

# FOREWORD

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education is an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration between our member countries in the field of special needs and inclusive education. We are the only European body with the specific mission of helping countries improve the quality and effectiveness of their educational provision for all learners, including those with disabilities and/or special educational needs.

At present, we have 29 member countries: Austria, Belgium (Flemish- and French-speaking communities), Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

We offer our member countries a unique opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience so that quality in inclusive education in each member country is promoted. Our member countries can learn from each other by drawing upon our ability to provide different types of real-time and virtual opportunities for exchanging knowledge and understanding.

Our mission is to support the improvement of educational policy and its implementation in practice for all learners. This aim takes into account issues such as equal opportunities, accessibility and the promotion of quality of education, whilst recognising that there are differences in countries' policies, practices and educational contexts.

This volume reflects the European Agency's mission in that it clearly aims to support the work of policy makers, practitioners and researchers who work with the practical implementation of policy for inclusive education in their countries.

This book draws on nearly 20 years of European Agency work with member countries. It considers evidence and findings from across a number of key policy areas the European Agency has examined with experts from across Europe and beyond. Each chapter has been drafted by a team of European Agency staff working with school leaders, researchers and decision-makers working with inclusive education in their individual country contexts. However, each chapter uses the outcomes of wider

European Agency thematic project work that has been developed in collaboration with many more professionals and end users (information on all of the European Agency's work can be found on <https://www.european-agency.org>).

In this, the European Agency's 20th anniversary year, I would like to thank all of the country representatives and experts that have contributed to our work over the last two decades. It is their past and on-going contributions to our collective work that have made the European Agency – as well as this book – possible.

Per Gunnvall

*Chair of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education*