MONITORING AND EVALUATION: SUPPORTING EXTERNAL SCHOOL EVALUATION PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

Executive summary

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes are central to ensuring that education systems are inclusive and truly serve all learners. These processes therefore have a pivotal role in quality assurance. The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) identifies M&E as a key priority (EASNIE, 2021). Effective M&E systems track progress and generate data on and for inclusion (UNESCO, 2020), helping policy-makers and educators understand how well systems support all learners.

The **Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Inclusive Education Policy** (MESIEP) activity explored how five EASNIE member countries – **Croatia**, **Ireland**, **Malta**, **Serbia** and **United Kingdom (England)** – design and implement their M&E frameworks for inclusive education. The activity considered Maxwell and Staring's six essential pillars of quality assurance in inclusive education (2018), focusing on the first two: **school external evaluation** and **school self-evaluation**.

> Phase 1 (2024) of MESIEP examined each participating country's M&E systems. It investigated:
>
> - the key institutions involved in external evaluations and their roles;
> - the policy frameworks guiding their work;
> - the types of data collected and how it informs decision-making and policy development.

To build a comprehensive understanding, each country contributed detailed information on their M&E systems, institutional relationships and feedback mechanisms. **Country briefs** outlined these insights and summarised national approaches to inclusive education monitoring.

The synthesis of these phase 1 findings, combined with a strong theoretical foundation, resulted in the following **key messages for effective M&E systems**. These highlight the requirements for M&E processes that can drive more equitable education systems across Europe.

1. **Enhance inclusive education principles in evaluation frameworks and practices**

    M&E systems should be aligned with inclusive education definitions and principles to ensure the data collected reflects all learners.

2. **Identify key actors and build collaborative partnerships across sectors**

    Effective M&E requires the engagement of diverse actors, from education ministries to civil society organisations and human rights bodies. Harnessing their collective expertise ensures that M&E processes are aligned with the broader goal of equitable, rights-based education.

3. **Involve diverse stakeholders from school communities in M&E processes and practices**

    Inclusive education thrives when multiple voices are heard. M&E processes should actively involve teachers, school leaders, other education professionals, learners, families and community representatives, ensuring that evaluation outcomes reflect the perspectives and needs of all stakeholders.

4. **Strengthen both bottom-up and top-down engagement in M&E systems**

    Schools play a vital role in shaping meaningful evaluation. Empowering them to contribute to M&E processes – and ensuring open communication between school and policy levels – creates a balanced system where insights from practice inform policy, and policy supports practice.

5. **Communicate evaluation results with clarity and purpose**

    M&E findings should not remain confined to reports. Clear, accessible dissemination strategies help school communities understand, use and benefit from evaluation outcomes, fostering shared ownership of continuous improvement.

6. **Foster partnership between school communities and external evaluators**

    External evaluation should be a collaborative process. When school communities see evaluators as supportive partners, they are more likely to engage constructively, enhancing the effectiveness of evaluation practices.

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Read the **full MESIEP report** at:

www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/mesiep-report

References

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021. *Key Principles – Supporting policy development and implementation for inclusive education*. (V.J. Donnelly and A. Watkins, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/key-principles-supporting-policy-development-implementation (Last accessed August 2025)

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