in one class. However, even though the currently in force Code defined such limits (note more than 20 pupils in Grades 1-4 and not more than 25 pupils in Grades 5-11), in practice these limits were not followed and in urban schools there were classes with 35 pupils for one teacher⁶⁰. However, there are limits of maximum number of pupils set for special or integrated classes.

- According to the law, schools have possibility to apply for additional financial resources from municipal budget to ensure quality education for children with SEN, e.g., hire additional staff, assistants, special equipment and working place, etc. However, these requests compete with other important expenses schools might have, such as renovation, innovative materials, new direction of education development. In addition, there is often a lack of knowledge about the specific needs of children with SEN. Therefore, in practice, school principals do not request money to finance inclusion measures. Moreover, even if the school principal applies for such funds, for example, for equipment of a resource class, then local authorities may not choose this direction as a priority and finance another school or other expense item⁶¹.

⁶⁰ See e.g., comments of experts in press release at <https://naviny.by/article/20190109/1547006375-chto-izmenitsya-v-shkolah-s-vvedeniem-podushevogo-finansirovaniya>

⁶¹ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1l-SFBy7l [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)]

- Moreover, current financing system does not foresee additional measures to schools catering for the needs of national minority pupils, refugees. State additional targeted support is available only based on the level of income or disability.

Section 3: Data

What data on inclusion in education is available to understand if progress is being made towards equitable learning opportunities for all learners?

Please indicate if the following frameworks are in place, provide a link and give a brief description of their aims and focus:

Framework	Yes / No	Description
For monitoring and evaluating the implementation of national-level inclusion in education policy	No	The only existing national guidelines on inclusion to date - The 2015 <u>Concept of the Development of Inclusive Education for Individuals' Special Developmental Needs</u> and the <u>Activity Plan of Implementation of the Concept of Inclusive Education for 2016-2020</u> do not foresee the creation of monitoring and evaluation framework to track the implementation of inclusive education in the country.
For quality assurance across all levels of the system (national, regional, school)	Yes	<u>National Education Institute</u> (under the Ministry of Education) conducts annual assessment studies (on a representative sample of schools) to monitor the quality of education; however, to date these studies did not focus on the questions of inclusion – but rather on achievements of general population in specific subjects or personal development. In the best case, such data is disaggregated by gender. According to the <u>Ministerial Decree 601/2019 on monitoring quality of general education in 2019/2020 academic year</u> , the focus of such assessments is on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils' fatigue and productivity (Grade 8); - Quality of service provision (Grade 9 and 11); - Personal development of pupils (Grade 8, 9, 11); - Reading literacy (Grade 8); - Pupils performance in Math, Chemistry and Geography (Grade 8).
Providing guidance on the use of a range of different data sources for evaluation and self-review at different levels (national, regional, school)	Yes	Ensuring the quality of education provision is the responsibility of Ministry of Education, Quality Assurance Department ⁶² . It conducts school inspections (аттестация) against national education standards and education programmes (curricula), as stated by the <u>Ministerial Decree No 75/2009</u> . The department also provides guidance to education institutions on the process and focus of self-evaluations ⁶³ . None of them focus on inclusion,

⁶² ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ МИНИСТЕРСТВА ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ от 29 декабря 2009 г. № 75 "О некоторых вопросах осуществления контроля за обеспечением качества образования"

⁶³ See e.g. here: <https://edu.gov.by/sistema-obrazovaniya/kontrol-kach/metodicheskie-rekomendatsii/>

		<p>however. Nevertheless, schools can incorporate topics of inclusion in the annual self-evaluation plans if they find it relevant. Schools that enrol children with special needs, cover the issues of inclusive education in the self-evaluation processes; however, there are no specific monitoring indicators. Schools that do not have many children with special psycho-physical development, do not consider inclusion as their priority and do not include these topics in self-evaluation plans. Anecdotal evidence from a handful of interviews demonstrates that educational institutions do not usually perceive other aspects of diversity (minority, gender, low SES) as part of inclusive education.</p>
--	--	--

What data is collected on learners from vulnerable groups, how and why?

The National Statistical Committee provides data book on the education sector every two years. The last available one dates back to 2019. The statistical book covers general education indicators (number of education institutions, pupils distributed by types of educational institutions and languages of instruction, professional staff, expenditure on education). In some cases, information is disaggregated by regions, urban/rural area and by gender.

The Statistical Committee has also created (with the support of UNICEF) a special platform for reporting on the key indicators towards achievement of SDGs; however, no statistics has been published on this website to date.

Progress has been made in collecting, analysing and presenting gender statistics. The National Statistical Committee has developed a set of statistical indicators for gender, based on the indicators used by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and adapted according to the national context. Belarus has also conducted the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey in 2012 and 2019 on the situation of children and women in Belarus with the support of UNICEF. The survey covers, among other, areas of education, gender equality and key SDG indicators.

According to the Concept on the development of inclusive education there is a plan to create a modern comprehensive data collection system on children with disabilities (it has not been created yet). The data on children with disabilities and special education needs is currently collected by three entities – Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection – for their own purposes. Independent reviews indicate that these efforts are not aligned, and the data often does not match⁶⁴.

With the support of UNICEF, a representative household survey on people with disabilities was conducted in 2018, which also covered a number of education indicators for children with disabilities (enrolment, accessibility of education).

⁶⁴ See e.g. Levanina centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHW_3wKvL6Wcd1I-SFBy7I [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)]

Information on the situation of children belonging to minority groups, in particular Roma children, and stateless children was reported to be missing. Some data is selectively being collected by NGOs, such as Romainegration and Human Constanta.

There is official information on young people with HIV, substance abuse, suicide behaviours, as well as on children left without parental care, children in institutions, but it is not linked to education indicators.

Please provide the available data relating to all learners in the compulsory education system and where they are enrolled for their education.

All questions can be answered using the country's own data sources as far as possible. Alternatively, the data can be provided from publicly available international sources e.g. UIS: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=216> or UOE: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Main_Page

Please give a clear reference to the Source in the column provided.

In the Learners column, as far as possible:

- provide actual numbers as far as possible and not estimates.
- only use 0 when the data is zero.
- use M to indicate missing data.
- use NA to indicate the question is Not Applicable (i.e. the country does not have that type of provision).

All questions refer to ALL learners in the education system, not just those formally identified as belonging to a group that is vulnerable to exclusion.

Please provide notes to clarify any issues with the data and include a specific note on the calendar year and/or school year the data refers to.

Data on learner access to compulsory education	Learners	Notes	Source
(i) What is the <i>potential population</i> of learners for the compulsory education system in the country (i.e. how many children are in the country that should, by law, be in some form of compulsory education)?	Total: 1.683 thousand Male: n/a Female: n/a	This data is not disaggregated by gender and covers children of 0-15 y.o.	<u>Belarusian statistical committee</u> , 2018
	Total: 472 762 Male: n/a Female: n/a	School age population	<u>UNESCO Institute for Statistics</u> , 2018
(ii) How many learners are enrolled in all forms of education (i.e. educational settings maintained by the ministry of education or by other	Total: 1 010 429 Male: 50.8% Female: 49.2%	Enrolment in gender secondary education, 2018/2019	<u>2019 Education statistics book</u>

authorities such as health, welfare or labour ministries)?		Data disaggregated by gender available only in %	
(iii) How many learners are out of any form of education (who by law should be in some form of education)?	Total: 1.2 % (in 2018) Male: n/a Female: n/a	No national statistics collected on this UNESCO Indicator - Out-of-school rate for children, adolescents and youth of primary and secondary school age	UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018
(iv) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools (i.e. all learners, not just those with recognised needs or from vulnerable groups)?	Total: 998 244 Male: n/a Female: n/a	Those enrolled in primary, basic, general education schools, gymnasiums and lyceums and learning-pedagogical centres in 2018/2019	2019 Education statistics book
(v) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools and spend the majority of their time (i.e. at least 80% or 4 days of the week) in inclusive groups/classes with their peers?	Total: n/a Male: n/a Female: n/a	Statistics on education of children with disabilities is available only from UNICEF household survey on people with disabilities . It indicates that 62% of all children with registered disabilities attend mainstream general education. However, NGOs report that even in such a case they are often placed in separate classes and almost do not interact with their peers ⁶⁵ . Therefore, these statistics is reported in the cell below.	

⁶⁵ See e.g. Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published

(vi) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools and spend the majority of their time (i.e. at least 80% or 4 days of the week) in separate, special groups/classes, away from their peers?	Total: 62% of all children with registered disabilities Male: n/a Female: n/a	UNICEF <u>household survey on people with disabilities</u> . UNICEF also indicates that closer analysis shows that those included are mainly children with mild developmental difficulties, such as mild speech disorders. One of nine (12 per cent) children with a disability does not attend any educational institution ⁶⁶ .	
(vii) How many learners are enrolled in totally separate, special units and/or schools, away from their peers?	Total: 11 731 Male: n/a Female: n/a	It includes boarding schools, children's homes, special education institutions, 2018/2019	<u>2019 Education statistics book</u>

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of data collection and monitoring for inclusion in education.

Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1I-SFBy7I [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)]

Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published.

Main conclusions are reported below.

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to data collection issues in the country?

NGOs and stakeholders report that access to information on the websites of government bodies and organizations in the field of education has worsened. For example, the website of the special education department (asabliva.by), which was disbanded in 2017, previously contained relevant reports related to the special education system, but they are not accessible anymore. The website of the Ministry of Education of Belarus at the moment contains only the most general statistical information in the form of a sequence of slides related to general and special education. There is no publicly available information on the results of the piloting of inclusive education in selected schools in Belarus.

⁶⁶ UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

Available statistics is very fragmented and basic. There is almost no education data on vulnerable groups disaggregated by gender, residential area, socio-economic status, which prevents effective planning of adequate education provision that would meet the needs of these groups of children.

Statistics on people with disabilities are collected by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Education. The existing data banks of the ministries are formed according to different methodologies and procedures, and the information is not aligned. For instance, the Ministry of Education does not include all children with disabilities to the category of children with special psycho-physical development, and therefore, special support is not provided to all. For example, if a child has a heart defect, it does not fall into the category of children with special psycho-physical development.

Levania Centre (2018) states that at a very early stage of child's development, a family can get into the database of the local health care institution when applying for medical care and / or diagnostics, and also subsequently, when determining the educational pathways, to the database of the local Centre of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation. However, these databases are never cross-checked.

The database of the Ministry of Education is formed according to the declarative, and not identification principle. A child can be examined by the Commission at the Centre of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation only with the consent and in the presence of legal representatives. Therefore, if a child has a disorder, including one previously recorded by doctors, but parents do not consider it necessary to report it to the school, then the child does not fall into the database of the Ministry of Education. Such procedural features in data collection can lead to further distortion of statistics.

Furthermore, the general reporting on the inclusion of learners with special psycho-physical development into mainstream education is not disaggregated by types of development. Closer look into such statistics reveal that only children with mild speech disorders (still classified as having SEN) are included and the ones with more severe disabilities are still segregated or fall out from education system entirely (Ibid.). Such a generalised statistics does not always give a reliable picture of how education process is organised for children with special educational needs.



Section 4: Curricula, learning materials and assessment

To what extent are curricula, learning materials and different assessment processes and procedures adapted to the principles of inclusive education?

Curriculum

a. Does the curriculum content include and represent all learners?

X No (not yet) ☐ No information available ☐ Partially ☐ Yes

If yes or partially, please provide a description and available links, including to underpinning values and principles.
If no, please give further information:

For the moment, the general education standards, education plans and educational programmes for different subjects have not been updated to integrate concepts and principles of inclusive education (with the exception of experimental educational programmes piloted in a eight schools as part of the implementation of the Concept on Development of Inclusive Education)⁶⁷. The Ministry intended to evaluate the results of the first piloting and extend it to a larger number of schools; however, the outcomes of this evaluation and information whether it actually took place is not publicly available. According to the Activity Plan of Implementation of the Concept of Inclusive Education for 2016-2020 all general education programmes and plans were scheduled to be updated integrating principles of inclusive education by 2020.

UNICEF also leveraged international expertise into the MoE preschool curriculum review, which was piloted in 2019. One major recommendation was the establishment of an early complex assistance service in preschools, enabling children with learning difficulties and developmental delays to receive additional support at their local community kindergarten rather than in separate specialized facilities. Such a structure would enable the preschool system to eventually include all children and re-profile special preschools into inclusive ones⁶⁸.

There are separate Educational standard for special education and Education programmes for special education which are reflecting the needs of learners with special psycho-physical development, but they are applied only in special education institutions or in special/integrated classes within general education schools.

There is no specific indication on to what extent the existing curricula are reflective of cultural and linguistic diversity of learners. However, the latest General education standards for 2018/2019 are following the principles of competence-based education and tolerance, intercultural communication and basic human values are mentioned as one of the important learning outcomes of general education programmes. The 2011 Education Code recognises the equal status of Belarusian and Russian languages and all education programmes and plans are available in two languages (the content is identical).

⁶⁷ UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

⁶⁸ Ibid.

The Ministry also provides methodical instructions to schools on teaching Russian and Belarussian to learners coming from other countries and not having sufficient proficiency in these languages. In such cases, they can be exempted from learning one or another language for two years in mainstream education (usually they audit the classes for the two years, but are not graded) and are entitled to additional language learning support classes (after passing an initial assessment). However, the state finances only two support classes per week (for any subject and for any learner who wishes to have one). The rest is provided on the paid basis. There is no possibility to learn pupils' mother tongues (which are different from Russian or Belarussian).

With the support of UNICEF, the peer-to-peer education system regarding the development of healthy lifestyle skills among adolescents has been institutionalized and integrated into the general education curricula⁶⁹. However, from gender perspective the current education programmes continue reinforcing existing gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles. For instance, current education plans still include a subject Crafts (Трудовое обучение), which is divided into two streams – for boys (learning crafts such as carpentry, plumbing – traditionally perceived as activities for men) and for girls (learning cooking, knitting, sewing, etc. – traditionally perceived as activities for women). Another example is such subjects as Military training (only for boys) and First aid training (only for girls). During the first aid training girls are also taught about reproductive health and partly sexual education, but again boys do not attend these classes and do not receive this information.

b. Does the process of curriculum development involve the participation and contribution of different stakeholders?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, please provide information on stakeholder involvement.

If no, please give further information:

The Education Code (2011) specifies that education standards and sample education plans (both for general education and for special education) are developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with organisations which provide scientific and methodological support to schools and other education institutions (at the national level this is National Education Institute).

Education programmes for specific subjects are developed by National Education Institute and then approved by the Ministry of Education. There is a participatory process in place. When preparing the programmes consultation with a selection of teachers takes place. There are also creative groups of teachers from different parts of the Republic are being formed. Furthermore, every year there is a diagnostic survey of schools – where professionals are invited to comment on the content of the programmes and suggest modifications for the future. However, CSO sector is not involved in the process of curricula development.

Educational programmes for additional education (non-formal education) are developed by local Centres of Additional Education (Центры молодежного творчества). The Centres suggest their programmes for national competition and then the winning programme is approved as a sample/recommended programme for others to follow.

⁶⁹ <https://www.unicef.by/en/unicef/nasha-rabota/>

UNICEF supports national institutions in improving education provision in the country and integrate inclusive principles in the curricula, bringing international expertise into curricula development. This way the curricula of pre-primary education, primary school curricula and teacher training curricula were being revised in 2019 with the help of experts from INNOVE (Estonian education competence centre)⁷⁰.

c. Is there guidance/procedures for schools to ensure that the curriculum content takes account of all learners (e.g. using flexibility to address differences due to gender, culture, religions, the ethnicities/nations living in the country, their history and culture, differences related to disability and socio-economic background, LGBT community).

☐ No ☐ No information available X Yes (partly)

If yes, please give a description and examples of this flexibility.

The national efforts to implement inclusive education to date have focused mostly on integration of learners with disabilities and SEN. The Education Code (2011) still specifies two separate streams of compulsory education - general education and special education – but the document is under revision now. The Concept on Development of Inclusive Education and its Activity Plan sets objectives to introduce more ‘integrated’ classes in general education schools and include learners with disabilities into mainstream education as much as possible. Ministry of Education provides some methodical instructional letters to schools on the ways integrated education can be organised (via National Education Institute and Centre for Special Education). However, to date not so many materials on inclusive education are available. Most of the instructional letters publicly available are addressing organisation of special education either in special classes/groups (within general education schools) or in special schools and Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation (in segregated manner). See e.g., Instructional-methodical letter of the Ministry of Education on organisation of special education in general education institutions in 2019/2020, one part of which covers detailed guidelines on how integrated classes should be created. However, in practice the so-called integrated classes use two curricula: a standard curriculum for general education, as well as the corresponding curriculum for special education. Joint training of children (depending on the level of disability) is carried out only for a very narrow list of disciplines, such as "Fine Arts", "Physical Culture and Health", "Music", "Labour Training/Crafts", "Fundamentals of Life Safety". For the rest of disciplines children follow their own programmes (standard or special) separately. In some institutions, children are also even divided during breaks between the lessons⁷¹.

As mentioned, Belarus is a bilingual country and learners have the right to choose the language of instruction (Russian or Belarusian). The government is responsible for ensuring that schools, classes or groups (including learning materials) with instruction in Russian and Belarussian are available. Regardless of the guarantee of equality of languages by the law, this does not happen in practice. The recent statistics shows that the share of children studying in Belarussian between 2005/06 and 2018/19 academic years decreased from 23.3% to 11.1%, while in Russian -

⁷⁰ More information about the project is available here: <https://www.innove.ee/en/international-cooperation/unicef-belarus-inclusive-education-children-disabilities/>

⁷¹ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1l-SFBy7l

increased from 76.7% up to 88.8%⁷². Stakeholders believe that education in Belarusian language is not supported and encouraged enough at the national level; there are fewer learning materials available. Many teachers do not feel confident to teach in Belarusian even if they work in the schools with Belarusian language of instruction (among other reasons due to the fact that higher education is persistently delivered only in Russian language)⁷³.

There are no specific guidelines, nor recognition at the national level on how other forms of diversity need to be reflected in general education process. According to the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2017-2020 there are intentions to examine teaching and learning materials from gender perspective; however, the current education plans and programmes are not yet gender-sensitive and there are no available guidelines on how existing materials can be reviewed or adjusted to combat gender stereotypes. Issues of LGBTQ community are absent from education programmes entirely.

The Ministry issued specific instruction and guidelines on how the education in national minority languages (referring to Polish, Lithuanian, Hebrew and Ukrainian) can be organised; however, this is directed to national minority schools or classes. There are no guidelines on how diverse linguistic repertoires of learners can be valued and taken into account in general education schools.

However, there are some guidelines for general education schools developed by educators and pedagogues on the development of tolerance towards refugee children with the help of multicultural pedagogies⁷⁴. To what extent these guidelines are used by schools is not clear.

If no, please give further information:

d. If individual education plans (IEPs) are used, please describe the procedure for developing (who is involved and how), what they focus on (specific curriculum areas; cross curricular competences; support strategies etc.) and how IEPs are implemented, used across the school?

The Education Code (2011) foresees the possibility of preparation of individual education plans for gifted and talented children or children, who are not able (temporarily or permanently) to follow general education process (Art. 279). Such IEPs are developed by school teachers or deputy school heads and approved by the school leader/head.

Based on the evidence from interviews, schools are active in practicing individual learning plans and personalised plans (even parents can request one for their children). For instance, if a child cannot attend school temporarily because of health reasons, he/she can be transferred to the home-schooling and individual plan can be designed. However, these plans still have to be in line with the Ministry's guidelines and recommendations (in terms of content and hours to be spent on certain subject).

For instance, one of the experimental schools (selected for the implementation of the Concept on Development of Inclusive Education) Mozyr Secondary School № 10" prepares individual programmes for children with severe and

⁷² Education in Belarus. Statistical Book 2019. Available at: https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_compilation/index_13888/

⁷³ Alternative report of the coalition of Belarusian NGOs on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Belarus, 2019. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bvQ5T1U1tcZHDi5jQoX7R714YjH1tN_o/view

⁷⁴ Polivanov et al (2013), Developing tolerance towards refugee children in Belarus with the help of multicultural pedagogy. A manual for teachers of institutions of general secondary education, additional education of children and youth.

multiple impairments, if the main content of certain educational subjects is incomprehensible. Individual programmes are worked out by speech pathologists, coordinated with parents, approved by the head of the school, on the basis of general programmes for these categories of children, and adjusted at the end of each academic year (Valetov et al., 2018)⁷⁵. Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation provide support to schools in developing individual education plans.

The situation is different with special education provision. According to NGO experts, in special education individual learning pathways are almost non-existent (except the cases of learners with severe disabilities). For each type of educational institution, considering the nature of disability they cater for, its own standard curriculum is provided by the Ministry. A child falling into a particular type of educational institution will be trained according to the curriculum corresponding to that institution. However, typical special education programme does not pay sufficient attention to the development of social and life skills. Due to the impossibility of individualising the curriculum, parents or guardians are rarely involved in determining the content of education for their child. The talents and abilities of the child, falling outside of the standard curriculum, are not taken into account by the official education system⁷⁶.

The Ministry of Education also provides guidelines to schools on how to organise individual/personalised preventive work for learners with behavioural problems (identified to be at risk of engaging in criminal activities). Such learners still follow the main education programmes, but in addition, attend extra activities identified in the preventive plan, usually prepared by schoolteacher, school psychologist and social pedagogue.

e. Are there different curricula or programmes for specific groups of learners at risk of exclusion (e.g. ethnic minorities or minority language groups)

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description of the main characteristics/organisation.

There are separate Educational standard for special education and Education programmes for special education for learners with special psycho-physical development. These programmes are applied in special/integrated classes of general schools and institutions of special education, such as:

- centres for correctional and developmental education and rehabilitation;
- special preschool institutions;
- special general education schools and boarding schools;
- auxiliary schools and boarding schools.

⁷⁵ Valetov V., Lebedzeu, M. & Paliyeva, T. (2018), The Current State and Development of Inclusive Education in Belarus. A Case Study Using the Mozyr District (Polesye Region) as an Example, International Dialogues on Education: Past and Present, Vol 5. No 1. Available at: <https://www.ide-journal.org/article/2018-volume-5-number-1-the-current-state-and-development-of-inclusive-education-in-belarus-a-case-study-using-the-mozyr-district-polesye-region-as-an-example/>

⁷⁶ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018.

According to the State party report to the Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2018)⁷⁷, in the 2018/19 academic year, there were 238 special education institutions: 141 special education and rehabilitation centres, 47 special preschools and 50 special schools or boarding schools. Over the past 10 years, the number of special schools or boarding schools has fallen by 38.3 per cent, from 81 in the 2006/07 academic year to 50 in the 2018/19 academic year. The government also reports that more and more general education schools organise integrated classes and that by 2017, the proportion of students receiving their education in an integrated and inclusive setting was 86.2 per cent (although in statistical reports these classes are called – special and integrated classes, therefore combining figures for pupils who study in mainstream schools in both segregated (special) classes and integrated classes)⁷⁸. Alternative NGO reports refute these statements and point out that a number of the so-called integrated classes are still segregated from mainstream classes and children with psycho-physical development are isolated from their peers (during classes and breaks)⁷⁹.

The Ministry of Education also provides separate guidelines and instructions for national minority schools, which should follow state general education curricula, but are welcome to introduce additional subjects related to national minority culture and languages. For instance, they define that while the overall instruction can take place in national minority language, subjects, such as History of Belarus and Geography must be taught in one of the state languages, and the subjects My Homeland Belarus and Human and the World must be taught in Belarusian.

If no, please give further information:

Learning materials

a. Is there autonomy for schools and teachers to select learning material/textbooks etc?

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

Schools can select learning materials and textbooks only from the list pre-determined and approved by the Ministry of Education. These lists are provided on the website of the National Education Institute.

However, different authors (including teachers) are encouraged to take part in competition on creation of learning materials for approval by the Ministry. The competition is also organised by the National Education Institute.

b. Are there policies to ensure the availability of textbooks/materials that promote the inclusion of learners from different vulnerable groups? (e.g. resources relevant to different ethnic groups etc.)

⁷⁷ State party report submitted by Belarus under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018. Available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2fBLR%2f1&Lang=en

⁷⁸ According to the State party report (2018), Belarus has a network of educational institutions that offer integrated education and learning. At the preschool level, there are 2,887 special or integrated education and learning groups. At the general secondary level, there are 5,023 special and integrated education and training classes.

⁷⁹ See e.g., Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published

X No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

The Concept on Development of Inclusive Education and its Activity Plan foresees development of learning materials reflecting the needs of children with psycho-special development in integrated settings, as well as ensure their better representation in general learning materials.

The 2017 National Action Plan on Gender Equality sets as a goal to examine textbooks from gender perspective and to include information on gender equality in the development of manuals for school subjects. However, this has not been implemented to date.

Textbooks for national minority schools (as in the case of regular schools) are approved by the Ministry. The schools are allowed to use textbooks issued by other countries in respective national minority languages, but only as supplementary materials.

c. Is there guidance/procedures to help schools to make learning materials accessible for all learners? (e.g. Braille/large print for learners with visual impairment, materials in other languages).

☐ No ☐ No information available X Yes

If yes, please give a description.

All the learning materials are provided by the Ministry of Education, including the ones adapted for children with special psycho-physical development. The up-to-date lists of textbooks and materials can be found on the website of the National Education Institute.

The government reports⁸⁰ that sign language has been added to the curriculum used at schools for students with hearing impairments. In 2017, the Narodnaya Asveta company published books from the School Library series in Braille for children with visual impairments (47 books (13 titles) with a print run of 1,081 copies). Some of the textbooks based on Braille system include links to the electronic materials in DAISY format created for people with visual impairments (they can be found on the website of the National Education Institute (<http://e-vedy.edu.by>)⁸¹). To what extent these materials are used by educational institutions and learners with SEN are aware of them remains unclear.

If no, please give further information:

⁸⁰ State party report submitted by Belarus under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018. Available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CRPD%2fC%2fBLR%2f1&Lang=en

⁸¹ Instructional-methodical letter of the Ministry of Education on organisation of special education in general education institutions in 2019/2020. Available at: https://edu.gov.by/sistema-obrazovaniya/glavnoe-upravlenie-obshchego-srednego-doshkolnogo-i-spetsialnogo-obrazovaniya/spets-obr/instruktivno-metodicheskie-pisma/%D0%98%D0%9C%D0%9F_%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%86%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5.docx

d. Is ICT used to improve access to materials for vulnerable groups?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Instructional-methodical letter of the Ministry of Education on the use of ICT in schools in 2019/2020 encourages general education institutions (including the ones providing special education) to use available ICT resources in education processes to increase the motivation of learners and facilitate the personalised approach to learning. All the electronic materials are available on the website of the National Education Institute (<http://e-vedy.edu.by>) and can be used by everyone interested for free. According to the Concept on informatisation of education system until 2020 in Belarus, more steps are being taken to modernise schools in terms of innovative ICT-based equipment and learning materials, improve teachers' ICT literacy, moving to electronic documentation and reporting, etc. To what extent these plans have been realised has not been evaluated yet.

Interview data confirms that every school has a computer class. Also, physics, chemistry and biology classes are equipped with modern technologies (smartboards and learning gadgets). There are electronic books which pupils can use for studies at home. Classes can take place over skype or video-conferencing (which is also practiced at the moment by some schools in the light of COVID-19 crisis). Children are allowed to use their own gadgets during classes for learning purposes. There are electronic diaries and journals to which parents can connect and follow children's grades and homework, as well as communicate with teachers. There are Viber groups for teachers and parents to facilitate communication.

The Concept on Development of Inclusive Education and its Activity Plan foresees development and integration of new ICT tools to enhance inclusion of learners with special psycho-physical development.

If no, please give further information:

e. Are there specific financial and practical resources available for textbooks/materials/ICT for different vulnerable groups?

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

According to the law, schools have possibility to apply for additional financial resources from municipal budget to ensure quality education for children with SEN, e.g., acquire special equipment and working place or learning materials, etc. However, these requests compete with other important expenses schools might have, such as renovation, innovation. It depends on the decision of municipality which items to prioritise and which schools to

support. NGOs report that it often happens that the costs of inclusive materials for their children are financed by parents⁸².

Assessment

a. Is there a national/local assessment framework that includes all learners?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

The Education Code (2011) defines the key assessment principles (for concurrent (*текущая аттестация*), interim (*промежуточная аттестация*) and final (*итоговая аттестация*) assessments) both for general education and special education. The assessment fulfils educational, stimulating, diagnostic, controlling and social function. The latter is seen as a differentiated approach towards assessment, considering individual needs and abilities of learners and their contexts⁸³.

10-point grading system is currently applied.

Concurrent assessment takes place during the class and is reflected in numerical marks (10-points system). According to the Code, pupils of Grades 1 and 2 are not assessed numerically but are evaluated qualitatively (in descriptive form) by their teachers.

Interim assessment takes place at the end of each quarter (also numerically) and considers the results of concurrent assessment. Final assessment is numerical and takes place at the end of the year. It considers the results of the achievements during the 4 quarters and the grade for the final exam. The Ministry strictly defines the types of assessments, the quantity and assessment standards to be used for each subject⁸⁴.

There are some adjustments of these general assessment rules for pupils in special education. For instance, they are not graded numerically during the first three years (Grades 1-3) of compulsory education. There are also some adaptations in the final exams: for instance, learners with hearing impairments can choose just one language for the final exam (Russian or Belarussian – while in mainstream schools both are mandatory) which takes form of a narration (instead of usual dictation).

Also national minority or immigrant learners, who are not proficient in Belarussian or Russian can be exempted from grading in these language classes for the first two years (in such cases children just audit the classes with all and have the possibility to get extra support after classes). However, for the third year and further, there are not any adjustments in assessment or education process for these children. Interestingly, even if the children are exempted

⁸² Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1I-SFBy7I [Мониторинговый отчет: Ситуация с реализацией права на образование для детей с инвалидностью в Беларуси (2018)]

⁸³ Ministerial Decree No674/2009 'On assessment norms in general education'.

⁸⁴ See e.g., <https://edu.gov.by/sistema-obrazovaniya/glavnoe-upravlenie-obshchego-srednego-doshkolnogo-i-spetsialnogo-obrazovaniya/srenee-obr/kontseptsii-standarty-normy-otmetok-po-uchebnym-predmetam/index.php>

from Belarusian language class, they still have to attend (and are graded) Belarusian literature class (which also takes place in Belarusian language).

If no, please give further information:

b. Is there guidance for teachers on how to use curriculum-based assessment to identify all learning needs in the classroom?

☐ No ☒ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

Generally, teachers can count on support from Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation when it comes to working with children with special needs and assessing them. However, these still follow special education curricula, rather than more inclusive principles.

c. Is there guidance/procedures on providing access to tests/examinations when learners need additional support/reasonable adjustments?(e.g. adapted materials, extra time etc.)

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (for children with disabilities)

If yes, please give a description.

There are adaptations of classroom and final assessments to the special needs of learners with disabilities (as described above). However, these adjustments are valid only for institutions of special education. General education schools themselves decide on possible adjustments. Anecdotal evidence from interviews demonstrates that schools generally try to adjust to the situation of learners with SEN and lift assessment requirements in various subjects (following the recommendations for the special education programmes).

However, NGOs report examples of children with learning difficulties studying in mainstream schools and being assessed according to the regular norms, as a result these children are usually under-achieving and face barriers in transiting to the next levels of education (e.g., VET schools). However, if this child would study in special education programme they would have easier transition to the next level of education following the special education track. Therefore, the access to the next level of education depends on the formal arrangements and type school a learner with SEN graduated from, rather than on their abilities⁸⁵.

Learners from national minority schools have to take the same final exams as their peers (no adaptations or adjustments) as specified in guidelines and instructions for national minority schools.

If no, please give further information:

d. Are there specific arrangements and/or formal procedures to support the assessment of the specific needs of learners who need additional support in their learning? (e.g. those with disabilities)

⁸⁵ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1I-_SFBY7I

☐ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, please give a description, including clear information on the focus of needs identification procedures and who is involved in the procedures (learners, parents, professionals):

Such an assessment is done in the Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education⁸⁶ by psycho-medical-pedagogical committees, which decide on the type of education, which is suitable for a child depending on their special needs: mainstream schooling, integrated and special class or special school. Parents can apply themselves for such an assessment or they can be also directed by schools or medical centres. With the support from UNICEF validated diagnostic tools were integrated into psycho-medical-pedagogical committees, enhancing the capacity of specialists to identify special educational conditions, based on the child's abilities and educational needs⁸⁷.

NGO experts, however, are concerned about possible discriminatory nature of such assessments (also due to lack of comprehensive diagnostic tools), when the medical diagnosis is defining children's education pathway (most often into segregationist special education), rather than child's potential and needs⁸⁸.

If no, please give further information:

e. Is ICT used in the assessment of vulnerable groups?

☐ No ☒ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, studies, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 relating to issues around curricula, learning materials and assessment processes.

No specific reports or studies related to curricula and assessment in inclusive education have been identified. Interviewees could not direct to any studies either.

There are few general reports by NGOs on the right of children with disabilities and on the rights of the child, which indirectly refer to the content of education (when discussing children's rights to education); however this information is not very extensive and these sources have been referenced above, where relevant.

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to curricula, learning materials and assessment processes in the country?

⁸⁶ Decree N 233 of the Ministry of Education on establishment of Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation, 2011. [Постановление Министерства Образования Республики Беларусь 16 августа 2011 г. N 233 Об утверждении положения о центре коррекционно-развивающего обучения и реабилитации и признании утратившими силу некоторых нормативных правовых актов Министерства Образования Республики Беларусь (в ред. постановления Минобразования от 04.10.2013 N 92)]

⁸⁷ UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

⁸⁸ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1l-_SFBY7l

While there is some progress made (or planned) to integrate learners with disabilities and special education needs by developing and modernising educational programmes, learning materials and customised assessment systems, there is absolute lack of strategies, curricula and education plans, which would be culturally and linguistically-responsive, gender-sensitive and reflect the needs of other vulnerable learners.

Belarusian education system is highly centralised and prescriptive (with endless decrees, instructions and rules defined centrally), and educators lack flexibility and trust to be able to respond to the individual needs of learners at the grassroot level, which creates barriers for effective realisation of the concept of inclusive education.

Additional financial support for inclusive education is often not prioritised and schools need to look for alternative resources to get necessary materials and equipment.

The Concept on Development of Inclusive Education is an important step and sets the framework for further actions in improving national education system. However, even though the Concept defines inclusive education in a broader sense, its Activity Plan focuses just on children with disabilities and SEN, which leaves other vulnerable groups of learners (such as refugees, low SES, LGBT community, Roma, immigrant children) out of policy attention and subsequently necessary support. Furthermore, there is no transparency in national monitoring of the implementation of the Concept on Development of Inclusive Education and how these monitoring results inform further development of inclusive education curricula.

Even if the concepts and strategies exist, this did not yet lead to re-thinking the whole education delivery system (e.g., moving to horizontal accountability of schools, trust and autonomy of teachers, reforming teacher education, re-thinking the strategy of curricula development and entirely re-thinking its content, etc.), which ensures that these strategies are implemented. What happens in reality, is just mere additions of the new concepts to already existing ill-functioning mechanism – e.g., introducing integrated classes, but not developing new integrated education programmes for SEN children in these classes, but merely combining two existing ones (standard curricula and special education one).

The experience of experimental schools (which have piloted inclusive education plans), as well as broader and more frequent consultations with civil society (which do not yet take place) is an important opportunity for re-thinking the existing education delivery system.

Furthermore, the adoption of the Concept itself and on-going revisions of the Education Code with the aim to include integrated concepts of inclusive education (instead of two separate streams) provide an important foundation and opportunity for further development of inclusive education in the country. It is key that a wide and participatory dialogue is established in Belarus around the concept of inclusive education which would cover all diverse groups of learners (not only children with disabilities).

Section 5: Teachers and support personnel

How are staff in schools prepared to accommodate students of all abilities and backgrounds, in terms of their initial training, continuing professional development and their attitudes to inclusion?

Please list type of staff, their numbers and required level of education for the position in different type of educational institutions

General comment:

There is very limited statistics available on teachers and support personnel in official sources. The Statistical Committee provides aggregated data on overall numbers of pedagogical staff, as well as overall numbers of teachers and school heads, disaggregated by area of residence, education level and in some cases, gender. No disaggregation on types of pedagogical staff and types of education institutions they work in is available.

In 2018/2019 in total there were 116 900 pedagogical staff employed in general (compulsory) education – this is 10600 less than in 2012/2013 academic year. 97300 of them were employed as teachers. 18.2% of them were men. Among school heads, women are prevailing as well – 86.4%. Around 68% of schoolteachers are working for more than 15 years and 77.9% of teachers have the highest or first category.

Source: 2019 Education statistics book

There is no statistics on ethnic diversity of teacher force. NGOs report that the right of national minorities to receive education in their language is not fully realised. E.g., Polish minority is one of the biggest in Belarus, but only 1% of Polish minority children receive education in Polish. The employment of Polish teachers (who are citizens of Poland) is restricted. Mostly they work in schools as volunteers. The statistics on ethnic minority pupils in education is not public and is inaccessible for CSO actors and national minority organisations⁸⁹.

Type of staff	Number	Required education ⁹⁰	Comment
Mainstream schools			
Teachers (primary education teachers and subject teachers)	97 300	Higher education (specialist diploma) ⁹¹ or special secondary (средне-специальное) education in pedagogy	<u>2019 Education statistics book (p.72)</u> This number also includes head teachers. Out of which 91400 have higher education degree.

⁸⁹ Alternative report of the coalition of Belarusian NGOs on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Belarus, 2019. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bvQ5T1U1tcZHDi5jQoX7R714YjH1tN_o/view

⁹⁰ The qualification requirements for education professionals are listed in the Decree No 53/2001 on 'Qualifications of workers' by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. All the changes in qualifications are reflected in Ministerial decrees. The most recent one is No 50/2017.

⁹¹ Equivalent to Bachelor level degree.

			The rest have specialised secondary education
Professional staff – School psychologist	M	Higher education (specialist diploma) in Psychology	Provides psychological support to learners and families. Conducts screenings, early interventions, and tracks pupils who need psychological assistance in order to monitor the progress of mental development and learning.
Professional staff – Social pedagogue	M	Higher education (specialist diploma) in Social Pedagogy	Organises and carries out a set of measures and activities for social protection, upbringing, education and development of children in their immediate environment (schools, families, communities).
Professional staff – Defectologist-teacher (Учитель-дефектолог)	M	Higher education (specialist diploma) in Pedagogy with the specialisation in 'Special Education'.	Carries out work aimed at the maximum correction of deviations in the development of children. Identifies children with developmental disorders, conducts their in-depth examination in order to determine the structural and functional disorders. Recommends optimal conditions for the education and upbringing of children with special needs in psychophysical

			development, creates a data bank, and tracks the development dynamics of each child.
Teacher Assistants - Educator/Mentor (Воспитатель)	М	Higher education (specialist diploma) or special secondary (средне-специальное) education in pedagogy	Is responsible for individual development of learners (organises extra-curricula activities at school, additional support for learners). If the school has integrated classes, the Educator is supporting teacher by following up the learning process of children with SEN
Teacher Assistants - Assistant educator (помощник воспитателя)	М	special secondary (средне-специальное) education or general secondary education	Provides care. Usually acts as individual assistant to children with SEN providing support in day-to-day activities
Methodist (методист)	М	Higher education in pedagogy and 2 years of experience	Is responsible for scientific and methodological support at school – analysis pedagogy and school organisation and providing recommendations and support for its improvement.
Non-formal education pedagogue (teacher of additional education)	М	Higher education (specialist diploma) or special secondary (средне-специальное) education in the area of work	Usually employed by non-formal education centres and is responsible for personal, creative, and physical development of learners

Career guidance pedagogue	M	Higher education and specific training in the subject 'Career guidance'	Stimulates and guides learners in choosing qualification, considering age characteristics and social experience of the individual.
Special schools			
Teachers	n/a	Higher education (specialist diploma) or special secondary (средне-специальное) education in pedagogy	Even though official qualification requirements do not require training in special education, most of the teachers who work in special schools did attend courses on special pedagogy as part of CPD. Also, according to the govt report, most of teacher education programmes include basic theory and practice in special pedagogy ⁹² .
Professional staff – Defectologist-teacher (Учитель-дефектолог)	n/a	Higher education (specialist diploma) in Pedagogy with the specialisation in 'Special Education'.	Main functions: as above
Teacher Assistants - Educator/Mentor (Воспитатель)	n/a	Higher education (specialist diploma) or special secondary (средне-специальное) education in pedagogy	When working children with special psycho-physical development who need individual support/guidance, Educators are required to take the training in how to assist children with autistic disorders. Main functions: as above

⁹² State party report submitted by Belarus under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018.

Teacher Assistants Assistant educator (помощник воспитателя)	n/a	special secondary (средне-специальное) education or general secondary education	Main functions: as above
<i>Others (please specify and add rows as required)</i>			
Other institutions offering education if they exist (i.e. children's homes, young offenders institutions etc). According to the gov-t report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child residential institutions are no longer providing education services and children placed in such institutions have to attend regular schools ⁹³ .			

Please indicate if education/training on inclusion in education is available for the following groups of professionals.

General comment:

The Concept on Development of Inclusive Education and its Activity Plan do foresee creation of pre-service and in-service teacher programmes on inclusive education for different categories of pedagogical staff. However, there is no yet evidence on to what extent such programmes have been comprehensively integrated into major teacher preparation institutions and how effective they are in preparing teachers for ensuring inclusive education. UNICEF and governmental reports to UN Committees do show that some progress has already been done in this area.

In 2016, the Institute of Inclusive Education was established within the Faculty of Special Education of the Belarusian State Pedagogical University. It provides training for specialists in special education pedagogy, speech therapy, and correctional pedagogy. It also acts as a scientific research hub in the field of Inclusive education. Closer look at the materials provided at the Institute's website suggests that the focus of these materials is rather on special education provision for learners with special psychophysical development (even if within integrated settings), rather than integrated and inclusive of all learners. The Institute does not provide materials or courses relevant for other types of diversity (such as ethnicity, SES, gender, LGBT, etc.)

The Concept foresees that two teachers are assigned for each inclusive (integrated) group of learners. Teachers are required to have a higher education degree in pedagogy with specialization in Special education or advanced training in inclusive education and mastered the necessarily skills to work with students with special needs.

According to the 2015 Concept of the Development of Inclusive Education, the content of teacher training programme needs to be updated in order to provide education personnel with adequate methodological competencies. With this purpose, the mandatory course "Theory and practice of special education"⁹⁴ has been included in the curriculum of

⁹³ State party report submitted by Belarus to the Committee on the Rights of the Child under article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2018. Available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fBLR%2f5-6&Lang=en

⁹⁴ The course itself still rather focuses on special education provision; through it covers methods of integrated provision to some extent. According to the course curricula, the main aims of the course are:

- to develop students' humanistic attitude towards people with SEN;

higher education institutions for almost all pedagogical staff⁹⁵. Education management and teaching staff is also required to continue attending in-service training to improve their competencies in inclusive education.

In-service teacher training on inclusive education mainly occurs with support of international partners. In 2014–2017, for example, teacher and education manager training on diversity was carried out as part of an international technical assistance project within the European programme for cooperation in education (TEMPUS). Some in-service training opportunities on inclusion are also offered by the state. Every teacher is required to attend CPD courses once in three years (these are provided for free). However, every year there are a multitude of additional courses and seminars on various topics are provided by the National Education Institute and Academy for Advanced studies. Schools can finance these courses if they have spare budget or teachers can self-finance. There are specific trainings offered on inclusion, but mostly special education teachers and teachers-defectologists are taking part in those (according to the interviews with practitioners).

UNICEF has supported the development of targeted teaching materials on inclusion of children with diverse capabilities into regular education within the in-service training provided at the Belarussian State Pedagogical University. With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Education and the Belarusian State Pedagogical University (BSPU) opened in 2017 the National Resources Centre for Inclusive Education at the Inclusive Education Institute of the Maksim Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University. The centre provides trainings for teachers and professionals in the field (both face-to-face and online mentoring) and helps developing teaching and learning materials. By the end of 2018 the centre had increased knowledge of more than 7000 education professionals⁹⁶.

In-service training and methodological support is also provided within regional resource centres (continuously or as one-time events). For instance, Mozyr Regional Centre for Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation organised the Week of Professional Excellence for the Special Education Teachers of the Gomel Region. As part of this event the staff of the Centre shared their productive teaching experience, demonstrated the conditions created for special education programmes. The Centre also helped to organise the methodological association of speech pathologists. The association is carrying out its work mainly in the form of an instructive-methodological or informational-theoretical meeting in which the following problems are raised: “Regulatory and legal support of the correctional-educational process at the level of special education”; “A unified approach to diagnostics and planning

-
- to form students' knowledge about the organization of special education and correctional and pedagogical assistance to children with SEN;
 - to form students' teaching skills in creating a favourable psychological climate in integrated classes;
 - to acquaint students with the content of work with parents of children with SEN;
 - to form students' initial practical skills in the field educational corrective development activities.

See the course curricula, available at: <https://elib.bspu.by/handle/doc/46899>

⁹⁵ State party report submitted by Belarus under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018. Available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CRPD%2fC%2fBLR%2f1&Lang=en

⁹⁶ UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at:

https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

of correctional sessions with children with severe and multiple disabilities (SMD)”; “The use of various correctional approaches in correctional sessions with SMD children”, etc⁹⁷.

In contrast, alternative reports by NGOs state that the existing efforts of training new and employed teachers are not sufficient for addressing the needs of learners with special needs. In-service training on inclusive methodologies is not mandatory for all teachers and often does not cover modern approaches, instruments and tools on working with children with SEN (such as behavioural approaches, alternative communication, neuropsychological methods, etc.). Furthermore, they are still often based on the principles of special (segregated education) and do not equip teachers with necessary knowledge, vision and tools on how to provide education in an integrated inclusive setting with mixed groups of children. Such tools are therefore rarely applied in schools where such children study. Parents often have to apply to private specialists who can support development of their children, which are often very expensive⁹⁸.

In line with the principles of inclusive education, the Law on National Minorities sets forth that education specialists have to be trained taking into account the interests of minorities groups. However, to date no evidence of such trainings has been found.

Type of staff	Yes	No	No information	If yes please state if pre- ⁹⁹ or in-service, mandatory or optional, who provides education/training and summary of content
Head teachers/School directors	X			The pre-service course “Theory and practice of special education” during their in-service pedagogical studies at BSPU (Belarusian state pedagogical university), mandatory The <u>in-service training plans for school heads for 2020</u> do not include courses on inclusion, but rather focus on ensuring quality, innovation and management. Hheads of special schools and Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation are entitled for mandatory in-service training on innovative management of special education institutions.
Teachers	X			The pre-service course “Theory and practice of special education” during their in-service pedagogical studies at BSPU (Belarusian state pedagogical university), mandatory

⁹⁷ Valetov V., Lebedzeu, M. & Paliyeva, T. (2018), The Current State and Development of Inclusive Education in Belarus. A Case Study Using the Mozyr District (Polesye Region) as an Example, International Dialogues on Education: Past and Present, Vol 5. No 1. Available at: <https://www.ide-journal.org/article/2018-volume-5-number-1-the-current-state-and-development-of-inclusive-education-in-belarus-a-case-study-using-the-mozyr-district-polesye-region-as-an-example/>

⁹⁸ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHW_3wKvL6Wcd1l-_SFBY7l

⁹⁹ More detailed information on pre-service training is provided in the Section 5.4 of this report.

			<p>One-time or continuous trainings and seminars on approaches to inclusive education are offered by Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation, optional</p> <p>Various <u>in-service courses</u> on modern methods of working with children with SEN offered at Inclusive Education Institute (BSPU), optional</p> <p><u>The plan for in-service trainings for general education teachers</u> for 2020 includes a number of short courses and seminars on ICT, innovative teaching methods, competence-oriented education, but nothing specific on inclusion.</p> <p>Teachers working in integrated classes, as well as special schools, are offered a number of trainings on innovative methods and tools of education of children with SEN.</p>
Teacher Assistants – Educators/Mentors	X		<p>One-time or continuous trainings and seminars on approaches to inclusive education offered by Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation, optional</p>
Professional Staff (psychologists, social pedagogues, defectologists)	X		<p><u>Initial education programmes for defectologist-teachers</u> at Inclusive Education Institute (BSPU), all the courses are focusing on the work with SEN children (but mostly on the methods of correctional pedagogy and special education provision)</p> <p>One-time or continuous trainings and seminars on approaches to inclusive education offered by Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation, optional</p> <p><u>The plan for in-service trainings for Methodist-teachers</u> for 2020 include a 4-day course on innovative methods in education and inclusive education, as well as on developing intercultural competence in learners.</p> <p>Social pedagogues and psychologists are also offered an in-service course on developing gender cultures in schools, as well as support to learners in social danger in 2020. However, the content of the course is not available.</p>

Inspectors			X	
Teacher Trainers			X	
Others (please list add rows as required)				

a. If you answered no to any of the above, please provide further information:

Is education and training of teachers aligned with national policy goals on inclusive education?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, please give a description.

According to the 2015 Concept of the Development of Inclusive Education, the content of teacher training programme needs to be updated in order to provide education personnel with adequate methodological competencies. Necessary steps in modernising and re-thinking teacher education (as described above) are being taken in line with those outlined in the Concept and in the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016–2020.

If no, please give further information:

With respect to the main initial teacher education programmes, describe how inclusion in education is addressed in it (i.e. requirement for number of academic credits under European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), subjects and topics covered, focus etc).

Note: there are no credit requirements under ECTS in Belarus HE; the requirements are expressed in academic hours.

The main ITE provider in Belarus is Belarusian State Pedagogical University. It offers 64 Bachelor Programmes and 18 Master programmes. Below are the examples of Bachelor programmes for future schoolteachers:

1)At the Inclusive Education Institute – 4 programmes are offered: speech therapy, pedagogy for children with hearing impairments, pedagogy for blind and visually impaired, oligophrenopedagogy. These are specialised programmes for teacher-defectologists, who will be working directly with children with SEN in integrated classes or special schools and centres. The focus and content of the programmes is directed at special education methods, special pedagogy, teaching approaches for children with SEN, etc.

2)Primary education programme (4-year programme, 7754 academic hours in total) preparing teachers for working with children at Grades 1-4. The curricula of the programme does not include any specific courses on inclusion or diversity, but offers on course on correctional pedagogy and the course 'Theory and practice of Special Education' (58 hours).

3)Education programmes for most subject teachers do include the course 'Theory and practice of Special Education' (58 hours) during the 4th (last one) years of studies. The course 'Pedagogy' also includes specific modules on the approaches working in integrated classes, differentiation and individualisation of education, correctional pedagogy, but other than that there are no further references to inclusion and diversity.

4)BSPU offers two study programmes – Belarusian language as a second language and Russian language as a second language, aiming to prepare teachers to work with children whose mother tongue is other than Russian or Belarusian.

Special education programmes are offered in 5 universities: Belarusian State Pedagogical University, Mozyr State Pedagogical University, Vitebsk State University, Grodno State University, Mogilev State University.

Based on these examples, there is no clear indication that inclusion is comprehensively integrated into pre-service teacher training in Belarus. Although the content of some courses and programmes do mention the intention to prepare teachers to work in integrated classes (aimed at inclusion of learners with disabilities and SEN in mainstream schooling), the extent to which the training is on inclusion, but not on the methods of special education, is not clear. The analysis in the previous sections demonstrated that in practice integrated classes are following two separate curricula (special education plans for children with SEN and general education for all other children) and children are separated in many subjects. Though in some subjects (e.g., music, crafts, physical training) children are mixed together and teachers do receive some training (but mostly pre-service) on how to include all children in the learning process in an integrated setting.

Other types of diversity do not seem to be explicitly or comprehensively addressed in pre-service or in-service training.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 relating to initial teacher education and/or professional development issues.

No specific reports or studies related to teacher training in inclusive education have been identified. Interviewees could not direct to any studies either.

There are few general reports by NGOs on the right of children with disabilities and on the rights of the child in general, which indirectly refer to the content of education (when discussing children's rights to education); however this information is not very extensive and these sources have been referenced above, where relevant.

There is a report produced by Levania (2018) on the state of inclusive education (focusing only on children with SEN) in Belarus; however, it does not analyse the situation with and content of teacher training programmes to day, with the exception of a few references to general lack of teacher preparedness to deal with children with disabilities (see Section 5.2.).

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to teachers and support personnel in the country?

In line with the Concept on Development of Inclusive Education, a number of steps have been taken to improve existing teacher preparation programmes in terms of inclusive education. A number of pre-service modules (such as Theory and practice of special education) has been added as mandatory elements to all teacher education programmes. Furthermore, a selection of in-service trainings (offered by the state institutions) have been focusing on the issues of inclusion – though these trainings are not mandatory.

Closer looks at the content of these trainings, suggests that many of them are still based on the principles and methods of special pedagogy (which is usually of segregated nature, even if provided in the so-called integrated/inclusive settings). The only course that is mandatory for all teachers (primary and secondary) is Theory and practice of special education, which also mostly covers the issues of correctional pedagogy; however, the aims of the course do state

that teachers are expected to know how to organise learning in an integrated setting at the end of this course. There are a number of courses on innovative methods of teaching, screening and early interventions in the work with children with disabilities offered by BSPU, but those are targeted mostly at special education teachers.

Also, there is no information yet on the quality and effectiveness of these modules and in-service trainings. Scarce evidence from alternative sources indicates that teachers are still largely unprepared to work with children with disabilities and SEN and lack necessary knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, these trainings do not use the know-how from other specialist institutions and do not exploit opportunities of collaboration with healthcare providers and NGOs¹⁰⁰.

Furthermore, available education opportunities for teachers are still rather selective and are not available to all teachers. Many of those are targeting those working in special institutions; therefore, de facto promoting the model of segregationist education – rather than improving the capacity of all teachers to deal with diversity. Mainstream classroom teachers do not often receive the support they need to ensure inclusion of all adolescents with SEN or other diverse learners. Despite the existence of diverse Ministry-issued resources, they have been inconsistently applied across the regions, and often inclusion depends on the level of progressiveness of the principals and teachers¹⁰¹.

However, the newly created resources centres within regional Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation are offering a number of trainings and mentoring possibilities to schools and teachers upon request (according to the interview data) and pose an opportunity for becoming knowledge hub in inclusive education (with the support of international organisations in advertising their focus from special education to inclusive education).

As the Concept and other educational policy documents understand inclusion mostly by integration of learners with SEN, so do the teacher preparation programmes address inclusion in a narrow perspective – focusing on the needs of learners with disabilities and the capacity of teachers and other staff to work with such children.

There was no clear evidence found on comprehensive inclusion of other diversity topics into teacher education (such as gender education, LGBT, education of migrant and refugee children, etc.). There are some trainings available on gender cultures and intercultural competence, but they are offered only to psychologists and methodists, rather than to all teachers.

¹⁰⁰ Radyhina, V. and Turchanka, I. (2017), Development of Non-Discrimination Ideas in Education in European Countries and Belarus, Eastern European Journal of Transnational Relations, 2017 Vol. 1 No. 1. DOI: 10.15290/eejtr.2017.01.01.05

¹⁰¹ UNICEF (2018), Thematic evaluation of Government interventions and UNICEF contribution to reducing vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience and promoting the rights of adolescents in Belarus.

Section 6: Schools

How does the work of schools, school management and leadership impact on access, participation and provision of equitable opportunities for all learners?

Who is excluded from attending any form of school?

This review has identified the following groups of children, which can be excluded from any form of education:

Children in institutions

With the support of UNICEF, Belarus has been implementing the de-institutionalisation reform over the recent years. By end-2017 some 19,160 children were registered as orphaned or without parental care, of whom 3,019 (15.8 per cent) were in state-provided residential care; 2.2 per cent in children's villages and 82 per cent in alternative family-based care (including family-type small group homes, fostering and guardianship). The share of children in residential care has decreased substantially over time, as the share in alternative, family-based care options such as fostering and small group homes has increased. Although progress was achieved in reducing the institutionalization of children, improvements have not benefitted all children equally. Children with disabilities and special education needs remain among the most vulnerable to institutionalization, representing 70 per cent of children in infant homes and 54 per cent of children in other residential care institutions¹⁰².

Since 2011, education in residential homes for children with physical or psychological development issues run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has been organized by education establishments local to the relevant social services unit¹⁰³. In most of the cases these are special schools, rather than mainstream education. And in many cases, educational arrangements are still made by the teaching staff of children's residential homes.

Children with disabilities and SEN

Even though some progress has been achieved in integrating children with disabilities into formal schooling (either special or integrated classes in mainstream schools or special schools), according to the 2018 household disability survey, 12% of children with disabilities were not attending any form of education. The more complex the child's disability, the more likely that the child will not be covered by educational programmes: 35.2 per cent of children with severe disabilities do not attend educational institutions. The most frequent reasons for not being enrolled in any form of education were: medical decisions/statements preventing from attending education (74%), need of tutors and non-availability of such in educational institutions (16%), no educational institutions in the area of residence (10%). Alternative NGO reports further confirm that the decisions of psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions in Centres for Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation often recommend children for special education or home-schooling. If parents do not agree with such a decision (which is their right by law), the Commission

¹⁰² UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

¹⁰³ State party report submitted by Belarus to the Committee on the Rights of the Child under article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2018.

can recommend general school, but without assigning special support and assistants, which de facto forces parents to agree to the offer in a specialised school or education at home¹⁰⁴.

Access to pre-school was even more limited, especially in rural areas. Only 50% of children with registered disabilities were enrolled in kindergartens in 2018.

For every third child with disability (32 per cent), physical exercise and sports are likely to be partially or completely inaccessible. The main barriers are non-adaptation of services to the physical capabilities of persons with disabilities, lack of information about services for people with disabilities and high prices and unwillingness of staff to assist persons with disabilities in overcoming barriers that prevent them from receiving services on par with others.

Roma children

Belarus does not have Roma integration strategy and does not collect any official statistics on living conditions and access to services of Roma population the country. According to the monitoring conducted by NGOs, 85% of Roma families in Belarus live in poverty (below the poverty line) and 6% of children are identified as being in 'social danger' because of family 'dysfunctionality'¹⁰⁵. However, there are no state measures taken to improve the situation of Roma, regardless of the recommendations from the UN Committee on the elimination of racial discrimination¹⁰⁶.

11% of school-aged Roma children do not attend school due to low achievement (and therefore dropping out) and lack of resources to buy clothes and necessary school materials.

Refugees and unaccompanied minors

Unaccompanied children and children separated from their parents, as well as refugee children with families, face serious violations of their rights, including immigration detention, separation from families and arbitrary expulsions.

According to the official statistics of Ministry of Interior, there are 70 refugee children in Belarus in 2020¹⁰⁷. Human rights organisations, such as Human Constanta often report about limited access of refugee families (mostly transit) to services and formal education (even though the law guarantees the same right as for Belarusian citizens). As a result, many of them receive only non-formal education provided by activists and volunteers¹⁰⁸. Additional education activities are also organised by UNHCR in cooperation with local actors (such as Centre of additional education 'Eureka')¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁴ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHw_3wKvL6Wcd1I-_SFBy7I

¹⁰⁵ Socio-economic situation of Roma population in Belarus, 2019. Available at: http://romaintegration.by/?page_id=7

¹⁰⁶ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2017), Concluding observations on the combined twentieth to twenty-third periodic reports of Belarus. CERD/C/BLR/CO/20-23

¹⁰⁷ See e.g., press release 'There are 70 refugee children in Belarus', available at: <https://www.sb.by/articles/v-belarusi-prozhivaet-70-detey-bezhentsev.html>

¹⁰⁸ See e.g., <https://humanconstantaby/en/publications-en/>

¹⁰⁹ See e.g., <https://www.unhcr.org/by/ru/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%82%D1%8B>

Are there issues around the over- and under-representation of different vulnerable groups in different school settings?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description and provide any data/evidence that is available

Children with disabilities are overrepresented in special education institutions or segregated special classes. The household disability survey reported that 62% of children with registered disabilities attend mainstream primary and secondary schools (but even in this case are enrolled in separate isolated classes). Yet, closer analysis shows that those included are mainly children with mild developmental difficulties, such as mild speech disorders¹¹⁰.

Please give details on the main admissions criteria for schools.

a. Highlight any issues with the national policies.

2011 Education Code states that access to compulsory education is granted upon the demonstration of ID (birth certificate or passport) and health certificate. In practice this can result in rejection in admission to some groups of learners (children with disabilities or undocumented migrants).

Some schools (gymnasiums and specialised sport/art schools) apply additional admission criteria – entry tests on specific subjects. Learners are then enrolled based on the test results on a competitive basis. In case of boarding school-gymnasiums, some groups of learners (orphans, children from large families, children from rural areas) are guaranteed admission if their entry grade is not lower than 6.

b. Where schools set their own admissions criteria, please outline any impact on inclusion.

The choice of educational institution within the framework of special or general schools is affected by the Decree of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus from 12/22/2011 No. 128 "On the determination of medical indications and contraindications for education". Despite the fact that according to Art. 265 of the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus, placing a child with a disability in special educational institutions, is possible only with the written consent of their legal representative, in practice, parents with reference to the Decree No. 128 are usually forced into choosing special schools or home schooling, which prevents the idea of inclusive education¹¹¹.

Please provide information on the different forms of support that are available to learners in schools.

a. Inclusive pedagogy, personalised learning and universal design approaches

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, please give a description.

The in-service training plans for school staff for 2020 include courses on modern teaching approaches, differentiation and individualisation of learning, etc. However, no reviews on to what extent these trainings equip teachers with necessary skills and these approaches are practiced in schools have been identified.

¹¹⁰ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Some scarce research suggests that regardless of positive policy developments and strategies on inclusion inclusive pedagogy is still difficult to ensure in practice. Radyhina and Turchanka (2017) say that inclusive culture in schools has not been developed yet; many school professionals and parents are still functionally illiterate in the area of child protection and educational rights. When it comes to education of children with SEN, emphasis is on the cognitive component of education and the role of schools in socialization and social development of children is diminished. Furthermore, schools underutilise the potential for cross-sectoral collaboration with healthcare providers and NGOs¹¹². However, there are a number of positive examples too – such as the experimental schools in which inclusive education approaches were piloted under the Activity Plan for implementation of the Concept on Development of Inclusive Education¹¹³.

Barriers that schools face in implementing inclusive education approaches are often related to rigid and in-flexible frameworks defined at the national level, leaving schools with no discretion to adjust their teaching practices; lack of additional support staff for working with children with SEN in an inclusive classrooms; frequent and formal school inspections (every 5 years) and attestations, overburdening school staff with paperwork.

National assessment studies conducted by National Education Institute are focusing mostly on the achievement of children and do not cover school climate or existing pedagogical approaches. PISA 2018 results (first time Belarus took part in PISA) demonstrate that majority of pupils believe that their teachers are enthusiastic about teaching (77%) and encourage children's collaboration in the class (56%)¹¹⁴.

PISA 2018 results also demonstrate that 19% of pupils in Belarus have experienced bullying over the last few months. Belarus with the UNICEF support have been taking efforts to promote safe learning environments. Combining the UNICEF strategies of advocacy through evidence generation and promotion of horizontal collaboration, UNICEF Belarus initiated plans for integrating the safe and enabling environments in schools (SEES) model. SEES applies a 'whole community' approach where all stakeholders collaborate to address violence among peers (bullying) in school settings, which was developed by UNICEF-Croatia and tested over an eight-year period. In spring 2018 Croatian experts came to Belarus on a technical mission to consult with the MoE and relevant education professionals to explore opportunities for adapting the SEES model for Belarus. The manual for the SEES programme has been adapted, through consultations with teachers, CSOs and young people. In collaboration with the MoE, the programme is being in selected schools during the 2019-2020 academic year¹¹⁵.

If no, please give further information:

¹¹² Radyhina, V. and Turchanka, I. (2017), Development of Non-Discrimination Ideas in Education in European Countries and Belarus, Eastern European Journal of Transnational Relations, 2017 Vol. 1 No. 1. DOI: 10.15290/eejtr.2017.01.01.05

¹¹³ See e.g., Mozyr Secondary School № 10 described in Valetov V., Lebedzeu, M. & Paliyeva, T. (2018), The Current State and Development of Inclusive Education in Belarus. A Case Study Using the Mozyr District (Polesye Region) as an Example, International Dialogues on Education: Past and Present, Vol 5. No 1. Available at: <https://www.ide-journal.org/article/2018-volume-5-number-1-the-current-state-and-development-of-inclusive-education-in-belarus-a-case-study-using-the-mozyr-district-polesye-region-as-an-example/>

¹¹⁴ PISA 2018 Country note: Belarus. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_BLR.pdf

¹¹⁵ UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

b. counselling and mentoring possibilities

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Most schools have school counselling and support services. School psychologist and social pedagogues are key players in supporting children adolescents facing difficulties – such as those living in families at social risk, those with substance abuse, etc. Children and parents who are in need of advice are always welcome and encouraged to consult with these professionals directly. However, as risk assessments of such children are conducted through schools, often the adolescents that are already out of school are not supported. But usually the list of functions of these professionals is very diverse and covers all students who attend school which makes it difficult for these professionals to provide comprehensive and continuous support to all children at risk.

UNICEF evaluation reports that many adolescents in Belarus experience anxiety, depression and other symptoms of mental health. The government issued a set of measures to prevent suicides, but they overemphasize the medical aspects and do not pay sufficient attention to the role of educators in promoting positive mental health at school and supporting students who may have mental health problems. It is expected that the implementation of the MoE's methodological recommendations on the organization of work on the prevention of suicidal behaviour of students can contribute to building such a positive climate in schools and address mental health challenges of many students. As adolescents' mental health is a broader topic that cannot be reduced to suicide prevention and it may include substance use and addiction, it requires more comprehensive measures supporting students on how to deal with stress, anxiety, emotional challenges and developing resilience to deal with challenges in life¹¹⁶.

If no, please give further information:

c. input from specialist teachers/therapists

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, please give a description.

Defectologist-teachers and speech therapists are available in regional resource centres (Centres for Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation) and also often employed within schools. They also lead the education process for children with SEN in special classes and schools. However, NGOs report that there is still a lack of support in general and special schools in this regard. For instance, there are almost no specialists trained to work with autistic children (regardless of the fact that the number of such children is growing). The teacher education system offers limited possibility for preparing such specialists and the currently practiced methods in schools and regional resource centres for diagnostics and support of autistic children are outdated¹¹⁷.

If no, please give further information:

¹¹⁶ UNICEF (2018), Thematic evaluation of Government interventions and UNICEF contribution to reducing vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience and promoting the rights of adolescents in Belarus.

¹¹⁷ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published.

d. input from learning support assistants

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (very limited)

If yes, please give a description.

The possibility of providing additional support to students with SEN (such as learning support assistants) is legally defined only for pupils with autistic disorders¹¹⁸. Support students with other types of disorders is not foreseen in the law, which often leads to the fact that psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions when deciding on the type of education of a child with SEN are not including recommendation on the need of services of personal assistants, which would oblige schools enrolling such children to provide one. This contradicts the existing strategy on developing inclusive education. The Concept recognizes the need to organise accompaniment (assisting) as part of an adaptive education environment.

However, in practice even children with ASD are not often granted the possibility of having learning assistant. Educational institutions often refer to a lack of funds for the employment of an individual assistant. Many parents in this situation pay for the services of an assistant on their own, but parents must obtain the consent of the educational institution. If the administration refuses, the parents are forced to queue and wait for the next year, when, possibly, the institution will have funds for hiring such an assistant. Also, there are no economic and legal incentives on the state level to attract qualified personnel to the position of a learning assistant. Law allows schools employing such an assistant only for one school year. In summer, such an employee is left without work and job guarantees for the new school year. The salary of the assistant (“assistant educator”) is lower than the salary of the educator or teacher¹¹⁹.

Alternatively, the centres of additional education established almost in every city and town, can offer additional support classes to children with SEN using the help of specialised teachers. Professionals of these centres also often offer home-based education for children with SEN which do not go to any type of school.

If no, please give further information:

e. availability of ICT/ assistive technology

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

According to the State party report to the CRPD, children receive assistive technology free of charge or on preferential terms in accordance with the State register (list) of assistive technology¹²⁰. The list of equipment and ICT-assistive technology required to be provided in special schools is defined by the Ministry and is constantly being updated with new assistive technology.

¹¹⁸ State party report submitted by Belarus under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018.

¹¹⁹ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published.

¹²⁰ State party report submitted by Belarus under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018.

Nation Education Institute also publishes recommendations on the use of different ICT assistive technologies in special education schools within its scientific lab 'Education without limits'.

f. Please describe any other forms of support available.

Based on the anecdotal evidence from interviews, schools are quite active in collaborating with each other and sharing resources and know-how. They organise information weeks, learning seminars and festivals. However, the topics of inclusions are not the first priority in such collaborations.

The themes of sustainable development are on the rise now. There are international networks of schools – such as Association for promotion of sustainable development. They organise joint projects, events, festivals. Every school organises something and invites other schools. The Ministry also promotes experimental activities and programmes. Each school can participate and introduce additional themes/subjects. Examples of topics that are offered are related to environmental management or social adaptation of children.

Schools organise joint debates on different SDGs: lifelong learning, clean energy, active cities.

Please give a description of the strategies in place for practically supporting mainstream school staff teams to increase their capacity to be inclusive and to improve access, participation and achievement for all learners.

Strategy	Description of the focus
Regional resource centres (Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation)	MoE regional (oblast) resource centres provide ongoing methodological support and supervision to schools on transitioning to inclusive classrooms. The resource centres were created within the existing network of correctional developmental centres at the regional level, and currently provide methodological support for diagnostics and the development of individual learning/rehabilitation plans to similar centres at the district level. UNICEF facilitated with the MoE and regional centre directors to strengthen the role of this centres in providing support to schools and transfer knowledge currently available at these centres to education professionals in mainstream schools. Thus, the regional centres become a bridge, providing ongoing methodological support for schools' transition to inclusion. UNICEF Belarus initiated the normative provisions for establishment of IE resource centres and provided methodological and diagnostic resources to facilitate their new role ¹²¹ . The centres also organise Information weeks and seminars for school professionals on the issues of inclusion ¹²² .

¹²¹ UNICEF (2018), Country office annual report for Belarus. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_2018_COAR.pdf

¹²² See e.g., Valetov V., Lebedzeu, M. & Paliyeva, T. (2018), The Current State and Development of Inclusive Education in Belarus. A Case Study Using the Mozyr District (Polesye Region) as an Example, International Dialogues on Education: Past and Present, Vol 5. No 1. Available at: <https://www.ide-journal.org/article/2018-volume-5-number-1-the-current-state-and-development-of-inclusive-education-in-belarus-a-case-study-using-the-mozyr-district-polesye-region-as-an-example/>

<u>Republican resource centre for inclusive education</u>	The centre for methodical materials and support to teachers created under the Inclusive Education Institute at BSPU. The centre helps develop guidance materials for implementing inclusive education in schools, as well as provide face-to-face and online mentoring and consultations to teachers on the issues. It also offers in-service training courses for teachers and other professionals.
---	--

Please provide information regarding school buildings and infrastructure.

a. Are there schools that face infrastructure issues that are barriers to inclusion?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description and provide information on what barriers, how they are monitored and any data/evidence that is available.

To give effect to the 2005 Council regulation on additional measures to create barrier-free environments for persons with disabilities, ensuring free access to public transports, places of study, work and entertainment, a government programme was implemented in 2011-2015, also involving the Ministry of Education. Some efforts (introducing ramps, elevators, doorways, specially equipped toilets) have already been done in this regard and a number of schools have been modernised to improve access for children with disabilities, which is also in line with the Concept Development of Inclusive education and the State Education and Youth Policy Programme 2016-2020. These efforts are further supported by the World Bank through Education Modernisation Project.

However, NGO reviews demonstrate that the progress in creating barrier-free environment is rather slow. Only a handful of schools have been to date re-designed in this regard and only in major cities¹²³. Mostly the strategy is to build new schools with universal design, rather than re-design the old school buildings.

The question on transport for children with disabilities to get to schools also remains open. Some cities, even if schools with barrier-free environment exist there, have not yet organised specialised transport for children with SEN to be able to get there. In Minsk, law regulates the right of people with disabilities (including children) to use specialised transport provided by municipality free of charge, but only 2 times per week, which does not cover the transport needs fully¹²⁴.

If no, please give further information:

b. Are there strategies and/or initiatives to improve school buildings and infrastructure?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please describe the strategies, their aim and focus.

Strategy	Description of the focus
<u>WB Education Modernisation Project</u>	The development objectives of Education Modernization Project are to: (i) improve access to quality learning environment in selected

¹²³ See e.g., press release of the Office on the rights of people with disabilities, available here: <http://disright.org/ru/news/specialnoe-obrazovanie-v-novom-uchebnom-godu-fakty-i-cifry>

¹²⁴ Ibid.

	general secondary schools, including creating barrier-free environments; and (ii) strengthen student assessment and education management information systems of Belarus.
<u>The Concept on Development of Inclusive Education and its Activity Plan</u>	They foresee creating barrier-free environment according to the local context needs in at least 10% of general education schools in the period of 2016 – 2020. There are no publicly available monitoring reports on the results of these activities. However, Office on the Rights of People with Disabilities highlights that the existing efforts are still very minimal and have not lead to the desired progress ¹²⁵ .
...	

If no, please give further information:

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) from any recent reports, systematic evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of the school system, potentially drawing on information from school inspections and / or school self-review work.

N/A

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to schools in the country?

—Slow progress in creating barrier-free environment in general education schools and inclusive school climates. Schools that have received the status of inclusive/experimental schools continue to remain closed in terms of information about the methods and pedagogies and piloting results: only experimental curricula are publicly available, but public and expert discussions are not held on their content, implementation progress and results. Potentially these schools could take the role of leading inclusive schools and become knowledge hubs for other schools in the country, if the monitoring process and transparency of its results are strengthened.

—There is a need to improve the network of schools that are able to address the needs of children with SEN across the country, most importantly reaching small towns and rural areas.

—Regardless of positive policy developments and strategies on inclusion inclusive pedagogy is still difficult to ensure in practice. With the exception of a few positive examples, inclusive culture in schools has not been developed yet; many school professionals and parents are still functionally illiterate in the area of child protection and educational rights and feel unprepared to address the needs of children. When it comes to education of children with SEN, emphasis is on the cognitive component of education and the role of schools in socialization and social development of children is diminished. Furthermore, schools underutilise the potential for cross-sectoral collaboration with healthcare providers and NGOs. Barriers that schools face in implementing inclusive education approaches are often related to rigid and in-flexible frameworks defined at the national level, leaving schools with no discretion to adjust

¹²⁵ Press release on the rules of creating barrier-free environment in Belarus, 8 February 2020. Available at: <http://www.disright.org/ru/news/o-pravilah-obespecheniya-dostupnosti-infrastruktury-dlya-lic-s-invalidnostyu>

their teaching practices; lack of additional support staff for working with children with SEN in an inclusive classrooms; frequent and formal school inspections (every 5 years) and attestations, overburdening school staff with paperwork.

—Lack of additional support staff, mentors and educators that are needed to support the work of teachers with children with SEN. The possibility to employ assistant education for individualised support is limited only to narrow group of children with SEN. The position of tutors and mentors is not even foreseen in existing legislation¹²⁶.

¹²⁶ See e.g., article by Levania Centre on the need of introducing the role of tutors in Belarus, available here: <http://levania.by/ru/%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0/%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%88%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8/%D1%82%D1%8C%D1%8E%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B2-%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D0%B8/>

Section 7: Communities, parents and students

How far does the wider school community support learners to access and benefit from education opportunities?

Have there been any campaigns to raise awareness of inclusion in education at national or local level?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

An important challenge in promoting inclusion in education in Belarus is the lack of awareness of different needs of pupils with different backgrounds and lack of tolerance to various types of diversity – among school community and the society at large. To challenge existing stereotypes awareness-raising campaigns are frequently organised by the state in collaboration with UN agencies nationally or by CSOs actors. The Concept on Development of Inclusive Education and the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy 2016-2020 foresee organisation of informational and awareness-raising events as part of the measures to promote inclusion in education.

Examples are provided below:

-In 2017, the National Centre for Legal Information worked with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on a project entitled “Making children and adolescents aware of their rights through adapted information materials”. As part of the project, seminars were held in various regions between September and December 2017 to increase awareness about the child-friendly legal portal (including information on their rights to education), in the hope that these resources will be used actively to educate children and young people and build a legal culture.

-In 2017 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNICEF have been organised a joint awareness-raising event called “Partnership for Children”, timed to coincide with the celebration of International Children’s Day on 1 June. A wide circle of representatives of State bodies, international organizations, NGOs, business, parliament, the media and other partners took part in this event. The main participants were children, with diverse backgrounds, including orphans and children with physical or psychological development issues.

-Republican Resource Centre for Inclusive Education regularly holds public webinars, consultations and training events on the questions of inclusion in education. However, these are not reaching beyond professional community.

Besides, state actors, NGOs, DPOs and CSOs organisations (such as Office on the Rights of People with Disabilities, Human Constanta, Levanina centre, Romaintegration, etc.) are regularly organising local public awareness campaigns on the issues of inclusion, tolerance, respect to diversity and rights violations of different groups of Belarusian society.

As a result of public and educational campaigns of general population, there are positive shifts in the public attitudes towards people with SEN and inclusive education. According to the public opinion survey conducted by Konvekt in

2019, 63% of respondents believed that integrated education is beneficial for both children with disabilities and other learners (compared to 34% in 2012)¹²⁷.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support parental involvement in schools?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

The 2011 Education Code encourages the creation of parental committees in general education institutions to represent the interests of their children in school decision-making processes. However, such committees are rather formal and rarely include parents of diverse backgrounds.

The Concept on Development of Inclusive Education and its Activity Plan foresee the organisation of different cultural, sport, and non-formal education events with children with disabilities and their parents. Interview data demonstrate that schools are making efforts to include parents in education process and also use the help of Centres of additional education to support social adaptation of families with children with disabilities. Various NGOs are also working with families and parents.

Parents are included through traditional parental meetings and Viber groups. Schools also practice Parents' academies. Once per quarter, school organizes education activities and exchanges for parents. Parents can request a topic of interest and the specialist with whom they want to talk – e.g., conversation with psychologist on parent-kid relationships; suicidal behaviours and how to recognise it and prevent, how to work with children at risk, healthy nutrition.

The in-service training plans for school professionals for 2020 include courses on parental involvement; however no information is available on a more detailed content of such courses and whether teachers found them useful and apply this knowledge in practice. Only rare NGOs report that parental participation in child's education process and school activities is not encouraged, and many parents are not legally literate on the rights of their children with SEN¹²⁸.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support collaboration between schools and stakeholders in their local communities (e.g. services/employers)?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes (to some extent)

If yes, please give a description.

¹²⁷ Office on the rights of people with disabilities (2019). Report based on the results of public opinion survey conducted by Konvekt company in 2019. Available at:

http://www.disright.org/sites/default/files/source/05.11.2019/nacionalnyi_opros_2019_konvekt.pdf

¹²⁸ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published.

Schools are encouraged to collaborate with the Regional Centres for Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation as described in the Section 6.

There are a number of youth organisations where pupils are encouraged to enrol. Every school has a teacher-organiser who is responsible for extra-curricular activities. Schools are also actively collaborating with external organisations – e.g., Forest department, garbage recycling plants. There is environmental movement – Time of Earth – children join the volunteer movements and clean the surroundings or prepare projects on environmental themes.

There are collaborations with Red Cross on social questions.

Schools can also invite famous people to give lectures or seminars or take part in the projects. There are also external organisations, such as Centres for Development of Youth (Центр молодежного творчества). These are state non-formal education organisations. They organise NFE activities for children from all schools. They develop a plan and send it around to schools and invite children to join. They often organise inclusion events for social adaptation of children with SEN where they can interact with other kids – through art, concerts, festivals. They are also trying to work with refugees and minorities. They also organise activities for difficult children (or young delinquents) – e.g., theatre and role plays with the help of psychologists.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support the development of learning communities in local/regional areas e.g. support for schools to work together; involvement with universities, support services to provide research evidence and development of innovative practice?

☐ NoX No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

All the information and guidance are provided centrally through the Ministry, National Education Institute (in charge of development of innovative practices) and Regional resource centres (Centres of Correctional and Developmental Education and Rehabilitation) tasked to provide consultations to schools. These Centres are also active in collaborating with each other, organising information weeks, peer-learning activities, etc.

Based on the anecdotal evidence from interviews, schools are quite active in collaborating with each other and sharing resources and know-how. They organise information weeks, learning seminars and festivals. However, the topics of inclusions are not the first priority in such collaborations.

The themes of sustainable development are on the rise now. There are international networks of schools – such as Association for promotion of sustainable development. They organise joint projects, events, festivals. Every school organises something and invites other schools. The Ministry also promotes experimental activities and programmes. Each school can participate and introduce additional themes/subjects. Examples of topics that are offered are related to environmental management or social adaptation of children.

Schools organise joint debates on different SDGs: lifelong learning, clean energy, active cities.

Does legislation/policy set out a role for NGOs, DPOs, or other organisations representing vulnerable groups?

X No (Partly) ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please describe the role. Specify which non-governmental actors are particularly active in inclusion in education and how they operate.

If no, please give further information:

According to the State party report to the UN Committees, NGOs and DPOs play an important role in representing the rights of vulnerable groups and are represented in the key monitoring organs/councils tasked with monitoring the implementation of the major UN conventions in Belarus (such as Disability Council, National Minority Council). However, in practice the role of these groups in influencing the policy is limited.

In addition, cuts in international donors' funding and CSOs limited access to local funding has weakened the sector still further. The only positive from this is that CSOs have had to develop the trust of Belarusians and this improvement is shown in the increased amount of crowdfunding success they have had as well as attracting volunteers¹²⁹.

Collaboration of schools and non-government sector is not legally defined. However, there are numerous examples of NGOs and other organisations (including business sector) in improving access to education of vulnerable groups and providing non-formal education activities to all children:

- Levania centre provides inclusive education and support to children with disabilities.

- Human Constanta organised the following educational activities in 2018:

 - Digital freedom lab

 - Digital privacy school

 - Antidiscrimination and human rights education seminars

 - The friendship fest in Brest

 - Human rights creative camp¹³⁰

- Belarussian association on the support of children and young people with disabilities offers non-formal education opportunities.

- 'Different and equal' association also provides a variety of trainings and events to enhance social adaptation of children and young people with disabilities.

- Makeout NGO organises Various educational and cultural events (i.e. workshops, lectures, roundtables, screenings and discussions), raising issues of gender, sexuality, identity, antidiscrimination, feminism, etc.

¹²⁹ <https://www.hospice.by/upload/iblock/c35/Final-Evaluation-of-BCH.pdf>

¹³⁰ Human Constanta (2018), Public report.

- EPAM Systems (leading IT company in Belarus) offers digital literacy courses to refugee children and adolescents¹³¹.
- Priorbank in partnership with UNICEF have launched the fundraising campaign through mobile bank app in support of children with disabilities and their families. With the help of raised funds families can afford hiring individual assistants to support their children's learning in schools¹³².
- UNICEF in cooperation with cell phone company MTS organised educational activities on internet safety of children and adolescents.
- Etc.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) from any recent reports, systematic evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of parental and wider community involvement in the work of schools.

N/A

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to communities, parents and students in the country?

There is a need to strengthen collaboration between parents and schools, especially when it comes to learning of children with disabilities. For the moment, the participation of parents in the educational process occurs only at the initiative of the parents themselves (if they are sufficiently aware of the existence of such a right) and if there is a will on the part of the educational institution. For example, in schools, a Council of psychological and pedagogical support is organized in accordance with the Methodological Recommendations for improving the work on the organization of integrated training and education. The legal representative of the child is entitled to attend the meetings of the council and make their contributions to the diagnostic map of psychological and pedagogical support. However, in practice, legal representatives simply are not informed about these opportunities and the upcoming meetings, the signature of the legal representative is not required on the diagnostic map itself¹³³.

More public campaigns and information events are necessary to increase the level of legal literacy of vulnerable groups, well as professionals. For instance, NGOs report very low level of awareness of legal representatives and specialists about the legislative rights of children with disabilities: the right to individual assistance for a number of categories of children, the creation of integrated groups and classes in mainstream kindergartens and schools, transportation of students, etc. The level of awareness in small towns and rural settlements is extremely unsatisfactory¹³⁴.

¹³¹ <https://www.sb.by/articles/v-belarusi-prozhivaet-70-detey-bezhentsev.html>

¹³² The details of the project are available here: <https://www.unicef.by/prior-deti/>

¹³³ Levania centre (2018), The situation analysis of the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities to education. Monitoring report. December 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bD9OuJV0uXHW_3wKvL6Wcd1I-_SFBy7I

¹³⁴ Alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the Republic of Belarus. Prepared by the coalition of NGOs (2020). Not yet published.

There is a need to strengthen the NGO and non-formal education sector and promote their partnerships with schools, which would strengthen school capacity in offering adequate, flexible and innovative support to learners with diverse needs.

