Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Inclusive Education Policy

Focus on existing monitoring and evaluation systems and practices in five European countries

MESIEP

MONITORING AND EVALUATION
SYSTEMS IN INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION POLICY

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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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, 2021a). 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.

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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.

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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.

INTRODUCTION

The MESIEP activity is one of six [Thematic Country Cluster Activities](#) (TCCA) carried out by EASNIE. The TCCA were developed in response to EASNIE member countries' priorities, which were collected via a survey in 2021 ([EASNIE, 2021b](#)). The [Country System Mapping](#) analysis conducted in 2023 guided the identification of the main features of member countries' education systems and the key areas to be further developed, leading to the organisation of the TCCA work.

Based on the identified priorities, MESIEP focused on the general topic of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in inclusive education. Several of EASNIE's on-going activities have addressed this key topic. For example, since 2018, the [European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education](#) (EASIE) activity has collected yearly quantitative and qualitative data on inclusive education from EASNIE member countries. [Country Policy Development Support](#) (CPDS) monitors policy development in inclusive education. It offers member countries the opportunity to gather evidence-based information and identify further areas of work. CPDS also addresses monitoring tools for policy implementation processes.

M&E is also a key priority for international and European institutions, as the Council of the European Union points out:

> Access to high-quality data on learner outcomes, inclusive practices and the barriers faced by learners with diverse and special educational needs is crucial for monitoring progress, evaluating the impact of inclusive education policies, and ensuring that school practices are continually adapted to meet the evolving needs of all learners (2025, p. 5).

Five EASNIE member countries were involved in the MESIEP activity: Croatia, Ireland, Malta, Serbia and UK (England). They are also referred to as the MESIEP countries in this report. The aim was to look at the M&E systems in place in each MESIEP country and how M&E of inclusive education policy can serve policy development and implementation.

As reinforced in EASNIE's *Key Principles*, M&E is an area that needs further exploration:

> … data should reflect a broad view of education and go beyond measuring outcomes for the purpose of comparison, to measure what is really valued in inclusive education at school, local, regional, national and even international levels (2021a, p. 24).

Some guiding questions helped to develop the different parameters to consider in the MESIEP activity:

- What are the relevant policies or frameworks related to M&E of equity and inclusion and monitoring diversity in countries?

- What data is collected in the field of diversity and equity in countries?

- What are the processes and mechanisms of data collection in the field of diversity and equity – that is, who collects and analyses the data and reports the findings?

- How do M&E of equity and inclusion and monitoring of diversity serve policy development in countries?

The activity was divided into two phases. Phase 1 (2024) focused specifically on monitoring and evaluating inclusion and equity at policy level. The aim was to gain a better comprehension of the MESIEP countries' systems, policies and practices for inclusion. To do so, the activity focused on how respective institutions under ministries of education (such as school inspectorates) and cross-sectoral institutions external to ministries of education (such as ombudsperson offices and commissioners' offices for child protection) monitor and evaluate equity and inclusion in education, and how they inform and serve policy development.

Phase 2 (2025) addressed M&E of inclusive education implementation, looking at the school level and focusing on internal evaluation, school accountability and school self-evaluation processes and practices.

Report aims and audience

This report aims to present the phase 1 work and its outcomes. With the support of a theoretical background, the analysis of the collected country information led to some key findings, which are further developed in this report. It aims to inform about existing practices related to inspectorates' and ombudsperson offices' contributions to M&E of inclusive education, and thus to policy development and improvement.

The report also shows the MESIEP countries' policies and practices related to M&E in inclusive education. It presents the institutions involved and their role in M&E of equity and inclusion, the type of data collected, data collection processes and mechanisms, and how M&E of equity and inclusion and monitoring of diversity serve countries' policy development.

The main target audience for this report is policy-makers in the five MESIEP countries, as well as decision-makers at national, regional and/or local levels who work with them. However, the report is also relevant for policy- and decision-makers in all EASNIE member countries and beyond.

Methodology and key steps of the activity

This report was developed throughout phase 1 of the MESIEP activity and drafted in collaboration with the country representatives from Croatia, Ireland, Malta, Serbia and UK (England). The methodology for developing this report was based on information collected with different approaches and through four main sources detailed below. For each main source, the EASNIE team facilitated the information-gathering process. The process took a co-development approach, meaning the country representatives and stakeholders involved were equally included in every step of the data collection and processing.

1. Two thematic online meetings

The first online meeting took place in April 2024. It addressed the role of the institutions and relevant departments involved in M&E of inclusive education under the authority of the ministries of education.

The second online meeting was in June 2024. Countries presented the role of institutions and relevant departments involved in M&E of inclusive education under authorities other than the ministries of education.

Both thematic online meetings invited additional stakeholders from the MESIEP countries to take part in the discussion. Participants were from the ministries of education and educational agencies, as well as external institutions such as ombudsperson offices. The countries shared their systems' processes and practices. Each country gave a general introduction to its system of M&E of inclusion and equity and addressed the following questions:

- What are the relevant policies and frameworks related to M&E of equity and inclusion and monitoring diversity in education?
- What data do the different institutions collect in the field of inclusion, equity and diversity in the country?
- How do the different institutions collect and analyse the data and write reports or evaluations in the field of diversity and equity?
- How do the different institutions disseminate their findings?
- How does the M&E of equity and inclusion conducted by the different institutions serve policy development in the country?

2. Thematic templates

Additional information was collected in summer 2024 through two templates, focusing on:

- institutions and relevant departments under the authority of the ministries of education;
- institutions and relevant departments under an authority other than the ministries of education.

The country representatives completed the templates, addressing six sections:

- General introduction to the system of M&E of inclusion and equity
- Policies and frameworks related to M&E of equity and inclusion in education
- Data collection and analysis in the field of inclusion, equity and diversity
- Dissemination of information related to the M&E of equity and inclusion in education
- Role of M&E of equity and inclusion in education in policy development
- Additional comments or insights.

3. Overviews of the monitoring and evaluation systems

The country representatives started mapping overviews of their country M&E systems during a workshop at the EASNIE bi-annual meeting in November 2024. The aim of this mapping exercise was for the country representatives to:

- reflect on how the different M&E components in their own countries relate to each other (the roles of the different institutions and how they co-operate with each other);

- identify at which level the M&E components operate;

- associate some actions and tasks the M&E components are responsible for.

4. Peer-learning activities

During phase 1, two peer-learning activities (PLAs) took place. In both, stakeholders from Croatia, Ireland, Malta and UK (England) visited a local school and met local partners, such as representatives from civil society organisations, educational institutions, inspectorates and ombudsperson offices.

The first PLA showed the inspection practices and presented the framework for special educational needs used when evaluating schools with special units. The second PLA gave participants the opportunity to meet representatives from the Croatian ombudsperson offices and from civil society who were actively involved in the field of children's rights and children vulnerable to exclusion.

Overview of the report

This report is built around three main components:

- The Theoretical background section outlines the diverse methodologies and types of M&E implemented within education systems. It addresses the importance of M&E in educational contexts and its impact on the inclusive education process. It presents the various levels at which M&E can be conducted in educational settings, particularly highlighting the school level, and concentrates mainly on external evaluation processes.

- The Main findings section presents the results of the data analysis. It summarises the major outcomes from the data analysis and reflects both the strengths and the areas for improvement in M&E of inclusive education in the five MESIEP country systems. The methodology section above sets out data sources and the steps that led to the main findings analysis.

- The Final reflections encapsulate the report's key findings and emphasise its most significant conclusions.

The Annexes present the MESIEP country briefs, which were developed to showcase the country-specific information. It was essential to get a clear overview of each M&E system to understand its different components, actors and dynamics. The country briefs also detail information on the existing practices, policies and key frameworks in the MESIEP countries.

Each Annex is standalone:

- [Annex 1: Croatia country brief](#)
- [Annex 2: Ireland country brief](#)
- [Annex 3: Malta country brief](#)
- [Annex 4: Serbia country brief](#)
- [Annex 5: UK (England) country brief](#).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This theoretical section of the report serves as background information, and is based on the TCCA literature review (EASNIE, 2024a). The literature review focuses on three thematic areas, one of which is the M&E of policy implementation for inclusive education. This background information further uses and analyses the literature review's findings on this thematic area. As the MESIEP activity specifically focused on the role of school inspectorates in M&E of inclusive education, additional literature on that topic was considered.

This background information refers mainly to publications by EASNIE and other organisations working in the field of inclusive education (such as the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD – and UNESCO). It also refers to key academic papers that serve the purpose of this report, which focuses on M&E of inclusive education at policy level and aims to inform policy-makers and decision-makers at national, regional and/or local level.

The main aim of this background information is to establish a theoretical framework for analysing the current landscape of M&E systems within the five MESIEP countries. The background information explores the various methodologies and types of M&E implemented in education systems and discusses the significance of M&E in educational settings and how these affect the process of inclusion. It introduces the different tiers at which M&E can occur within educational settings at different levels, with a particular emphasis on the school level, and focusing on external and internal evaluation processes.

Furthermore, this section of the report underscores the roles played by relevant institutions involved in M&E processes and how these can contribute to informing inclusive education policy development.

The role of monitoring and evaluation in inclusive education

> Inclusive education … is concerned with developing equitable quality education systems for all learners by removing barriers to their presence in mainstream schools, full participation in school and community, and achievement of valued goals (including those wider than academic learning) (EASNIE, 2022a, p. 58).

Inclusion as a concept is characterised as a process that seeks to address and remove barriers that limit learners' presence, participation and achievement. Equity emphasises the principle of fairness, ensuring that the educational experiences of all learners are regarded as equally significant (UNESCO, 2017).

Establishing an inclusive education system that accommodates the growing diversity among learners requires a holistic approach that addresses five essential policy domains:

- 'Governing and designing education systems to promote equity and inclusion'

- 'Resourcing education systems to foster equity and inclusion'

- 'Building capacity to foster equity and inclusion'

- 'Promoting equity and inclusion through school-level interventions'

- 'Monitoring and evaluating equity and inclusion in education' (OECD, 2023a, pp. 11–12).

Each of these policy areas plays a crucial role in promoting inclusion and equity within the educational landscape. However, EASNIE's Country Policy Review and Analysis work (2021c) showed that, compared to other policy areas, policies related to monitoring and quality assurance were less comprehensive (EASNIE, 2024b). Considering this and given the focus of the MESIEP activity, this section of the report specifically delves into M&E of equity and inclusion in education.

M&E plays an important role in ensuring the implementation of policies related to equity and inclusion (OECD, 2023a). Although monitoring and evaluation may be seen as complementary concepts (UNESCO, 2016) and can often be found in the literature together, they are separate terms.

The OECD defines 'monitoring' as:

> A continuing process that involves the systematic collection or collation of data (on specified indicators or other types of information). Provides the management and other stakeholders of an intervention with indications of the extent of implementation progress, achievement of intended results, occurrence of unintended results, use of allocated funds and other important intervention and context-related information (2023b, p. 44).

EASNIE's online glossary defines 'evaluation' as follows:

> A systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results.
>
> Evaluation focuses on the macro level, considering the context of learning and related factors. Assessment measures learning at the micro or learner level and is one element of evaluation. Evaluation should inform next steps and on-going improvement (EASNIE, no date).

As complementary concepts (EASNIE, 2024a), monitoring and evaluation can certainly reinforce each other and track the progress and impact of policies or programmes. They systematically evaluate this progress and impact and the alignment with established goals, objectives and targets, while also examining relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (UNESCO, 2016).

The main objective of M&E is to provide information about the quality of the education system and to provide constructive feedback on reforms aimed at improving educational processes and results for all learners (OECD, 2023a). A primary objective of M&E in education is to guarantee that all individuals, across various levels, receive equitable and high-quality education (UNESCO, 2016).

Ensuring high-quality education is a complex process that encompasses various dimensions, considering the quality of inputs, processes, and outputs and outcomes

(ibid.). These three levels – also known as the input-process-outcome model – comprise different elements that require attention:

- **Input** in educational settings encompasses various elements, such as financial support, educational legislation, teacher qualifications and infrastructure, that are essential for achieving specific outcomes (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009). Inputs are aspects such as policies, leadership, material and financial resources, teacher training and continuous professional development, and curriculum (OECD, 2023a).

- **Process** refers to different educational activities, such as procedures, school practices, classroom instructions, etc. These processes transform the input and resources into outputs and outcomes (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009). School practices, as well as the school climate, collaboration and support for individuals, are important processes in school settings (OECD, 2023a).

- **Outputs** refer to aspects like participation rates and curricular accomplishments, whereas **outcomes** focus on the effects, impacts or consequences resulting from inputs and processes, such as academic and functional literacy (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009). Outcomes can be divided into educational outcomes (which may include participation, drop-out, grade repetition rates and achievement), well-being outcomes (which may include sense of belonging, mental health and school climate) and non-educational outcomes (such as economic and labour market outcomes and health outcomes) (OECD, 2023a).

Combining these three elements into a model or framework can make it possible to monitor the progress of equity and inclusion and to identify areas that require improvement (ibid.). Monitoring establishes a connection between the outcomes and the allocation of inputs/resources, as well as the re-design of processes. This connection is particularly crucial, as alterations in resource allocation or input, along with modifications to processes, can indirectly influence the outcomes, as Figure 1 shows (Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009).
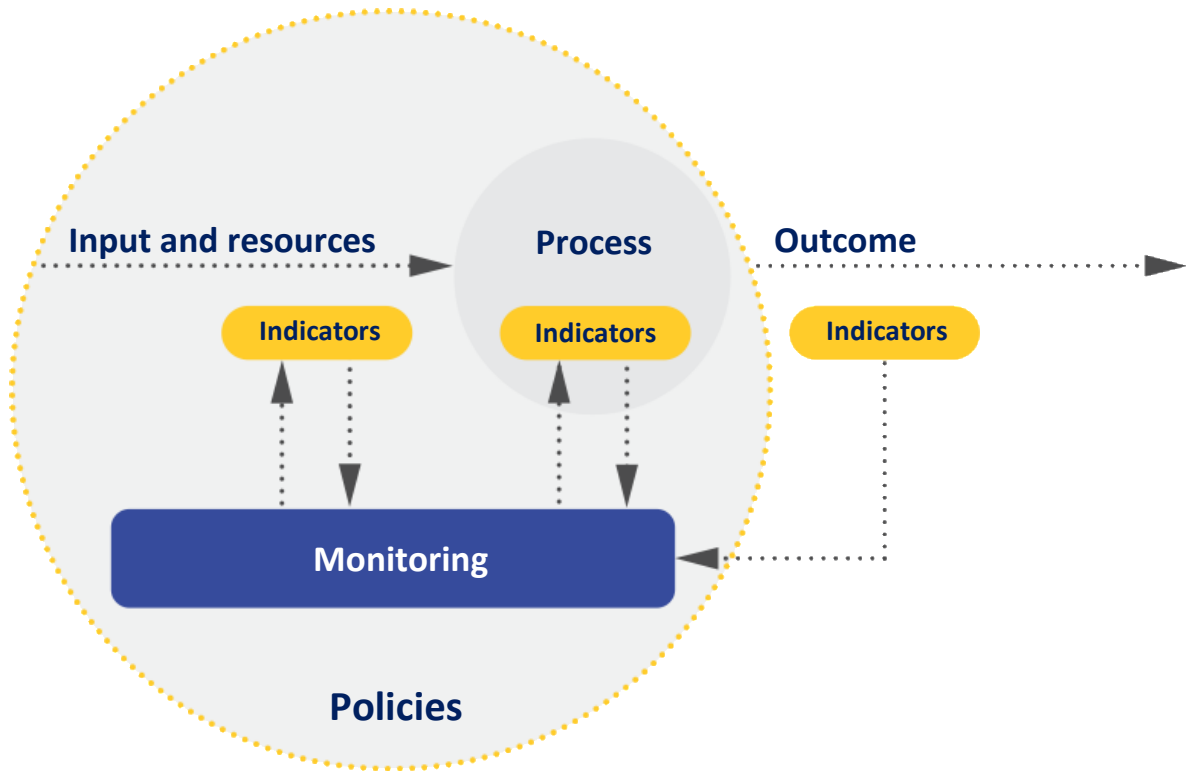
Figure 1. Monitoring system model with focus on policies *(adapted from Kyriazopoulou & Weber, 2009, p. 17)*

The indicators needed at the different levels, as illustrated in Figure 1, must address all significant areas, be able to identify changes that occur and provide information about the cause of the changes (ibid.).

M&E starts with monitoring input, processes and outputs and evolves into evaluating impact, making it possible to measure and understand changes (UNESCO, 2016). Thus, monitoring and evaluation procedures complement each other and provide information that can support planning and improvement processes (EASNIE, 2024a).

M&E relies on information collected through different sources. In this context, UNESCO (2016) highlights five components of M&E that can be found in most countries:

- **School record-keeping system**, which provides information at school level on learners, teachers, finances, infrastructure, etc.

- **Statistical data system**, such as an Education Management Information System that collects and analyses data from schools for policy goals

- **Resource management systems** that can refer to management and employment of teachers or to financial resource management

- **Performance evaluation system**, which refers to school inspections that aim to evaluate schools and to teacher evaluation aiming to assess teacher performance

- **Learner evaluation system**, which may refer to the examination of learners for the purpose of certifying them and to learner assessment to evaluate learners' achievement levels.

By focusing on different levels and collecting data from various sources, M&E systems can provide evidence on where improvements in education systems are needed and whether policies are achieving their intended outcomes. This can support policy-making decisions on implementing changes that are important for equity and inclusion (OECD, 2023a). Such evidence-based policy-making 'is critical for the long-term development of inclusive education systems' (Watkins & Ebersold, 2016, p. 229). In providing such continuous evidence, M&E of education systems can focus on different levels. The next section addresses these.

Multi-level approach for monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education

When talking about M&E of inclusive education systems, the quality of inclusive education should be examined by addressing four interacting levels: macro, meso, micro and individual person (Watkins & Ebersold, 2016). This approach emphasises the significance of understanding how inclusive education quality is influenced by the dynamics between policy, practice and individual stakeholders (ibid.). These four levels are addressed briefly below:

- **Macro level** refers to policy and practice at national and/or regional level. M&E at national and/or regional level should aim to provide evidence that addresses critical policy questions, such as how inclusive policies facilitate inclusive practices, how effective the different educational placements and educational approaches are, and how the system supports learners and their parents (ibid.). M&E at macro level focuses, for example, on:

  … data on learners' access to and participation in education, evidence of long-term outcomes, key policy priorities and concerns regarding equity and inclusion (EASNIE, 2024a, p. 14).

- **Meso level** refers to policy and practice at school/community level. M&E at school level should focus on the potential for fostering inclusive cultures within the educational institution, as well as enhancing learners' inclusion (Watkins & Ebersold, 2016). M&E at this level should examine, for example:

  … data on quality of school life for all learners and stakeholders e.g. valuing diversity, providing support, parental involvement, community involvement and social inclusion, leadership support for inclusive culture and building inclusive capability (EASNIE, 2024a, p. 14).

- **Micro level** refers to educational practice at classroom level and emphasises the organisation of learning experiences and the effective use of available resources (Watkins & Ebersold, 2016). M&E at classroom level focuses on the 'organisation of learning, use of resources, teacher knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes' (EASNIE, 2024a, p. 14).

- **Individual level** refers to both teachers and learners. It aims to provide insight into how different learners are participating in educational possibilities and how

participatory relationships serve as intermediaries that connect policy, practice, and the experiences of individuals (Watkins & Ebersold, 2016). M&E at individual level focuses on 'engagement in learning, academic success, personal, social and emotional well-being' (EASNIE, 2024a, p. 14).

Watkins and Ebersold (2016) state that, when integrated with the input-process-outcome model, these four levels offer a systematic framework for determining the essential data types required for an effective monitoring system for inclusive education policies. Consideration of all four levels is equally important. However, due to the MESIEP activity's focus, the sub-sections below address the approaches and data types that should be collected within effective monitoring systems for inclusive education at national/regional and school/community levels.

Monitoring and evaluation at national level

EASNIE states that M&E at national level should consider the following key areas of policy and practice:

- Learner outcomes, including academic and broader well-being outcomes relevant to progress and achievement

- Diversity, equity and inclusion and the dilemma of labelling learners

- Learner presence, placement and participation

- Policy development and implementation (2024a, p. 28).

Learner outcomes

Data on learner outcomes can be collected through international assessment programmes (such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)), national examinations and assessments, data from schools, school inspections, etc. (ibid.). In this context, the OECD (2023a) points out that, while many countries tend to mainly collect data on learners' academic outcomes, it is also important to collect data on well-being outcomes, as both types of outcomes are significant components of the overall school experience. Academic outcomes and learner well-being are closely interlinked and can influence each other.

National monitoring of diversity, equity and inclusion

'Monitoring and evaluating progress towards equity and inclusion in education is important to provide feedback and to inform improvements across the education system' (Varsik, 2022, p. 36). To effectively evaluate progress towards equity and inclusion goals, it is essential to implement thorough data collection practices that assess all learners' access, participation and performance. These practices must also refer to different aspects, such as gender, immigrant background, special educational needs, socio-economic or ethnic background, giftedness, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. (ibid.). This type of data can be collected through different sources and methods. For example, data collected from international assessment, from inspectorates, from

ombudsperson offices or from similar agencies can contribute to monitoring these aspects.

The types and methods of collecting data that considers learner diversity vary across different education systems (OECD, 2023a). Some national authorities collect such types of data at the individual learner level and others at the school level, where this data is sent to the national level (ibid.).

National monitoring of learner presence, placement and participation

Collecting data on presence, placement and participation is highly relevant, as 'presence in the education system is a prerequisite for an inclusive placement and participation, which in turn is a prerequisite for progress of any kind' (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020, p. 90). In this context, it is important that national systems collect not only data on the presence of learners who are included in the education system, but also data on out-of-education learners (EASNIE, 2024a). In addition, collecting data on placement (in terms of mainstream school or alternative education) and data on learners' participation in learning possibilities and activities at national level is crucial (ibid.).

Policy development and implementation

A well-designed M&E system empowers policy-makers to create more evidence-based policies that reflect both the political context and users' perspectives (UNESCO, 2016). EASNIE (2014) highlights that identifying the right policy questions is fundamental to collect data that meaningfully shapes policy. These questions can lead to the creation of indicators that help to determine whether the essential structures and processes are in place. This evaluation process not only supports the successful implementation of policies, but also enables on-going M&E to ensure continuous improvement (ibid.).

Monitoring and evaluation at school and community level

M&E at school and community level has the goal of contributing towards improving overall school quality. It may refer to a broad range of school policies and practices (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). According to Maxwell and Staring (2018), six aspects of such policies and practices within education systems should be considered:

1. School self-evaluation
2. External evaluation
3. Evaluation and appraisal of teachers and school leaders
4. National qualifications and examinations in upper-secondary stages
5. Assessment of learner progress at earlier stages
6. Stakeholder engagement.

These six areas are highly interrelated and should all be considered together in every cohesive quality assurance approach (ibid.). However, due to the focus of the MESIEP activity, this report concentrates on external evaluation and only briefly addresses internal evaluation and self-evaluation of schools as being very much related to external evaluation.

External and internal evaluation of schools

External school evaluation

External evaluation is a widely-used approach to quality assurance in European countries. It is conducted by persons outside the school, who report to the authorities that are responsible for education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). External evaluation potentially serves three main purposes:

- Providing public assurance and accountability;

- Providing an evidential basis for professional advice to inform the development of national policy; and

- Acting as a mechanism for the spread of 'best practice' across the system (Maxwell & Staring, 2018, p. 12).

In most European countries, central- or top-level institutions, such as an inspectorate or specific agency mandated to conduct school evaluation, carry out external evaluation (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

> Inspectorates of Education set expectations through their inspection standards and procedures. They assess the quality of education by using existing data (e.g. statistics, data on student performance) and by collecting additional information (e.g. by interviews with stakeholders, classroom observation) (Ehren, Altrichter, McNamara & O'Hara, 2013, p. 4).

Focus on school inspections

Maxwell and Staring (2018) explore how the role of external evaluation, such as inspection, can be influenced depending on the governing systems in the field of education. In systems and cultures with 'high stakes accountability', inspection will:

- 'have a primary focus on serving the purpose of accountability and regulation';
- 'tend to operate fixed and relatively frequent cycles of inspection to provide a regular source of standardised comparative gradings on every provider designed to inform consumer choice';
- 'be "high stakes" for schools and staff with an impact on the style and climate in which inspections take place';
- 'tend to default to prioritising a limited range of "hard data" in arriving at their judgements and using a highly standardised methodology to provide a defensible basis against challenge' (ibid., p. 13).

In systems that follow quality improvement rather than a quality control approach, inspections will be focused on improvements:

- Such inspections 'still serve a public assurance role, moderating the quality of school (and sometimes local/provincial) self-evaluation, but can do so on a more flexible basis rather than on a fixed cycle, backed up by "risk-based" arrangements

to intervene quickly where there are signs that a school needs to be inspected urgently'.

- They 'develop less standardisation and more flexible customisation in the way they go about inspecting and reporting on schools, presenting a more rounded, individualised narrative about the school and often putting fewer, if any, gradings in the public domain'.

- 'In a less "high stakes" environment external evaluators can develop a style of engagement which is more akin to coaching than examining, with higher levels of professional dialogue built into the process to help schools learn from the experience inspectors bring of practice elsewhere' (ibid.).

Historically, school inspections primarily emphasised adherence to established regulations. However, this is changing and their approaches are becoming more conceptualised with the aim of establishing a regulatory framework that allows schools to operate with increased autonomy, while ensuring accountability for learner performance (Brown, McNamara, O'Hara & O'Brien, 2016). With these changes, school inspections are seen as mechanisms for achieving compliance, ensuring accountability and assuring quality, but also for supporting school development and improvement (ibid.).

In 2013, Ehren et al. stated that inspection approaches vary across European countries, and their scope is determined by the power and influence allocated to each inspectorate, as well as the particular inspection methodologies used to evaluate schools. It can be stated that this is still the case, as different inspection approaches can be observed in different countries.

Inspection models

The European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015) explain how school inspections in different countries are carried out according to three models: a cyclical model, a focused approach model and a combination of these two models. With the cyclical model, all schools in a country are evaluated at a regular interval. This interval, defined by the responsible authorities, can range from two years to a maximum of ten years. The focused model differs from the cyclical model and is based on sampling (some schools may be selected to be inspected), risk assessment or specific criteria. Some countries combine these two models when conducting school inspection.

Over the years, a trend of moving from cyclical school-wide inspection towards proportionate or risk-based inspection has been observed (Brown et al., 2016). The frequency of the second type of inspections is determined by evaluative inspection judgements concerning cases that deviate from acceptable practices within schools (ibid.).

Phases of school inspection

Within these different models of school inspection, responsible institutions can use an extensive range of evaluation techniques to gather data. These encompass desk research, school visits, interviews, surveys, classroom observations and the examination of documents generated by the schools, including self-evaluation results (Ehren et al., 2013).

By comparing the inspection approaches of different countries, the European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice divide the applied inspection evaluation methods and techniques into three phases:

1. 'collecting and analysing data on single schools and sometimes performing an initial risk analysis'

2. 'a visit to the school to observe practices, inspect documents, and consult in-school actors as well as, in some cases, other relevant stakeholders'

3. 'preparing the evaluation report' (2015, p. 24).

In some countries, the institutions responsible for school inspection collect and analyse data (such as statistical quantitative data, reports, qualitative data and administrative documents) during the first phase to prepare for the upcoming school visit. Other countries use this phase as a basis for deciding which schools need inspection and what kind of inspection should be conducted (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

The second phase, which refers to the school visits, varies in duration in the different countries. It generally involves interviews with school staff, classroom observations and observations of school activities, premises or documents (ibid.). Inspectors typically evaluate schools according to established standards, which are often situated within a broader 'quality framework'. Based on these standards, during school visits, inspectors can provide feedback to schools, highlighting both their strengths and challenges. In some countries, inspectors can also give schools guidance on potential improvements (Ehren et al., 2013).

After the inspection visits, the evaluators' activities, along with their conclusions and, when relevant, their assessments, are described in a comprehensive evaluation report with recommendations for school improvement. This practice is common in many countries, although in some countries the report is prepared based on a collaborative dialogue between the evaluators and the school management (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). In some countries, the institutions responsible for school inspection publicly publish the report containing recommendations to improve the inspected school (Ehren et al., 2013). In other countries, reports may be distributed with restrictions or not shared with the public. However, in most countries, reports and evaluation findings are distributed to and shared with the authorities responsible for education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

As well as supporting improvements at school level, the institutions responsible for school inspections can initiate improvements at policy levels. They can provide whole-system reports or thematic evaluation reports referring to specific policies and provisions, which policy-makers can use to inform national policy development or improvement (Maxwell & Staring, 2018).

External evaluation of schools is often complemented with internal or self-evaluation of schools. A number of systems are working to find a suitable balance between external evaluations carried out by bodies other than the schools and self-evaluation conducted by schools themselves (ibid.). Synergy between self-evaluation and external evaluation of schools can contribute towards systems that are better prepared to handle the complex changes in the field of education (European Commission, 2017).

Internal evaluation and self-evaluation of schools

School self-evaluation, often referred to as internal evaluation, is a systematic approach that schools use to assess the quality of the education they provide. It entails a comprehensive review of various elements, ranging from pedagogical practices to administrative issues (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Consequently, it yields an evidence-based assessment that enables schools to identify initiatives aimed at improving learner outcomes and enhancing overall academic performance (O'Brien, McNamara, O'Hara, Brown & Skerritt, 2022). School self-evaluation is characterised as a bottom-up approach for advancing educational quality (Maxwell & Staring, 2018). In conducting self-evaluations, it is imperative for schools to engage all stakeholder groups, particularly those who may be disadvantaged, ensuring that the process acknowledges their viewpoints (EASNIE, 2024a).

Implementation of school self-evaluation varies across the different countries' systems. While some systems encourage schools to create their own self-evaluation frameworks with minimal external assistance from central bodies, other systems experience greater investment from government and central agencies aimed at strengthening schools' abilities to engage in self-evaluation and improvement planning (Maxwell & Staring, 2018).

Phase 2 of MESIEP explored school self-evaluation in more depth.

From theoretical background information to findings

This theoretical background information has addressed the role of M&E in inclusive education and discussed how M&E processes can influence the development and implementation of inclusive education policies and practices. Moreover, since phase 1 of MESIEP focused on external school evaluation as one component of the broader M&E framework, the theoretical information presented has offered an overview of the different roles and focuses that external evaluation can have.

The information outlined in this section of the report has set the stage and established a basis for examining the M&E processes currently implemented in the MESIEP countries. Consideration of the theoretical background alongside the country-specific information in the country briefs facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the existing external evaluation processes and approaches in the MESIEP countries. This enabled the EASNIE team to draw conclusions and formulate key messages and recommendations, which are presented in the next sections of this report.

MAIN FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings from an analysis of the information collected from the MESIEP countries, as well as the key concepts detailed in the [theoretical background](#) section. A mapping exercise was completed, which considered the different M&E processes and frameworks that the MESIEP countries mentioned during all the steps of the activity (set out in this report's [methodology section](#)). The [country briefs](#) were a key source, as they present all the information collected throughout phase 1 of MESIEP.

The goal of this section is not to compare one system to another – as each country has its own context – but to show the existing landscape of M&E in inclusive education in the MESIEP countries. This section describes the need for more comprehensive M&E systems, then focuses on the emphasis on the right to education and equity.

Towards more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems

The charts in the [country briefs](#) offer an overview of key elements in the MESIEP countries' M&E systems. The country briefs also provide further details on these elements, describing the institutions involved in M&E processes and practices. These include institutions under the authority of the ministry of education and some institutions under authorities other than the ministry of education.

Governance, policy and legal frameworks

The MESIEP country briefs refer to numerous policies and legal frameworks that encourage comprehensive M&E systems.

The various standards, guidelines, handbooks and frameworks are key policies and supportive tools for implementing M&E processes in practice. As policies evolve, it seems logical to regularly review and adapt these implementation tools to align with new reforms. Clear guidance ensures a good understanding of the expectations and goals set by policy-makers and facilitates implementation work.

Special needs-oriented legal framework

Looking at the different legal frameworks, the predominance of a special-needs orientation is notable. Even though the legal frameworks across the MESIEP countries seem well-established, the M&E policies mainly address inclusive education through the lens of special needs education. Some of the departments and professionals are specialised in evaluating special needs education settings. As previous EASNIE work mentions, 'to support effective quality assurance and M&E processes, policy must clearly articulate the values of inclusive education … and what high-quality inclusive education looks like' (2024a, p. 39). Separate approaches may then be found to hinder a systemic and holistic approach to developing inclusive educational school environments.

This observation shows that moving towards holistic approaches in M&E processes and practices is uncommon among the MESIEP countries. This echoes the common debate about labelling learners in this M&E domain (EASNIE, 2024a). Indeed, the main question

is: how is it possible to collect information and data about learners, and specifically learning provision and outcomes, without using labels? What are the possible approaches and tools available?

Inclusive education definitions

In its Legislative Definitions around Learners Vulnerable to Exclusion activity, EASNIE mapped the different terminology and definitions used in its member countries' policies. Table 1 shows the definitions of inclusive education from this activity for the MESIEP countries.

Table 1. Definitions of inclusive education mapped by EASNIE (2023) in the MESIEP countries

Country	Definition
Croatia	There is no legal definition, but the Ministry of Science and Education published the Guidelines for working with learners with disabilities, which give instructions on inclusive education. (Legislative Definitions country report)
Ireland	In Ireland, inclusive education has been interpreted as providing a continuum of educational provision that encompasses mainstream classes, special classes in mainstream schools and special schools. National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Review Process, in *Policy Advice on Special Schools and Classes*. (Legislative Definitions country report)
Malta	Available and accessible to all learners of all ages, including those facing challenges, such as those with special needs or who have a disability, those originating from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, migrant backgrounds or geographically depressed areas or war-torn zones, regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. (Legislative Definitions country report)
Serbia	Inclusive education is not just a question of accessibility or process, but a change in basic values and beliefs. There are significant human, economic and social reasons for inclusive education as a means of building relationships among individuals, groups and within society as a whole (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 2018). (Legislative Definitions country report)
UK (England)	No information found.

Table 1 shows that initial work on defining inclusive education principles could be a step for the MESIEP countries to consider. This would allow them to establish a shared understanding of inclusive education systems and their expectations and to, therefore, align their legal frameworks accordingly. As UNESCO stresses:

> … accepted, clearly stated definitions of inclusion and equity should be the starting point for deciding what to monitor. In other words, there is a need to 'measure what we value', rather than 'value what we can measure' (2017, p. 21).

As EASNIE emphasised in 2014, and reinforced in its *Key Principles* in 2021, M&E systems and mechanisms are key for policy development: 'From a policy perspective, access to

valid and reliable data as an evidence base to develop inclusive educational policy at the regional, national and international level is essential' (EASNIE, 2021a, p. 23). A clear definition of inclusive education will guide data collection and evaluation practices and will help to move towards more comprehensive M&E systems. A first step, therefore, will be to address the following questions:

- What types of data should be collected?
- What indicators should be looked at?
- What are the key features of an inclusive system?
- How can sustainable monitoring frameworks be established?

The definition of inclusive education should address all learners and all M&E systems should reflect all learners. If the work is not conducted at policy level, practices at school level will lack guidance and a clear understanding of how to improve capacity building.

Clear roles and responsibilities

The country briefs describe the different roles and responsibilities of the institutions involved in M&E of inclusive education, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Terminology used in the MESIEP country briefs when referring to the roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in M&E of inclusive education

Country	Terminology used for institutions under the authority of the ministry of education	Terminology used for institutions under authorities other than the ministry of education
Croatia	Inspect application of laws and other regulations governing the organisation and operation of school institutions Decide on the rights and legal interests of learners and their parents Investigate complaints from citizens about difficulties with the institution Seen as part of the quality assurance mechanism Align schools with the legal requirements Combination of inspection and supervision Advisory role; responsible for overall external evaluation Monitor the development and implementation of the national curriculum standards Responsible for providing professional assistance Responsible for pedagogical supervision of school staff and teachers Conduct external evaluation of educational institutions	Responsible for promoting and protecting human rights Reporting of irregularities Responsible for gender equality Responsible for children's rights Responsible for children and adults with disabilities and health issues Promote the rights and interests of children and persons with developmental disabilities/ difficulties Protect rights and interests of persons with disabilities Protect the rights and interests of children Promotion of human rights and fundamental freedom and the rule of law Combat discrimination
Ireland	Promoting improvement in the learning and well-being of children and young people Carry out annual programme of evaluations and advisory visits to pre-primary, primary and post-primary schools and education centres. Conduct evaluation and provide advice where education is provided Evaluate schools' management of learners' well-being Evaluate provision for children and young people with special educational needs Advancing the Department of Education's goals and principles relating to equity and inclusion Advisory role to support school and setting leaders in internal school self-evaluation processes	Promote the rights and welfare of children Investigate and make recommendations based on complaints about services provided to children by public bodies Advise and inform the government on policy and practice for people with disabilities

Country	Terminology used for institutions under the authority of the ministry of education	Terminology used for institutions under authorities other than the ministry of education
Malta	Assure and monitor standards and quality in education of all pre-compulsory and compulsory educational establishments Responsible for issuing school licences	No information found
Serbia	Responsible for quality assurance Determine educational standards Conduct national testing of learners Analyse the quality level Suggest improvement methods Support the work of the Ministry and educational institutions Monitor the legality of the schools' functioning Evaluate the quality of the institutions' work Responsible for external school evaluation Reports on final exam results	Monitoring the implementation of inclusive education
UK (England)	Gather evidence to assess how well a school is performing Inspection of education settings Inspection of children's social care Carry out external inspection of maintained schools and academies	Make recommendations and inform policy-making

Table 2 shows that institutions under the authority of the ministry of education have more responsibilities in M&E processes and practices than institutions under other authorities, confirming what the charts in the country briefs illustrate. Another relevant aspect is that the types of functions and roles differ between institutions under the authority of the ministry of education and other institutions. Roles and responsibilities assigned to entities under the ministry of education echo the three types of monitoring – compliance, diagnostic and performance – mentioned by UNESCO (2016). All the MESIEP countries mentioned roles which are aligned with these dimensions. Monitoring processes are complex and show different purposes that are all relevant for policy development.

Top-down approach

The ministry of education is the main body responsible for M&E in each MESIEP country's system. It is obvious that it plays a central role in orchestrating the different actors involved in M&E processes. The charts show that the dynamics between the main actors in M&E are organised through a top-down approach under the ministry of education.

However, actors under authorities other than the ministry of education do not seem to have a hierarchical top-down organisation. The institutions that do not belong to the ministry of education seem to be more 'independent' or not directly related to the same

authority; this is true in all the MESIEP countries' systems. The charts for the MESIEP countries do not show any connection between the actors under the authority of the ministry of education and the other actors involved, apart from the schools. These initial observations are pertinent to understand each actor's role in M&E processes and practices.

The charts do not show any evidence of two-way communication or feedback processes. The evaluation process is well-established and clearly illustrates one-way communication. As the TCCA literature review states, 'flexibility should be provided to allow for more individualised inspection reports and supportive interactions, with professional dialogue designed to support improvement' (EASNIE, 2024a, p. 43). In the country briefs, some of the MESIEP countries mentioned a process of sharing the results of the external evaluation with some objectives and a work plan to address in future practice. This process shows a follow-up and individualised dialogue with the school; however, it does not reveal a collaborative feedback process.

To summarise, ministries of education seem to be the main actor in M&E processes, under which several bodies act top-down towards the school level. Other entities are involved, which seem to be external to the ministries of education and without any particular clear collaboration.

Multi-level approach and multi-layered systems

School evaluations

The Eurydice report on quality assurance (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) states that school evaluations are the main types of evaluations conducted across European countries. As mentioned in the [theoretical background] section, Maxwell and Staring (2018) describe six essential pillars to consider when addressing quality assurance in M&E systems. The two first pillars refer to internal evaluation and external evaluation. The MESIEP countries show similar practices, meaning that all five countries conduct external and internal school evaluations, which reflect well-established processes and mechanisms:

> As any evaluation process, both the external and internal evaluation of schools implies similar phases, including data collection and the elaboration of a judgment against agreed criteria (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015, p. 15).

However, the focus and the approaches of these evaluations can vary significantly from one country to another. Characteristics – such as the frequency of evaluation, who conducts the evaluation, who is involved in the evaluation, what type of data is collected, from whom, by whom, and the types of outcomes of the evaluations – are specific to each MESIEP country.

External evaluations

Phase 1 of MESIEP focused primarily on external evaluations. In all the MESIEP countries, institutions under the authority of the ministry of education conduct external evaluations. These include inspectorate bodies, departments of the ministry of education or internal

agencies. The organisation and models are relatively different among the various MESIEP countries' education systems.

Through school evaluations, and particularly external ones, several types of data are collected using different methodologies and modalities, depending on policies and the external evaluators' level of autonomy. The various methods reported by the MESIEP countries include analysing relevant documentation (statistical school records, school policies, learners' assessments, etc.), school visits, focus groups with learners, interviews with school staff and leaders, and surveys shared with families and educators, as explained by the European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015).

The focus of the evaluations differs from one MESIEP country to another. Some have more of an audit approach and evaluate the school according to certain criteria and whether 'the school is performing well or not'. Others have more topic-related evaluations, which may be special needs education-oriented, whereby the school is evaluated on diverse aspects focusing on teaching practices and learners with special educational needs. In other cases, schools may request an evaluation to avail of support to overcome identified challenges.

The frequency of the evaluation is again quite different from one MESIEP country to another. While some evaluations are conducted yearly or every two years, others can only be conducted according to a plan established by the institutions, depending on school performance, learning outcomes, complaints received, etc. This information reflects the trends identified by Brown et al. (2016), as mentioned in the theoretical background section. This could show a shift towards school evaluation that is more specific and focused.

The outcomes of the evaluations vary, as does their dissemination. The MESIEP countries mention external evaluation leading to reporting which may be internal or public. The report usually concludes with a judgement and leads to an action plan for the school to undertake in the next school year. There may be a follow-up to see whether the action plan has been put in place and the reported challenges addressed.

All these practices are connected to the country's evaluation and data culture (OECD, 2022). Several discussions during the MESIEP activity addressed evaluation culture and what it represents. The relationship between evaluators and those being evaluated depends on cultural practices and representations. Evaluation may be seen as a chance to get support from institutions, to share challenges and to improve. Conversely, it may be perceived as judgemental and unconducive to improving schools' everyday practices.

Multi-stakeholder involvement

According to UNESCO, 'increased stakeholder participation can improve the quality of monitoring and accountability by providing information on a wider range of indicators' (cited in EASNIE, 2024a, p. 44).

Stakeholder involvement made up a large part of the discussions during the MESIEP PLAs. Various questions fed the debates:

- Who is involved in the evaluation processes?
- Which stakeholders should be part of the discussions?

- How can a group be significantly represented when it comes to evaluation?

- How can additional stakeholders be reached?

- How can collaborative practices be encouraged?

It was found that the current evaluation practices and processes often exclude teacher assistants and similar groups of professionals. The discussions showed that all the MESIEP countries face similar situations, even though the employment conditions of these professionals vary a lot from one country to another. For example, a teacher assistant may be employed by a school, by local authorities or by the ministry of education. In some countries, they may be assigned to one school, while in other countries they may work in several schools. They may work with a group of learners or with a single learner. The reflections behind these discussions refer to who is considered 'legitimate' to participate in evaluation processes in general and what their added value could be if they did participate.

The MESIEP countries indicated that families, educators/teachers, learners, school leaders and other school professionals are included in evaluation practices through various means, including interviews, surveys and focus groups. However, there is no information available to address the following questions:

- What kind of expertise is expected from stakeholders to be involved in evaluation processes?

- How are or how should educational professionals be represented in evaluation processes?

- Who is responsible for taking part in the evaluation?

- Are evaluation practices considered inclusive if they do not offer stakeholders the opportunity to participate?

The involvement mentioned by the MESIEP countries shows the school community's commitment to contributing to and collaborating with educational institutions. Feedback should be planned as a final phase in the evaluation process to report the conclusions back to stakeholders. This practice touches upon what the OECD calls 'data literacy' (2022, p. 6) and stakeholders' capacity to access and to understand the outcomes of the evaluation. EASNIE's *Key Principles* address this point: 'presenting data in an accessible and user-friendly way enhances its use by all stakeholders, working towards on-going improvement' (2021a, p. 23).

Collaborative practices and engaged stakeholders in M&E processes support policy development. This contributes to collecting additional data to adjust and identify future areas of work and potential gaps to address, all helping to define and plan educational priorities and education quality assurance.

Stakeholders' involvement in and commitment to M&E processes also contribute to the implementation phase of policies. As the OECD highlights:

> In terms of policy reform, the use of indicators for monitoring and piloting policy implementation therefore hinges on "stakeholders' data literacy". At every governance levels [sic], stakeholders' capacity to understand data and

indicators will condition how much they engage with various sources of data. It requires for instance that teachers and school leaders are able to select and shape data in a coherent and meaningful way to improve instruction and school planning, and that district leaders and policy makers integrate research evidence into their practice and turn data analysis into action (2022, p. 6).

Emphasis on the right to education and equity

The MESIEP activity looked into additional contributors to M&E systems that are not under the authority of the ministry of education.

Monitoring and evaluation as a tool to promote human rights to education

Multiplicity of actors engaged

All the MESIEP countries have well-established institutions, such as ombudsperson offices and other agencies, responsible for promoting human rights and the right to education. This aspect of M&E of inclusive education is a significant outcome of phase 1 of MESIEP. All the work conducted by these engaged institutions contributes towards developing inclusive education practices and policies. It reinforces the importance of countries' commitment to ensure educational opportunities for all and work towards more equitable education systems in general.

Looking at the MESIEP country charts, one observation can be made: none of these actors are related in any way to the ministry of education. These institutions usually act independently. In the MESIEP countries, these external institutions have different roles and responsibilities and act differently.

Roles and responsibilities

Looking at Table 2, most of the roles and responsibilities assigned to these stakeholders are to promote, recommend, protect, advise and inform, which shows very active and engaged actors. These institutions usually represent civil society and, more importantly, in some cases support families who are vulnerable to exclusion and learners who face issues with educational institutions. These actors engage directly with the community to overcome discrimination and barriers to education and to inclusion.

Collaboration with policy-makers

Some of these institutions collaborate with policy-makers by making recommendations, reporting observations or alerting about certain situations. In some of the MESIEP countries, they have a reporting duty towards policy level and must inform about certain topics and areas when requested. Others have the duty to publicly report to policy-makers each year on the actions conducted. Policy-makers can consult them in certain cases for specific requests related to their area of expertise.

The prevention and promotion work conducted by these actors can lead policy-makers to address and act on certain areas or issues. This reinforces the importance of involving these stakeholders in discussions on and contributions to M&E of inclusive education.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

This report has drawn a very general picture of M&E systems and practices, and specifically of M&E of inclusive education. The theoretical background information has helped to clarify certain processes and mechanisms.

This report has concentrated on establishing connections between the different elements present in M&E systems at national and policy levels in the MESIEP countries, with a particular focus on external evaluation processes. In phase 2 of the activity (2025), the focus was narrowed to explore the school level and internal evaluation processes and practices.

The MESIEP activity gathered information from five EASNIE member countries. However, a future activity could explore M&E of inclusive education in all EASNIE member countries.

As reinforced by the Council of the European Union:

> Evidence-informed policies that incorporate data on the effectiveness of inclusive practices are essential to guide the design and implementation of inclusive education and training systems at all levels and to ensure that interventions are tailored to meet the diverse needs of learners while promoting high-quality and equitable education and training (2025, p. 6).

Overall, the following key findings may be considered the outcomes of phase 1 of MESIEP:

- The ministry of education is the general regulator or main actor of M&E systems in inclusive education.

- Multiple actors external to the ministry of education are engaged in monitoring and evaluating the right to inclusive education and promoting human rights, but they work quite independently.

- External school evaluations mainly aim to ensure policy implementation.

- M&E practices and legal frameworks are mainly special needs-oriented; the concept of inclusive education being understood to mean quality education for all learners is not sufficiently addressed.

- Multiple stakeholders are involved in evaluation processes; however, some professional groups are still not involved (for example, teacher assistants).

- A top-down approach with one-way communication is observable.

- External school evaluation processes use multiple sources of information (interviews, school surveys, focus group discussions with learners and families, school documentation, quantitative data, learners' outcomes).

- The positions of evaluators and those being evaluated are difficult to shift. Movement towards more supportive relationships is key to ensure comprehensive M&E systems.

- It is necessary to enhance collaboration between school communities and policy-makers.

- There is a need to improve the dissemination of the outcomes of the evaluation. Most of the MESIEP countries show reporting and feedback processes between the evaluation bodies and the school, but not how the school community uses the evaluations and how outcomes are shared, particularly at school level.

- The MESIEP countries do not mention cross-collaboration as being part of external school evaluation practices and processes.

As an inspector from Ireland mentioned during a MESIEP meeting, 'Emphasising what inclusive education looks like rather than focusing on what is not inclusive' seems to be the direction towards improving inclusive practices. EASNIE has already addressed this in its position paper on inclusive education:

> At the heart of future planning is a need for clarity about the meaning of inclusive education. Inclusion in education and equity should not be seen as separate policies, but as principles that underpin and inform all national policies. This includes those on governance, curriculum, assessment, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation, teacher education, and funding and resource allocation (2022b, p. 2).

The MESIEP activity has mainly focused its work on school evaluations, and especially on external school evaluation. Therefore, it does not cover all topics and areas related to M&E of inclusive education. Other areas, such as teacher appraisal and learning outcomes, could be considered to enrich the work and ensure a comprehensive approach towards M&E of inclusive education systems.

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ANNEXES

These annexes contain country briefs developed throughout phase 1 of MESIEP. Each brief is standalone and provides information about a specific MESIEP country's context.

The information in these country briefs was current in October 2025.

Each country brief has a similar structure:

- First, it presents a mapped overview of the institutions involved in M&E processes and practices under the authority of the ministry of education (blue boxes) and under other authorities (green boxes). It also shows the educational institution level (orange boxes).

- Two main sections follow the charts:

    – Main features of the M&E system

    – Policies and frameworks related to M&E systems.
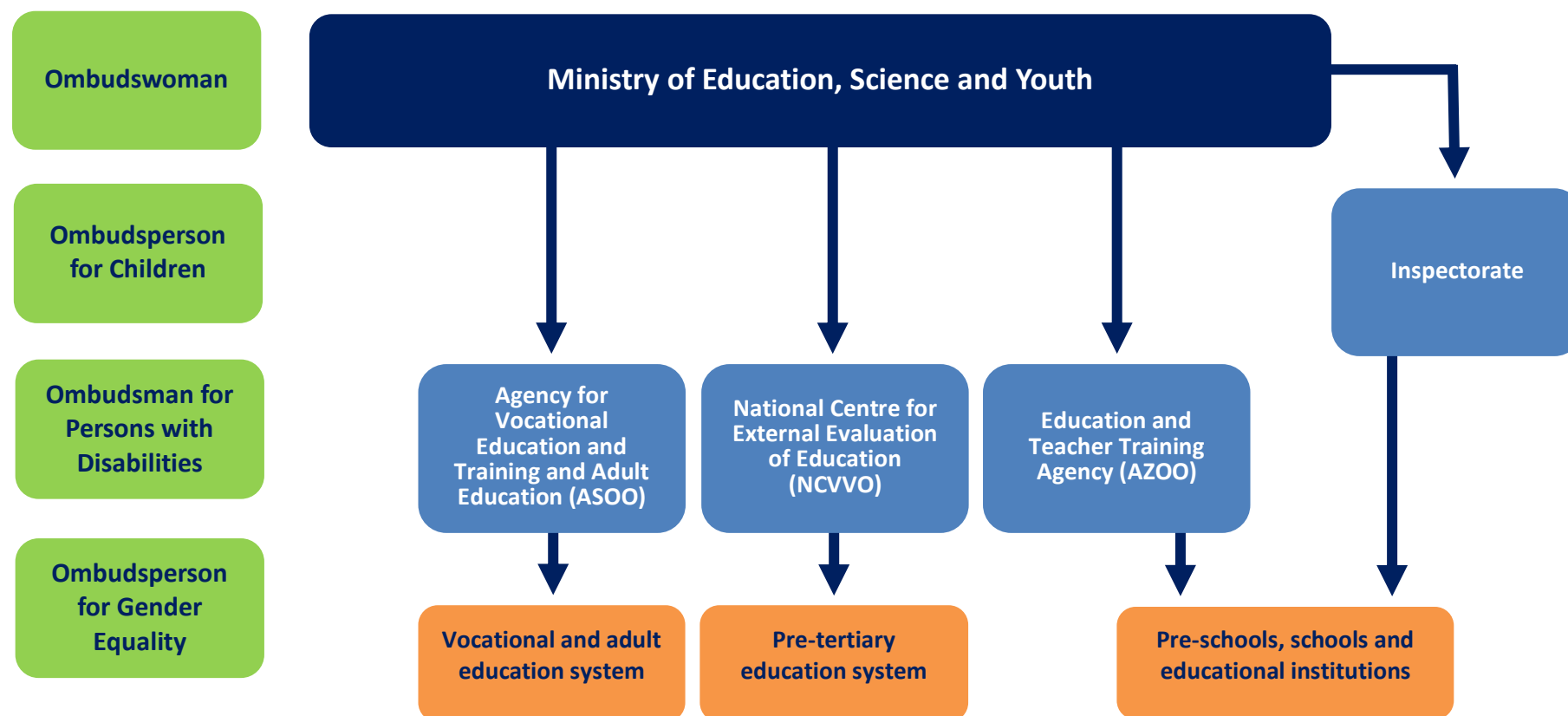
The country briefs follow below:

- [Annex 1: Croatia country brief](#)

- [Annex 2: Ireland country brief](#)

- [Annex 3: Malta country brief](#)

- [Annex 4: Serbia country brief](#)

- [Annex 5: UK (England) country brief](#).

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Inclusive Education Policy

ANNEX 1: CROATIA COUNTRY BRIEF

Figure 2. Overview of the M&E system in Croatia

Main features of the monitoring and evaluation system – Croatia

Institutions involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

Inspectorate: an independent, internal organisational unit of the Ministry which carries out inspections in pre-primary institutions, primary and secondary schools and learner dormitories. It aims to improve the quality of pre-tertiary education and the implementation of laws and regulations.

Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO): a public institution responsible for quality assurance in education. It participates in the monitoring, improvement and development of education in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools.

Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO): a public institution responsible for improving the vocational and adult education system.

National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO): a public institution which has an advisory role in improving the quality of education. It is responsible for the overall external evaluation of the pre-tertiary education system in Croatia.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

Ombudswoman: established by the 1990 Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. The Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia is a commissioner of the Croatian Parliament responsible for promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Ombudswoman performs the mandates of the National Equality Body in charge of combating discrimination and is responsible for the National Preventive Mechanism for the protection of persons deprived of their liberty. The Ombudswoman is also entrusted with external reporting of irregularities within the Whistleblowers' Protection Act.

Ombudsperson for Gender Equality: established in 2003. Responsible for gender equality, which is one of the fundamental values of Croatia's constitution, and for combating discrimination in the field of gender equality.

Ombudsperson for Children: established in 2003. Responsible for children's rights (up to 18 years old). The Ombudsperson for Children has 'children's counsellors' – a group of children called the Network of Young Counsellors who advise the Ombudsperson on issues that are important for children. The network consists of 20 members aged 12–18, including children with disabilities. The Ombudsperson for Children also makes efforts to protect and promote the rights and interests of children with disabilities.

Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities: established in 2008. Responsible for children and adults with disabilities and health issues. Their primary role is to protect, monitor and promote the rights and interests of children with developmental disabilities and persons with disabilities.

Role of the actors involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

The **Inspectorate** inspects the application of laws and other regulations governing:

- the organisation and operation of pre-school and school system institutions;

- the establishment and termination of an employment relationship;

- the exercise of rights and obligations in an employment relationship.

It also decides on the rights and legal interests of learners and their parents, ensuring transparency of institutional work. The Inspectorate supervises the application of the legal rules of collective agreements, which are granted by law or other regulation. Inspections also investigate complaints from citizens about difficulties in institutions. School inspections are often seen as part of the education system's quality assurance mechanism, although in most cases their role is mainly linked to aligning schools with the legal requirements. Sometimes their role is a combination of inspection and supervision. The Inspectorate decides on appeals against institutions' decisions to exclude learners from school and other decisions made in the exercise of public authority when the Ministry is responsible for the decision.

The **Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO)** participates in creating, developing and implementing the national curriculum. It monitors the development and implementation of the Croatian National Educational Standard as part of the national curriculum. It also participates in creating and monitoring national programmes. AZOO provides professional assistance and instructs institutions and staff in implementing educational activities. It is responsible for professionalisation of educators (organising and implementing professional training, conducting professional exams, etc.). It is also responsible for professional-pedagogical supervision of kindergarten and school employees and teachers.

The **Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO)** is responsible for planning, developing, organising, implementing, monitoring and improving the vocational and adult education system. It advises vocational and adult education institutions and participates in vocational and adult education system evaluation, self-evaluation and external evaluation procedures. ASOO prepares and develops the methodology for creating occupational standards, professional qualifications and curricula in vocational education and for creating adult education programmes. It also creates vocational curricula and prepares proposals for occupational standards. It is responsible for professionalisation of employees in the vocational and adult education system. It is also responsible for professional-pedagogical supervision of school employees and teachers in vocational secondary schools.

The **National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO)** conducts state matriculation exams and external evaluation of Croatia's education system and exams, based on national standards. NCVVO's defined activities are in the field of external evaluation of learner achievements (developing, organising, implementing and analysing national and state matriculation exams, implementing international research, determining standards, creating task banks).

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The **Ombudswoman** is independent and autonomous in their work, which is directed at protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, combating discrimination in their role as the National Equality Body and preventing torture via the National Preventive Mechanism. The institution fulfils its goals by building authority and trust and having a vision for a society in which human rights are respected, promoted and protected, in which the state administration is just, efficient and accessible and in which each individual enjoys equality of opportunity. The Ombudswoman promotes and protects human rights, freedoms and the rule of law. More specifically, within their different mandates, they:

- examine complaints of unlawful practices and irregularities with respect to the work of state bodies, bodies of the local and regional self-government units and legal persons vested with public authority;

- within the mandate of the National Equality Body, examine complaints against legal and natural persons in accordance with the special law;

- perform the duties of the National Preventive Mechanism Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

- act as an external body for reporting irregularities within the Whistleblowers' Protection Act;

- protect the rights of persons deprived of their liberty;

- monitor the state of human rights and point out the need for their protection;

- monitor the alignment of laws and other regulations with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and with international legal acts on human rights;

- promote the alignment of the legislation with international and European standards and ensure its consistent application;

- submit annual reports to the Croatian Parliament;

- carry out research and analysis;

- develop and maintain the institutional database and relevant documentation;

- inform the public and relevant stakeholders about violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as about established infringements of constitutional and legal rights;

- promote and maintain co-operation with civil society, international organisations and scientific and research institutions.

The **Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities** has different roles related to protecting the rights and interests of persons with disabilities. These include, for example:

- monitoring the compliance of laws and other regulations in Croatia with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and international documents;

- fulfilling Croatia's obligations arising from international documents and implementing Croatia's policies, national strategies and programmes;

- protecting human rights and the fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities and combatting all forms of discrimination due to disability;

- considering cases of violation of the rights of persons with disabilities, informing the public about these violations, and acting to prevent them;

- collecting information on and informing the public about the state of the rights of persons with disabilities;

- advocating for the protection and promotion of the rights and interests of persons with disabilities;

- suggesting measures to build a comprehensive system to protect and promote the rights and interests of persons with disabilities, as well as measures aimed at improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families;

- recommending inspections and professional-pedagogical supervision in schools.

The **Ombudsperson for Children** has different tasks related to protecting the rights and interests of children. The Ombudsperson:

- ensures that laws and other regulations in Croatia comply with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international documents;

- fulfils Croatia's obligations arising from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international documents and applies all regulations related to protecting children's rights and interests;

- monitors violations of individual children's rights, studies general occurrences and methods of violations of children's rights and interests, and advocates for the protection and promotion of the rights and interests of children with special needs;

- suggests measures to build a comprehensive system to protect and promote children's rights and to prevent harmful actions that threaten their interests;

- introduces children to their rights and interests, advises them on how to exercise and protect these, co-operates with children, encourages them to express themselves and respects their opinion;

- informs the public about the state of children's rights, initiates and participates in public activities aimed at improving the position of children and proposes measures to increase their influence in society;

- can participate in procedures that precede the adoption of regulations related to children's rights or issues of importance for children, and can encourage the adoption of and changes to laws and other regulations related to children's rights and protection.

The **Ombudsperson for Gender Equality** has a role related to gender equality. Gender equality is one of the fundamental values of the Croatian constitution. At the proposal of

the Croatian Government, the Croatian Parliament appointed the first Ombudsperson for Gender Equality in accordance with the Gender Equality Act, adopted in 2003 (Official Gazette 116/03). In 2008, the Croatian Parliament adopted a new Gender Equality Act (Official Gazette 82/08), according to which the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality performs the tasks of an independent body in charge of combating discrimination in the field of gender equality. The Ombudsperson for Gender Equality's responsibilities include:

- receiving complaints from any natural persons or legal entities regarding gender discrimination;

- providing assistance to natural and legal persons who filed a complaint of sexual discrimination when instituting legal proceedings;

- taking steps to investigate individual complaints prior to legal proceedings;

- conducting, with the consent of the parties involved, a mediation process with the aim of reaching an out-of-court settlement;

- collecting and analysing statistical data on cases of sexual discrimination;

- conducting independent surveys concerning discrimination, publishing independent reports and exchanging available information with corresponding European bodies;

- independently monitoring the enforcement of the Gender Equality Act and other regulations on gender equality and reporting to the Croatian Parliament at least once a year;

- investigating cases of infringement of the principle of gender equality, cases of discrimination against individuals or groups of individuals by public bodies, units of local or regional self-government or other bodies with public authority, by employees of these bodies or other legal or natural persons;

Anyone has the right to address the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality about any infringements of the Gender Equality Act, regardless of whether they have suffered direct injury from such infringement or are filing a complaint in somebody else's name, provided that the injured party is not expressly opposed.

Data collected in monitoring and evaluation processes

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

The **Inspectorate** and the **Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO)** act on complaints and keep internal statistics on what they mainly referred to, in which area, etc. If they notice deficiencies when supervising kindergartens and schools, they determine mandatory measures to be implemented within a certain period and ask for feedback on the activities carried out.

The **National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO)** conducts external evaluation to determine learners' achieved competence levels and educational outcomes defined by subject curricula and evaluation for learning, i.e. evaluation of what has been learned. NCVVO analyses data collected through external evaluation and prepares reports

on the results of external evaluation. It is obliged to provide the school with access to its external evaluation results.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The four Ombudsperson offices submit annual reports on their work to the Croatian Parliament. These reports give an overview of the state of rights of all persons, including persons with disabilities, in Croatia for the year. Before being included on the Parliament's agenda, different parliamentary committees discuss the reports (the Committee for Health and Social Policy discusses reports by the Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities; the Committee for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities and the Committee on the Constitution, Standing Orders and Political System discuss the Ombudswoman's reports; the Committee for Family, Youth and Sports discusses the Ombudsperson for Children's reports; the Committee for Gender Equality discusses reports by the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality). Each report is then discussed in plenary. In addition to these annual reports, the Ombudsperson offices may submit a special report on a specific topic or can disseminate data such as press releases, details of conferences/round tables and similar events, scientific articles and online publications.

The **Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities** collects data on the number of learners with and without disabilities in primary and secondary school, the share of learners with disabilities from year to year, the number and share of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools, special classes in mainstream schools and in special institutions, and the number of university students with disabilities. This data is collected from the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth. The Ombudsman also visits special institutions and special classes in mainstream schools on their own initiative or visits certain learners with disabilities in mainstream schools following a complaint. The Ombudsman can do their own research or co-operate with faculty/scientific institutions to investigate on-going complaints.

The **Ombudsperson for Children** visits children's institutions (for example, schools, kindergartens, homes, including schools in which children with disabilities are educated, so-called 'special schools', institutions that provide accommodation for children with disabilities, etc.) and talks to children to gain direct insight into their opinions on their education. The Ombudsperson organises workshops with children (primary and secondary school learners and learners with disabilities in so-called 'special schools'). The Ombudsperson conducts research with children (for example, survey with learners with disabilities on implementing educational policy and their possible impact on implementation measures in education). By a process of random selection, learners with disabilities are also included in this research. The results of the studies are published on the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children website.

The **Ombudsperson for Gender Equality** monitors the implementation of the gender equality principle in education, according to the Act on Gender Equality and other regulations and examples of good practice. The Ombudsperson has oversight of curriculums, school textbooks and other education materials and reacts in the case of indicators of discriminatory content or gender stereotypes. The institution is open to study visits by school classes and also participates in school projects related to civic education. The Ombudsperson also analyses official gender-distributed data from the

Croatian Bureau of Statistics from the gender perspective, to determine longitudinal trends in the Croatian education system. The Ombudsperson monitors current trends in the national and international context and tries to include all relevant news and data in the chapter on 'Education' in their annual report.

Policies and frameworks related to monitoring and evaluation – Croatia

- **Constitution of the Republic of Croatia**: according to Article 66 of the Constitution, education is available to everyone equally, based on their abilities, and compulsory education is free. Article 93 of the Constitution states the provisions related to the Ombudsman's role and work in general.

- The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities**, including Article 24 (referring to education), and the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, including Articles 23, 28 and 29 (referring to education), are international binding documents. All national laws, regulations and acts should be harmonised with these two conventions.

- **Law on primary and secondary education**: according to this law, both primary and secondary education are based on equal educational opportunities for all learners based on their abilities.

- **Anti-discrimination law**: this law aims to ensure protection and promotion of equality as the highest value of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, to create prerequisites for achieving equal opportunities and to regulate protection against different forms of discrimination.

- **School Inspection Act**

- **Law/Act on the Education and Teacher Training Agency**

- **Law/Act on the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education**

- **The Ombudsman Act**

- **Law on the Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities**: the Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities acts according to this law in protecting the rights and interests of persons with disabilities.

- **Law on the Ombudsperson for Children**: the Ombudsperson for Children acts according to this law in protecting the rights and interests of children.

- **Act (law) on Gender Equality**: the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality acts according to this law in combating discrimination in the field of gender equality.

- **Law/Act on the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education**

- The National Centre for External Evaluation of Education has published numerous **guidelines**, for all educational levels, on **self-evaluation and self-reflection for educational institutions**:

    – Handbook for implementation of self-evaluation in primary schools (2009)

    – Handbook for implementation of self-evaluation in secondary schools (2010)

    – Handbook for the Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Pre-school Education Institutions (2013).

- Rulebook on the **method of implementing external evaluation** and **using the results** of external evaluation of school institutions.

- The [National Plan for Developing the Education System to 2027](#) and the [Action Plan for Implementing the National Plan for Developing the Education System to 2024](#) aim to implement different measures to achieve an education system which:

    – is inclusive, high-quality and equitable;

    – actively encourages the integral development of all learners;

    – prepares all learners for the world of work, continuation of education, modern life and active participation in democratic society.

ANNEX 2: IRELAND COUNTRY BRIEF

Figure 3. Overview of the M&E system in Ireland
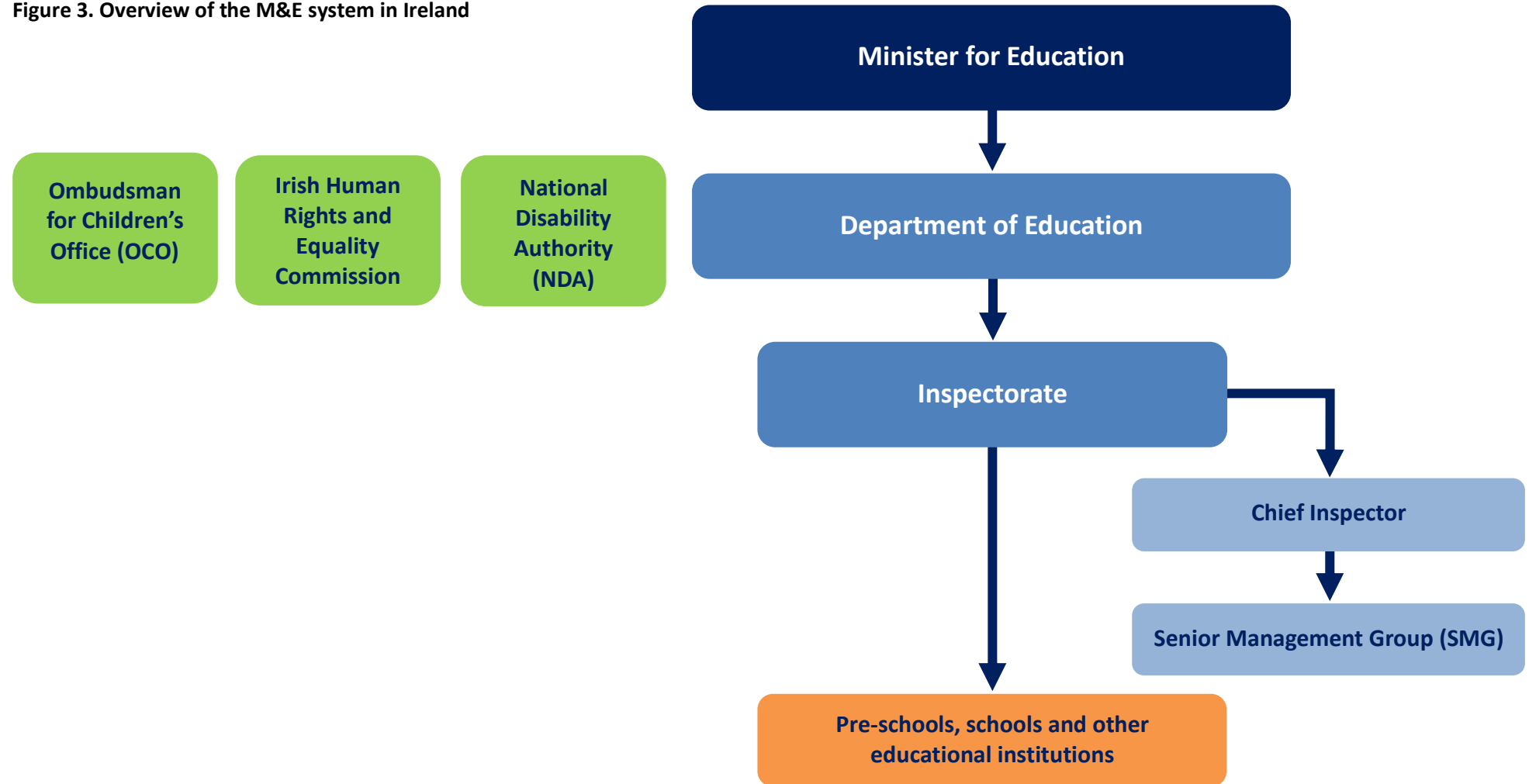
Main features of the monitoring and evaluation system – Ireland

Institutions involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

The **Inspectorate** is part of the Department of Education. It is headed by a Chief Inspector, supported by two Deputy Chief Inspectors and ten Assistant Chief Inspectors, who together form the Senior Management Group (SMG). The Inspectorate has an Access and Inclusion unit, which is responsible for conducting focused evaluations on aspects of educational provision related to inclusion, access and participation.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The **Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO)** is an independent statutory human rights institution, established in 2004. The OCO has a youth advisory panel, involving young people, which is led by the Participation and Rights Education unit. This panel involves children, supporting them to contribute to the OCO's work and express their views on a range of matters affecting children. Children with special educational needs are also included in these processes.

The **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** is responsible for promoting and monitoring the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among other things.

The **National Disability Authority (NDA)** also has a role to advise and inform the government on policy and practice for people with disabilities. Its functions include:

- research on issues relating to disability;

- assisting in the development of statistical information appropriate for planning, delivering and monitoring programmes and services for people with disabilities;

- monitoring the implementation of standards and codes of practice in programmes and services for persons with disabilities.

Role of the actors involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

Inspection is a key component of education quality assurance in Ireland. Inspection has two central pivotal roles:

1. **Promoting improvement in the learning and well-being of children and young people**. This is done by sharing findings from inspection with the education system to identify strengths in educational provision and facilitate professional reflection on aspects requiring further development. This work supports the overarching education, inclusion and equity goals to which educators and policy-makers in Ireland aspire.

   The Inspectorate engages in a wide range of evaluations and carries out an annual programme of evaluations and advisory visits to early learning and care settings,

primary, post-primary and special schools and education centres. It also conducts evaluations in, and provides advice to, a range of other settings where education is provided, including schools within prisons. The Inspectorate conducts annual evaluations of the schools attached to Special Care Units and the Children's Detention Campus to evaluate the educational provision and promote best practice for children and young people who are in the care of the state. When evaluating the educational provision in a school, the Inspectorate considers the specific contextual factors in which the school operates. These factors include school size, location, socio-economic circumstances of the learners and community, learners' additional and special educational needs, age range of the learners, and the diversity of languages in the school community.

A wide range of inspection types has been developed so that evaluation and advisory work can be tailored to the needs of individual schools and the school system. All inspection models monitor and report on procedures regarding aspects of child protection, along with the prevention of bullying behaviour. Almost all inspection models focus on the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. Depending on the evaluation, they may also focus on the quality of support for learners, the quality of action planning for school improvement, and the quality of leadership and management. Some inspection types, such as incidental inspections, are quite short. Other inspections, such as whole-school evaluations take more time and involve evaluation of the schools' leadership and management, as well as teaching and learning. The different inspection models are conducted according to the [Guidelines](#), which cover the various types of evaluations.

Some inspection models evaluate how the school manages and addresses its learners' well-being. The recently-developed *Promotion of Wellbeing Evaluation* model evaluates the extent to which the school promotes learning for well-being and learning about well-being across four domains: culture and environment; curriculum; policy and practice; and partnerships. This model also evaluates the effectiveness of the school's work to prevent and address bullying.

The Inspectorate evaluates provision for children and young people with special educational needs, through its routine inspections and through a number of bespoke approaches:

‒ The whole-school type model focuses on learner experiences and outcomes, the management and use of resources, and the quality of inclusive practices to support learners' inclusion, participation and holistic development. During these evaluations, inspectors look in depth at areas relating to inclusion and equity, including a school's provision for learners who receive additional support within mainstream classes only, those who receive additional support within mainstream classes and in support settings, and learners in special classes.

‒ The *Focused evaluation of learning and provision for students with special educational needs* model evaluates the overall quality of learning for learners with special educational needs and also focuses on one particular aspect of a

school's provision, allowing the Inspector to address this aspect in greater depth.

- – An annual programme of thematic inspections focuses on specific aspects of provision for children and young people with special educational needs. Recent examples include a thematic report on the use of assistive technology to support engagement in learning and a thematic report on provision in special classes for learners with autism.

2. **Advancing the Department of Education's goals and principles relating to equity and inclusion**. The Inspectorate does this:

   - – through its advisory role to the Department of Education and the Minister;

   - – through membership of a range of boards – for example, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE); Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA), and An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (Council for Gaeltacht and Irish-medium Education) (COGG);

   - – through collaboration with partner organisations, such as Oide (the support service for teachers and school leaders) and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), to align key messages and supports for schools;

   - – through participation in Development Groups established by the NCCA to develop curricula and subject specifications;

   - – by providing advice and affirmation for teachers, school leaders and management;

   - – by promoting school self-evaluation (SSE);

   - – through extensive evaluation work;

   - – through its Access and Inclusion unit, which works to further develop the evaluation of inclusive provision and promotes consideration and sharing of key findings to inform policy and practice at school, regional and Department levels.

With its advisory role, the Inspectorate supports schools and sets leaders an internal SSE process. The Irish system aspires to a well-integrated system of evaluation that combines the external perspective (inspection) with the reflective and collective insights of school leaders, teachers, parents and learners, gathered through the SSE process.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The **Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO)** has two roles:

- Traditional ombudsperson function, where complaints are made to the OCO by, or on behalf of, children, about the actions of public bodies, schools or hospitals that may have had an adverse effect on children. If the OCO investigates an action taken by a school or public body, it may make recommendations to the public body. It has the power to request that the public body notify the OCO of its response to the investigation. The OCO may also submit investigation reports to

the relevant Oireachtas (parliament) committees, or an Oireachtas committee may invite the OCO to speak about the report.

- Promoting the rights and welfare of children up to 18 years of age in Ireland. In addition to the complaints, sometimes members of the public (for example, parents) contact and inform the OCO about identified issues and how things are operating. Among the OCO's duties is raising awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The OCO is not mandated to monitor and evaluate equity and inclusion in education. However, it has duties regarding children's rights and welfare, such as to:

- collect and share information;

- monitor legislation;

- advise government ministers on policy development and co-ordination;

- encourage public bodies and institutions to develop policies, practices and procedures;

- promote awareness of children's rights and welfare based on the principles of the UNCRC.

Though the OCO does not have duties specifically related to education, the above duties include work on matters relating to education.

The **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** is responsible for promoting and monitoring the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among other things.

The **National Disability Authority (NDA)** has a role to advise and inform the government on policy and practice for people with disabilities. Its functions include:

- research on issues relating to disability;

- assisting in the development of statistical information appropriate for planning, delivering and monitoring programmes and services for people with disabilities;

- monitoring the implementation of standards and codes of practice in programmes and services for persons with disabilities.

Data collected in monitoring and evaluation processes

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

Prior to school visits, **inspectors** gather data related to school attendance patterns, summary socio-economic data for the learner cohort, and data related to expulsions and suspensions. In all inspections, the Inspectorate monitors and reports on compliance with keys aspects of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023/2025) and on the extent to which schools are implementing the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2024/2025). Observing teaching and learning and engaging with learners are central to all inspection models.

Discussions with school managers and teachers are organised during school visits. Depending on the inspection model, school visits may also include:

- focus groups with learners and parents;

- a well-being workshop with a combined group of volunteer learners and adults from the school community;

- surveys for parents, learners and teachers;

- meetings with school leaders, relevant teachers and special education teachers;

- analysis of a school's data to show evidence of improvement.

These methods allow collection of different data, depending on the focus of the evaluation. During their engagements with learners, inspectors ask questions about their sense of inclusion in school activities, including during lunchtime and extra-curricular activities. They explore whether learners feel respected within the school, their awareness of and involvement in setting their own learning targets, and the opportunities they have to experience and celebrate their successes.

At the end of the school visits, inspectors provide verbal feedback to the principal. For most inspections, the strengths and areas for further development are set out in a written report issued after the inspection. Inspection reports are also published online. In addition, the Inspectorate regularly publishes composite reports on the quality of aspects of provision in schools across a wide range of areas, including those relating to equity and inclusion.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The **OCO** has no specific legislative remit or power to gather data. It gathers publicly available statistical data and other data through desk-based research of governmental and non-governmental primary and secondary sources, and requests for information from different government departments and from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), etc., that may gather data from their services. The OCO gathers data through complaints, information from the general public, and research.

The OCO focuses more on identifying gaps in data collection by government departments and state agencies relevant to children. This assists the government, NGOs and the OCO in monitoring and evaluating the impact of policy developments on children.

The OCO regularly highlights data gathering on children as one of the general measures of implementing children's rights that the state is obliged to implement in line with the UNCRC.

Following a specific complaint, the OCO can conduct research – for example, on school places for children with special educational needs – though interviews and discussions with different stakeholders. Based on this research, a report will be issued outlining policy development and with recommendations to the Department of Education or other public bodies (for example, the Oireachtas). The data from different institutions is disseminated through the OCO report on the OCO website and through a press release issued to the media and posted on the website, engagement with print media, radio and television, and through government departments and ministers.

Policies and frameworks related to monitoring and evaluation – Ireland

- **Guide to Inspections in Schools**: These guides (one for primary and special schools and one for post-primary schools) set out the approach to inspection in schools. They provide a general overview of the approach to inspection and an outline of each of the inspection types used in schools.

- **Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools** and **Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools**: These two frameworks guide the Inspectorate's evaluation and advisory work. They provide a unified and coherent set of standards for the two dimensions of teaching and learning, and leadership and management in schools. Among the standards identified within the quality frameworks for primary, post-primary and special schools is a commitment to equal opportunity, inclusion and the holistic development of each child. These standards set out what effective learning, teaching and management practices look like in the Irish school system. The frameworks are designed to inform both external inspection and internal self-evaluation. They include several indicators that refer to equity and inclusion in education, which support inspectors as they monitor, evaluate and report on quality in all schools' inclusive practices. Different inspections will draw on the elements of the framework that are most relevant to the focus of the inspection.

- The **Continuum of Support Framework** assists schools in identifying and responding to learners' needs. It recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long-term, and that learners require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. Using this framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

- **Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools** and **Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools**: The Continuum of Support Framework and these two guidelines for supporting learners with special educational needs are particularly considered in inspection evaluation models that evaluate provision for children and young people with special educational needs.

- The **Department of Education Statement of Strategy 2023-2025** sets out a mission, vision and values for an education system that is of the highest quality, where every member of the educational community, including learners, their families and all the staff that engage with them, feels valued and supported. The Department of Education is committed to tackling educational inequality as part of its mission, and is working to achieve key strategic goals, one of which is to ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all learners are supported to fulfil their potential.

- [Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools](#) is the Department of Education's policy response to tackling educational and social disadvantage. It sets out a vision for education to become a more effective pathway to better opportunities for communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion.

- The [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice](#) sets out the Department of Education's policy in relation to its role in promoting the well-being of children and young people in schools and centres for education. It sets out the Department's ambition and vision for well-being promotion and helps to ensure effective implementation of a multi-component, whole-school approach that positively impacts on all children and young people, in line with best international practice.

- The Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying and the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools set out a whole-education approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools. They are centred on a child-rights-based approach and support a partnership approach where all members of the school community work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

- [Ombudsman for Children Act 2002](#): the OCO has a strategic plan, which includes education and children with disabilities as priorities.

ANNEX 3: MALTA COUNTRY BRIEF

Figure 4. Overview of the M&E system in Malta
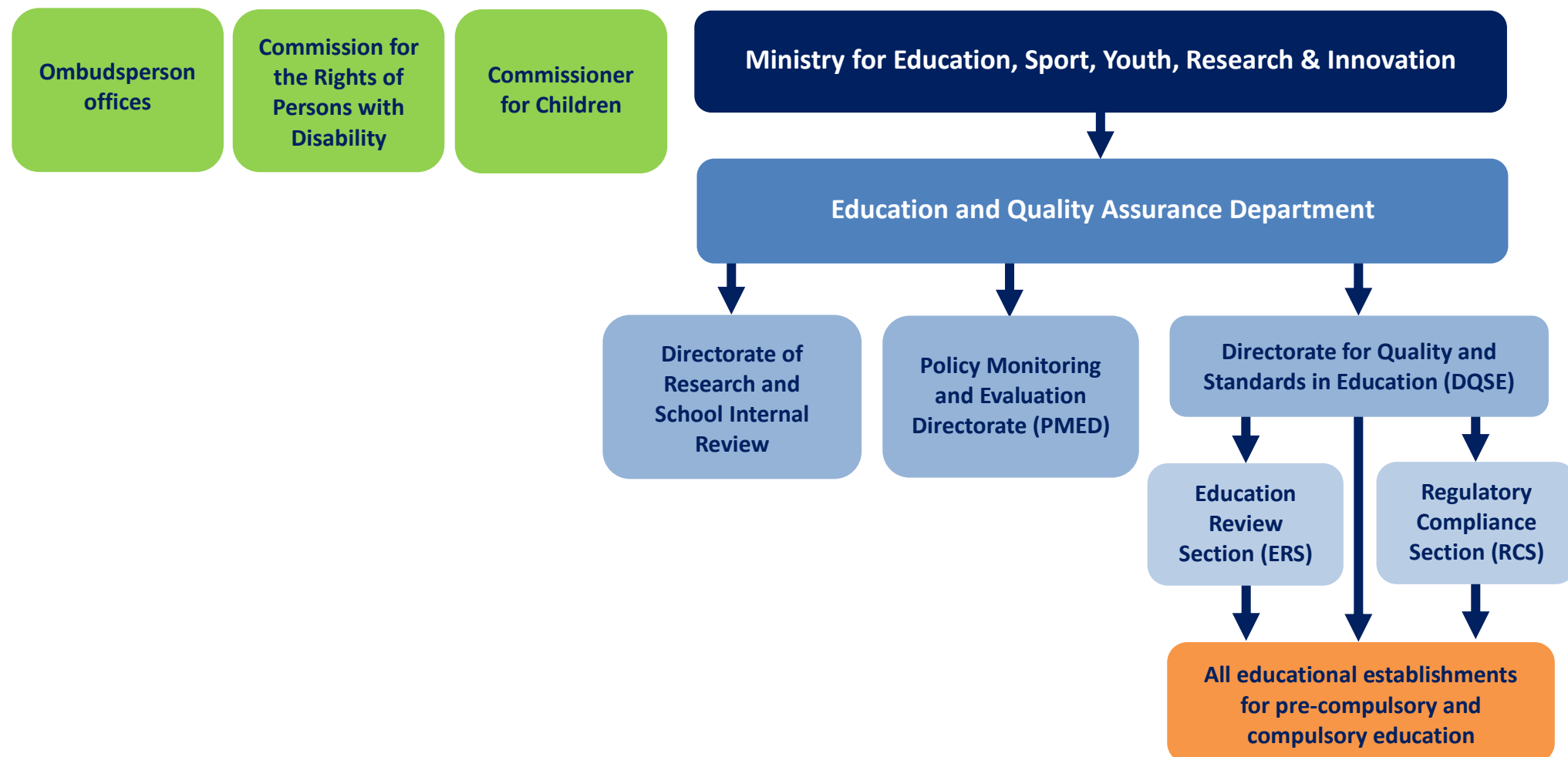
Main features of the monitoring and evaluation system – Malta

Institutions involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

The institutions responsible for monitoring and evaluation in Malta are under the authority of the Ministry of Education.

The **Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE)** is the national regulator for pre-compulsory and compulsory education, as per the Education Act Chapter 605. The DQSE conducts external reviews and compliance visits, licenses childcare centres, schools, educational establishments and summer schools, conducts programme accreditation and addresses complaints.

Through the external review structure, the DQSE is committed to promoting a culture of continuous professional growth and school improvement within schools. The processes established for external reviews in schools guarantee that each school will be considered and evaluated within its own context. External reviews also take place in early childhood educational settings where attendance is not compulsory.

The Regulatory Compliance Section (RCS), also part of the DQSE, is responsible for licensing schools, educational institutions and childcare centres (0–16 years). According to the Education Act Chapter 605, any institution offering pre-compulsory and compulsory educational services must be licensed by the DQSE.

The **Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (PMED)**, established in 2022, has emerged as a pivotal force in shaping Malta's educational landscape, particularly through its stewardship of the **Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools – Route to Quality Inclusion**. The PMED's work on this Policy exemplifies a model of strategic, evidence-informed governance. The PMED strives towards continuous evaluation, stakeholder collaboration and a commitment to inclusive excellence. The Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation has recently announced a pre-consultation process for the new inclusion policy, which is due to be launched in 2027 as the current inclusion policy ends in January 2027.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

Ombudsperson offices, Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Commissioner for Children.

Role of the actors involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

The National Quality Standards in Education and the National Educational Framework preceded the development of the National Education Standards. The basis for the National Education Standards (2024–2030) involved widespread consultation with all stakeholders.

In fact, the standards and framework were the first two documents released as satellite strategies within the National Education Strategy. The strategy strongly emphasises well-

being and is inherently linked to the concept of inclusion in a holistic manner. In developing the National Education Strategy, the Ministry of Education considered the quality standards common to all schools in Malta, along with success criteria and quality markers. These factors informed the measures proposed in the strategy.

The DQSE is required to establish, regulate, assure and monitor standards and quality in education in all the educational establishments attended by learners of compulsory and pre-compulsory school age, irrespective of which sector they belong to. These reviews are required to guarantee optimum quality, especially of educational programmes and services, and of operations.

The DQSE's approach as a regulatory body is developmental, where quality assurance is seen as an evaluation of schools' approach to different aspects, such as leadership and management, learning and teaching, and school ethos. Guiding schools towards improvement takes centre stage. Through different review models, the DQSE ensures a regular presence in all schools in Malta and Gozo where the schools' plans for improvement, current practices and national policies are discussed through an approach that focuses on dialogue and reflection.

The DQSE, as per legislation, is responsible for issuing school licences for state and non-state schools. These licences are therefore based on process and structure, both the learning and teaching process and the compliance aspects. The DQSE can therefore propose changes in legislation that it deems to be beneficial to children and schools.

The PMED's role is to follow and implement the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation's commitment to ensure the transformation of policy into practice by fostering a culture of transparency, accountability and continuous improvement across all levels of the education system. In this regard, the PMED has produced two reports – one in 2024 and a follow-up in 2025 – on the implementation of the above-mentioned policy. In parallel, EASNIE presented a re-audit report on the inclusive education system in Malta in 2024, as a follow-up to the recommendations it made in 2014.

The PMED's work is grounded in a robust evaluation framework that aligns with the **European Education Area 2030 targets** and **Sustainable Development Goal 4**. Through its rolling evaluation plans and multi-stakeholder reporting structures, the PMED ensures that the inclusion policy mentioned above is not only implemented but refined to meet evolving needs.

The **Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2025** outlines the PMED's comprehensive approach to policy oversight. It emphasises evidence-informed decision-making, accountability and the integration of internal evaluation mechanisms. This ensures that policies like the inclusion policy are assessed both formatively and summatively, allowing for adjustments and long-term impact measurement.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

> While recognizing the State party's efforts to ensure respect for the views of the child, in particular through the mandate of the Commissioner for Children, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/MLT/CO/2,

para. 33) and recommends, with reference to its general comment no. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, that the State party:

(a) Strengthen its efforts to ensure respect for the right of all children to be heard in all matters affecting them, in the family, at schools, in the courts and in all relevant administrative and other processes, including children in vulnerable and marginalized situations, such as children with disabilities, and asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, and ensure that due weight is given to their views in accordance with their age and maturity;

(b) Ensure that professionals working with and for children systematically receive appropriate training on hearing and taking into account children's views in all decisions affecting them and in accordance with the child's age and maturity;

(c) Conduct awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, the community and schools, including within student councils, with particular attention to children in vulnerable and marginalized situations;

(d) Ensure the adoption and effective implementation of the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool in order to standardize participation of and consultation with children on issues that affect them (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2019, p. 5).

Data collected in monitoring and evaluation processes

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

In every school, both structural quality and process quality undergo assessment. Structural quality includes the physical environment, qualifications, learning and assessment time that each learner receives. Process quality includes external reviews and focuses on the three areas which form part of the standards: leadership and management, learning and teaching, and school ethos.

The framework focuses on three levels:

- the school-based internal review process, acknowledging the school's autonomy and awareness to identify its own needs, and to identify the support that is needed through the school-based internal review process;
- external support and collective capacity building;
- the external monitoring and evaluation process.

A lot of importance is given to how the school conducts its own quality assurance through its structure, processes and standards. The external quality assurance mechanism aims to evaluate the school in a developmental way, based on dialogue and reflection. As the external evaluator, the DQSE discusses with schools their plans for improvement in the

areas linked to the National Quality Standards, while viewing inclusion in a holistic way throughout the three areas included in these standards. The DQSE evaluates how schools are planning to achieve those priorities and offers guidance and feedback.

The school leadership team is typically very supportive of the external review process, due to its developmental nature which is based on professional dialogue. The fundamental aim of any external review model is to bring about improvement. Thorough discussions follow the recommendations in the report, and subsequent visits help build mutual trust.

External review models – DQSE practices:

- Unannounced visits, which focus on leadership and learning and teaching

- Whole-school external reviews, which focus on all the standards

- Focused reviews – for example, a focused review is currently being conducted on leadership and management. Currently, the DQSE is developing a focused review model specifically focusing on inclusion and inclusive practices within Maltese compulsory education. This type of review will focus on the National Standards in conjunction with national policy and strategy linked to inclusive practices. This model will be piloted during the 2025/2026 school year. Previously, the DQSE investigated all the specialised schools, resource centres and learning support centres.

Whole-school external reviews are announced six weeks before the visit and focused reviews are announced four weeks in advance. The DQSE checks the school's internal processes, policies and relevant documentation. Questionnaires based on the National Quality Standards are distributed to parents and educators, including learning support educators, and to learners (8–16-year-olds) prior to the visit.

During the school visit, the senior leadership team, educators, learning support educators, learners (including early years – starting with 6-year-olds), parents and the wider community are interviewed. The content of the interviews and focus groups, as well as the method of collecting questionnaires, is always tailored to the school's specific social and demographic context. Learners' voices are included throughout the process. The DQSE also interviews the different professionals who offer services to the school, including counsellors, inclusion co-ordinators and specialised experts providing a service to the school, to see whether their way of working with the school is effective.

Following the visit, the DQSE issues an external review report with targeted recommendations to be addressed by the school. A few weeks after the final report, the review team meets with the school leadership again to develop an action plan. An unannounced follow-up visit takes place up to a year after the review, which considers the recommendations, how they were targeted and whether they were successful.

The PMED's methodology includes school visits, feedback collection and descriptive studies that inform its evaluations. It also tracks implementation rates across strategies, with the inclusion policy showing steady progress. The PMED's reports do not merely assess – they recommend. These insights feed into the PMED's Evaluation and Monitoring Work Plan, which outlines strategic priorities under pillars such as Wellbeing, Growth and Empowerment, and Equity and Inclusion in the National Education Strategy 2024-2030.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

No information found.

Policies and frameworks related to monitoring and education – Malta

The **Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools – Route to Quality Inclusion** reflects Malta's commitment to equity, diversity and excellence in education. The Policy is structured around four key benchmarks, each meticulously monitored by the PMED:

1. **Access and participation**: All learners must have equitable access to educational systems and structures. The PMED's reports highlight efforts to reduce barriers and promote participation across diverse learner profiles.

2. **Responsive teaching approaches**: Educators are encouraged to adopt teaching methods that reflect and respond to diversity. The promotion of **Universal Design for Learning** principles has been central to this benchmark.

3. **Supportive school structures**: Schools are supported through well-organised frameworks that foster inclusive cultures. The PMED has documented the implementation of shared ethos models and diversity days to reinforce this benchmark.

4. **Professional development**: Educators are provided with flexible training opportunities to enhance their capacity for inclusive teaching. The PMED's monthly and quarterly reports detail the rollout of Senior Leadership Team training modules and feedback loops from school visits.

National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years), July 2021: these aim to reflect recent developments in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) field within the Maltese context, while also being in line with on-going research and practice for children aged 0–3 years. These standards aim to develop and strengthen a more socially just and active labour market by sustaining the availability and accessibility of quality ECEC services. The standards also inform parents about what to expect from a regulated centre.

Early Childhood Education and Care (0–7 years) National Policy Framework: a holistic approach to inclusion in which the continuous understanding of inclusion and equity is integrated into all standards. As such, enrolment access, equitable access to the physical environment, and equitable access to learning and care opportunities are all part of the same goal and concept.

National Quality Standards in Education (3-16 years), July 2023: these serve as fundamental tools for inspectors during school evaluations and progress monitoring. Schools can also use these standards for internal reviews. They cover three key areas: educational leadership and management, learning and teaching, and school ethos. Inclusion is integral to these standards. For instance, Standard 2.2 states:

> The school fosters a positive learning culture in which learners thrive holistically. Educators sustain this culture by cultivating learner motivation,

encouraging engagement and celebrating differences and abilities through an approach that is learner-centred.

In this standard, the success criteria include the quality markers of planning, collaboration between the teacher and learning support educators, classroom atmosphere, learning environment, and learner variability. For Standard 3.1, in the School Ethos section, the success criteria include a sense of belonging, school culture, mutual respect and behaviour policy. Standard 3.2 addresses different aspects of inclusion and diversity.

The concepts of diversity and equity are embedded in all nine of the National Quality Standards, but are particularly prominent in the Ethos section:

> Standard 3.1 – A sense of mutual respect amongst all stakeholders prevails, promoting positive behaviour and fostering a sense of belonging.

> Standard 3.2 – The school community embraces diversity and fosters an inclusive and supportive ethos in which all learners feel safe to express themselves and reach their full potential (National Quality Standards in Education (3-16 years), p. 23).

These standards and criteria are implemented during external reviews, but also form the guidelines for schools' internal reviews and school development planning.

A Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0-16 years), March 2023: These guidelines pertain to both the inspectorate and schools, focusing on school improvement. The concept of inclusion is embedded within the standards and framework. The vision is to establish a sustainable quality assurance mechanism that balances autonomy and accountability while enhancing synergy between internal and external quality assurance processes. When a school conducts self-evaluation based on its unique needs, external quality assurance follows to assess those capabilities. This tailored approach ensures the quality assurance system aligns with the school's specific requirements.

The **National Quality Standards in Education (3-16 years)**, published in July 2023, were one of the fundamental documents for the National Education Strategy, which was published in May 2024.

A Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0-16 years) and the **National Quality Standards in Education (3-16 years)** form the basis for quality assurance practices in pre-compulsory and compulsory education in Malta. They clearly outline the quality assurance approach and set clear criteria for regulation. They were developed through consultation with different stakeholders and aim to articulate a shared national understanding of school quality, especially in aligning internal and external review processes. This is outlined in the National Curriculum Framework:

> Quality Assurance is to be realised through a system of ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and review within schools complemented by an external review system that together foster school improvement (2012, p. 32).

This aims to create a better balance between autonomy and accountability and between a centralised and decentralised system of quality assurance. The National Quality Standards

in Education include three main areas: educational leadership and management, learning and teaching, and school ethos.

A Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0-16 years) seeks to address the issue of equity and diversity in its definition of quality education:

> The common core understanding is that quality education seeks to promote inclusive and equitable opportunities for all learners […]. A quality education is one that aims at ensuring that children live a healthy lifestyle and learn within an environment which is physically and emotionally safe. Quality education is there to provide educational experiences which translate into a range of personal, social, and developmental benefits that lead, in turn, to active global citizenship, participation in the world of work, and lifelong learning.

> Malta's vision for education is set out in the *National Curriculum Framework for All (2012)*, the *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 (2014)* [now superseded by the National Education Strategy 2024-2030] and the *Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools (2022)*. These three documents act as a catalyst for achieving the Sustainable Development Goal for education, that of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong opportunities for all. The common factor which underlies these goals is that learners are at the heart of the learning and teaching process (A Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0-16 years), 2023, pp. 11–12).

ANNEX 4: SERBIA COUNTRY BRIEF

Figure 5. Overview of the M&E system in Serbia
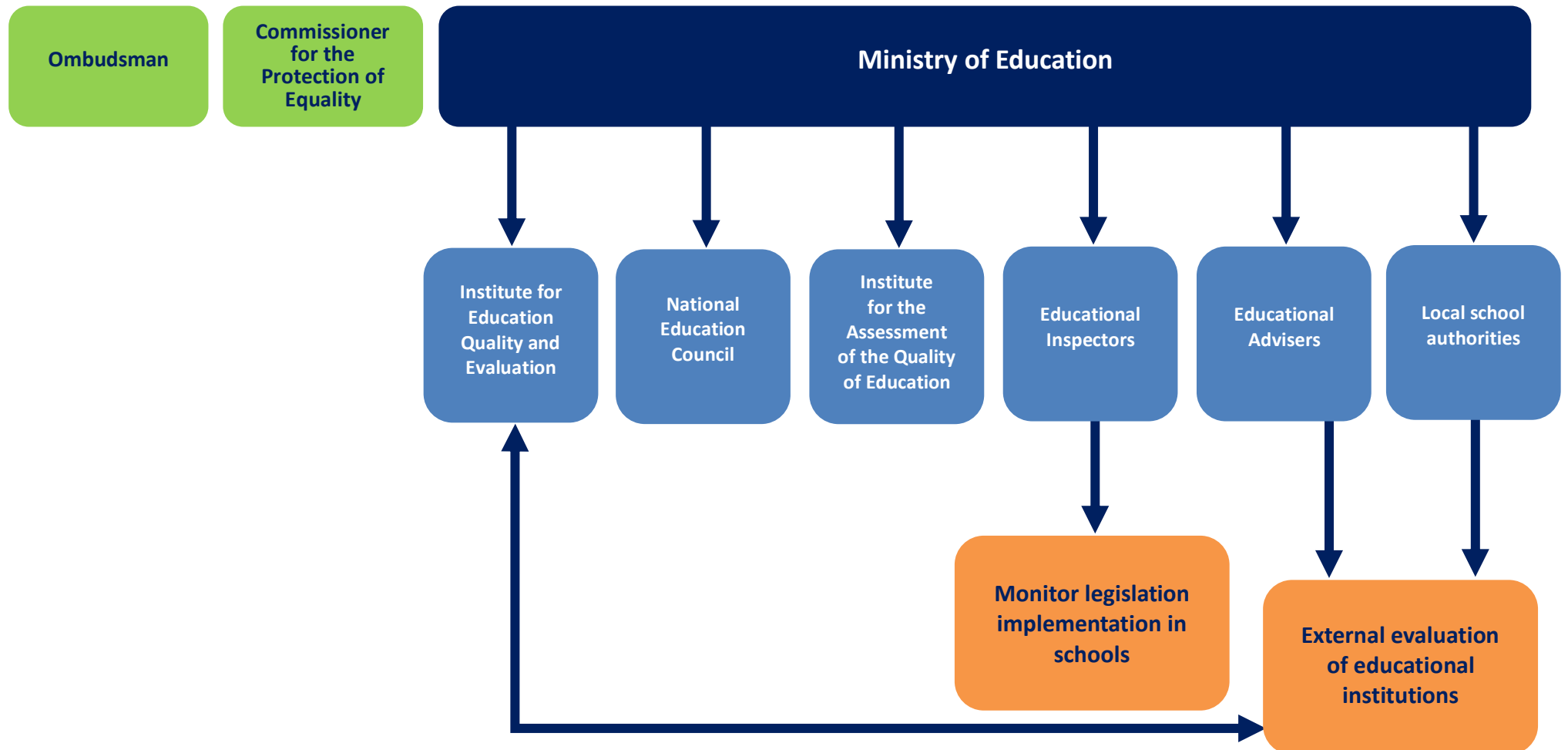
Main features of the monitoring and evaluation system – Serbia

Institutions involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education regulates the **Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation**, the **Institute for Improvement of Education** and the **National Education Council**. These institutions are responsible for quality assurance by determining educational standards, conducting national testing of learners, analysing the current quality level, suggesting improvement methods, supporting the work of the Ministry and educational institutions, adapting Serbian educational policy to European education systems, and similar duties.

Local school authorities, national education inspectors and educational advisers, all under the Ministry, are in direct contact with educational institutions, teachers and other school staff. Their responsibility is to determine the quality level in individual educational institutions and to ensure compliance with education standards.

The roles of the **Educational Inspector** and the **Educational Adviser** are clearly separated in the Serbian education system. While inspectors monitor the legality of the schools' functioning, educational advisers externally evaluate the quality of the institutions' work, as well as fulfilling supervisory and advisory roles.

External evaluation of educational institutions' work in Serbia is carried out by educational advisers, and, if necessary, by representatives of the **Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation**, organised in teams.

Regional school authorities under the Ministry are responsible for external school evaluation (following guidelines). They also follow up on school development plans and appraise teachers for promotion.

The **Institute for the Assessment of the Quality of Education** reports on final exam results. One aim of the final exam in primary schools is to assess the quality of schools' and teachers' work, as well as the education system's current status and progress. Each school receives a report on the final exam results, which may be used to analyse correspondence between these results and learners' grades, to compare with other schools and for external evaluation.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

Parliament and independent bodies (**Ombudsman** and **Commissioner for the Protection of Equality**) play an important role in monitoring the implementation of inclusive education.

The **Commissioner for the Protection of Equality** is an independent, autonomous and specialised public body, formed on the basis of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of 2009.

The **Ombudsman** is an independent state body, responsible for protecting and promoting respect for freedoms and rights.

Non-governmental organisations are an important factor when it comes to independent monitoring, and an important corrective for the entire education system.

Role of the actors involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

The **inspection** checks and monitors the legality of educational institutions' work. It is organised at the municipal (or city) level as a first-level inspection, and at the national level as a second-level inspection.

Article 5 of the Law on Educational Inspection (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 27/2018, 129/2021) stipulates that the **Educational Inspectorate** supervises the implementation of laws and other regulations governing the organisation and operation of pre-primary education institutions and primary and secondary education, especially regarding certain areas. In terms of inclusive education, the most important of these areas are the rights and responsibilities of employees, learners and parents/legal guardians, and ensuring their protection from discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect, as well as behaviour that violates reputation, honour or dignity.

Educational advisers in the external evaluation process evaluate educational institutions' work in the field of inclusive education based on the prescribed standards for the work of educational institutions in the quality framework.

The **Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation** is established by the government with the aim of evaluating education and providing recommendations for the provision of quality education. The Institute's key activities are defining standards in education, evaluating education and training participants in the education system.

The **Institute for Improvement of Education** was established by the Republic of Serbia with the aim of monitoring, ensuring and improving the quality and development of the education system. It performs development, advisory, research and other expert activities in pre-primary, primary and secondary education.

Article 43 of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System describes the role of the **Institute for the Assessment of the Quality of Education**. The Institute contains a Centre for Quality Assurance of the Work of Institutions. Its main duties are to:

- develop educational standards;
- develop quality standards for the work of institutions;
- participate in the external evaluation of the work of institutions;
- develop a methodology and instruments for self-evaluation and external evaluation of the work of institutions;
- develop and implement training programmes in the field of self-evaluation;
- develop and implement training programmes for assessing the pedagogical added value of the school as an indicator of the quality of the work of the institution;

- develop and implement training programmes in the field of monitoring learners' progress and assessing the preparation and publishing of publications in the field of quality assurance of institutions (Article 44);

- prepare publications in the field of external evaluation of the system, self-evaluation of institutions and promotion of the quality of institutions.

School administrations are organisational units of the Ministry. Their task is to provide operational and professional support to schools, carry out professional and pedagogical supervision in institutions and externally evaluate the quality of the work of institutions.

School administrations hold the lists of education and training institution employees who exercise the right to take over the school administration, and co-ordinate the professional development of teachers, educators and professional associates, directors and secretaries of institutions. School administrations support institutions in development planning, self-evaluation, developing pre-school, school and educational programmes and education quality assurance. They participate in preparing the education and upbringing development plan and monitor its implementation in the area for which they are responsible.

There are 17 school administrations in Serbia, including the group for professional-pedagogical supervision in Novi Pazar that was organised for the municipalities of Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Tutin. Educational advisers are the part of the school administrations.

The Law on the Basics of the Education and Upbringing System (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other laws, 10/2019, 27/2018 – other laws, 6/2020, 129/2021 and 92/2023), Article 170, states that educational advisers carry out professional-pedagogical supervision through the following activities:

- evaluating the quality of the work of the institution, i.e. the learner's home, based on established standards, the implementation of the development plan and the programme of education and upbringing;

- providing help and support for the institution's self-evaluation;

- monitoring compliance with general principles and the achievement of education and upbringing goals;

- advising and providing professional assistance to teachers, educators, professional associates and directors, to improve the quality of their work and the institution's work and to achieve educational standards;

- advising and providing professional assistance to the institution (or home education), to ensure the protection of children, learners and employees from discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect;

- achieving direct insight into the work of the institution (or home education), teachers, educators, professional associates and directors;

- attending classes, exams and other forms of educational work;

- monitoring the implementation of tests;

- assessing the fulfilment of the conditions for obtaining a position;

- monitoring and evaluating the quality of the work of the adviser – external associate;

- proposing that the institution, the minister and competent authorities undertake the necessary activities to eliminate deficiencies and improve professional or educational work. If irregularities are found in the work, initiating the inspection supervision procedure, in accordance with the laws regulating inspection supervision in the field of education and upbringing.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The **Commissioner for the Protection of Equality** as an independent, public body aims to:

- prevent all forms and cases of discrimination;

- protect equality of natural and legal persons in all areas of social relations;

- supervise the application of regulations prohibiting discrimination;

- promote the realisation and protection of equality.

The role of the **Ombudsman** as an independent state body, defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and the Law on the Protector of Citizens, is to constantly promote respect for human freedoms and rights through its personal authority and reputation. The Ombudsman pays special attention to the protection of the rights of members of national minorities, children's rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, the rights of persons deprived of liberty, and gender equality. By verifying complaints or acting on its own initiative, the Ombudsman controls whether the state administration bodies, state attorney bodies and organisations that exercise public powers act in accordance with the laws and other regulations of the Republic of Serbia or the principles of good administration.

Data collected in monitoring and evaluation processes

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

System evaluation – Evaluation at this level is carried out based on indicators used to monitor the situation in the education system (coverage of children/learners, number of learners who leave the system, number of learners enrolled in secondary school, monitoring of inclusive education, etc.).

Institution evaluation – Self-evaluation and external evaluation through the application of the quality standards for the institution's work in the relevant areas: school programme and annual work plan, teaching and learning, educational achievements of learners, support for learners, ethos, organisation of school work and management, and resources (the list relates to school, and there is a similar one for pre-school institutions). The quality of each area is evaluated in relation to the achievement of standards.

Inspection supervision related to inclusive education checks whether the institution complies with all provisions of the law on the education system related to inclusive education. The educational inspection checklists include some questions concerning learners who need additional support in education. The checklists are used during regular inspection procedures in all educational institutions. The checklist is a publicly available

document that presents complex and extensive legal obligations through a series of comprehensible questions and answers. Points are awarded for answers, and the inspector, based on the sum of points per checklist, determines the degree of risk and compliance with regulations.

In the field of educational inspection supervision, using these lists allows educational institutions to self-evaluate and self-assess the compliance of their activities with the regulations. They may notice irregularities in their work and correct them in a timely manner. Publication and availability of the checklists act as a preventive educational and informative measure. It helps institutions supervised by the educational inspection to know in advance what their obligations are and what they need to do to bring their activities and actions in line with the regulations, prevent damage, and to know what the educational inspector checks in the inspection.

In accordance with the Law on Inspection Supervision, Article 14, the inspection must create checklists from its area of inspection supervision, publish them on its website and apply them during regular inspection supervision. The annual inspection supervision plan is made for the school/working year, while the annual report is submitted for the previous school/working year.

Educational advisers use two self-assessment manuals when supervising and evaluating institutions' inclusiveness. Educational advisers are external evaluators. The Rulebook on evaluating the quality of the institution's work (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 10/2019 and 77/2024) prescribes that the educational adviser is a member of the team that does external evaluation, while self-evaluation assessment is carried out by the institution, based on the Rulebook on the institutions' work quality standards (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 14/2018 and 1/2024). After the self-evaluation, the self-evaluation team submits a self-evaluation report to the director of the institution.

The self-evaluation report on the quality of the institution's work is submitted by the director to the educational, teaching or pedagogic council, the parents' council, the learner council, the parliament and the governing body, as well as the school administration.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The **Commissioner for the Protection of Equality** and the **Ombudsman** represent a corrective factor. The Ombudsman has the position of a special body that protects, promotes and improves the rights of the child. To this end, these institutions prepare special thematic reports in which they draw conclusions and recommendations for improving the work of state bodies in this domain.

Policies and frameworks related to monitoring and evaluation – Serbia

The National Report on Inclusive Education in the Republic of Serbia represents the practice of the Ministry of Education. The [first National Report on Inclusive Education](#) covers the period 2015–2018 and the second National Report on Inclusive Education covers 2019–2021. The Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2016–2025, harmonised with the Action Plan for Negotiation Chapter 23, considers

judiciary and fundamental rights, under Serbia's accession negotiation process with the European Union (EU). Financial support is partly from the national budget and partly from donor funds (international funds, Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance). In addition, further directions for developing inclusive education are defined within the Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia by 2030.

The monitoring framework for inclusive education across all system levels (in existence since 2012) includes indicators and supports school self-review, as well as external evaluation. It is still in the process of implementation. The Monitoring and Evaluation of Inclusive Education project has been developed within the framework of the World Bank Technical Assistance and funded under the Western Balkans Investment Framework Trust Fund.

The quality framework for evaluating the work of educational institutions includes 30 standards and 158 indicators (Bylaw on Quality Standards of Educational Institutions' Work, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 7/11). These are distributed across seven key areas of school work: school programme and annual work plan, teaching and learning, learner achievements, learner support, work organisation, leadership, and resources.

The 'Improved Equal Access and Completion of Pre-University Education for Children in Need of Additional Support in Education – Let's Learn Together' project was implemented by the Ministry of Education in co-operation with UNICEF with the support of the EU Delegation to Serbia in the period 2021–2024 (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2020). Within this project, the Inclusive Education Monitoring Framework was revised through the development of indicators to monitor inclusive education at the local level.

The revised version of the monitoring framework was improved in 2023 to reflect changes in education, social protection, healthcare and local government policies since 2015. The main change was a revised monitoring approach, moving from analysing and collecting statistical data to multi-perspective and self-monitoring using different data. This change contributes to a more meaningful and flexible monitoring process, especially in a system where there is no data or insufficiently high-quality data, where there is a lack of procedures for data exchange and a lack of human resources. At the same time, this process fosters co-operation and horizontal learning within a single local government unit, as well as between multiple local government units, which is a prerequisite for quality inclusive education.

Between 2017 and 2019, a set of new and/or amended laws and bylaws in education was adopted. Most provisions are dedicated to further developing inclusive education, including improving equal access to pre-primary education, a clearer mandate of interdepartmental committees, and collecting and managing data:

- The **Law on Educational Inspection** (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 27/2018 and 129/2021): educational inspection will examine the application of laws and other regulations in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, adult education, dual education, higher education, textbooks, learner standards, science and research and the National Qualifications Framework. Educational inspection

tasks, in accordance with Article 5 of this law, shall be carried out by the educational inspector:

- in the ministry in charge of education – the republic educational inspector;

- in the provincial administration body – the provincial educational inspector;

- at the city and municipal level – the city/municipal educational inspector within the authority responsible for education.

- The **Law on the Foundations of the Education System** is a systemic education law which prescribes inclusive education. It states that the education system must secure equal rights to and accessibility of education for all children, learners and adults, based on social justice and the principle of equal opportunities, without discrimination.

- Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia by 2030.

- Action plan for realisation of the Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia by 2030.

- Law on Pre-school Education.

- Law on Primary Education.

- Law on Secondary School.

- Bylaw on Quality Evaluation of Institutions.

- Bylaw on Quality Standards of Educational Institutions' Work.

ANNEX 5: UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND) COUNTRY BRIEF

Figure 6. Overview of the M&E system in UK (England)
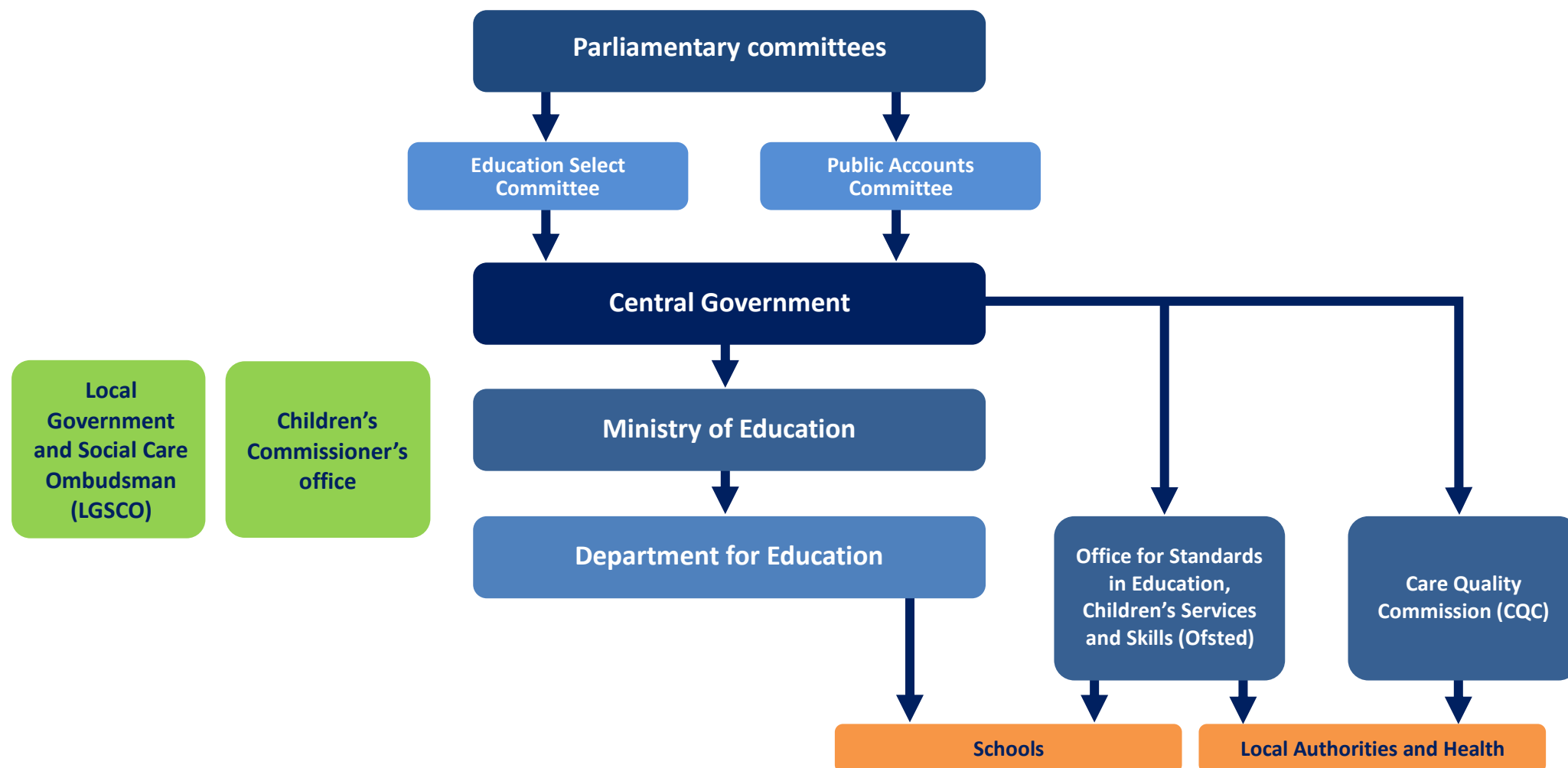
Main features of the monitoring and evaluation system – UK (England)

Institutions involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

Ofsted, the independent inspectorate, was established in 1992. Ofsted's current framework, the Education Inspection Framework (EIF), came into force in September 2019. The EIF provides a single framework for education inspection across the full range of providers, including registered early years settings, maintained schools and academies, non-maintained special schools, pupil referral units, non-association independent schools, further education and skill providers, and providers of learning in the judicial services. Inspection reports are published, and providers may be subject to intervention by the Department for Education (DfE) if important areas for improvement exist.

Ofsted evaluates the sectors of the education system which it inspects. It is required to publish an annual report covering quality and standards across its inspection remit. Ofsted also publishes a range of reports evaluating provision in specific curriculum areas and aspects of social care, early years and childcare, education, and further education, learning and skills. The evaluation and the inspection of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is carried out jointly by Ofsted and the **Care Quality Commission (CQC)**. CQC is the health inspectorate and is a partner in SEND inspections.

Central government sets the legislation that describes inspection arrangements. It also compiles data on and evaluates school performance based on performance measures (known as school accountability measures) to raise standards and to hold schools to account. The DfE and the National Health Service England also play a role in supporting and intervening with schools, local authorities and integrated care boards (health service) when they are underperforming.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

Parliamentary committees provide an important means of scrutinising government policy and proposed legislation at central level. House of Commons Select Committees shadow government departments and scrutinise their work as follows:

- The Education Select Committee examines the policy, spending and administration of the DfE and related non-departmental public bodies and non-ministerial departments, including Ofsted.

- The Public Accounts Committee examines public spending.

General Committees and Temporary Joint Committees are also formed to consider proposed and draft legislation.

The **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)** investigates public complaints about local government and adult social care providers in England. This includes complaints about local government's responsibilities to arrange school places and support children with special educational needs.

LGSCO is independent from the government and other regulators. It represents the last step in the complaints process against local government services, and is impartial and free to use. LGSCO can extend its investigations to look at others who have been affected by poor service, beyond the original complainant. It can make non-binding recommendations for local government to provide remedies. This can include arranging services for people who have gone without, and/or symbolic modest financial awards. The LGSCO also uses learning from investigations to recommend systemic improvements to local government bodies.

The law stops LGSCO from looking at complaints about what happens within schools (such as discipline and attendance). This leaves a redress and accountability gap for parents who wish to pursue complaints about schools.

The **Children's Commissioner's office** is an executive non-departmental public body in England responsible for promoting and protecting children's rights. The Children's Commissioner is directly accountable to parliament for delivering its functions. The role of the Children's Commissioner was established under the Children Act 2004 to promote and protect the rights of children. The office was further strengthened by the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Commissioner has special responsibility for the rights of children who are in or leaving care, living away from home or receiving social care services. The Children's Commissioner has a number of statutory powers, including the right to:

- provide advice and assistance to children;

- enter any premises other than a private dwelling to interview a child or observe a standard of care provided to them;

- request information from any person exercising functions of a public nature in relation to children.

If the Children's Commissioner considers that the case of an individual child in England raises issues of public policy of relevance to other children, they may hold an inquiry into that case to investigate and make recommendations on those issues. The Commissioner can also publish reports with recommendations and can require a person with functions of a public nature to state in writing what action the person has taken or proposes to take in response to the recommendations. The current Commissioner has seven key priority areas, including education.

Role of the actors involved in monitoring and evaluation

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

Ofsted inspectors gather evidence to assess how well a school is performing. Inspectors use a range of evidence to initially identify issues to be followed up in inspection, such as performance data, the school's previous inspection report and parents' views. There are nine DfE Regional Directors across nine geographic regions. They act on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Ofsted plays a role in system-level quality assurance through:

- inspection of education settings including maintained schools and academies, further education colleges, and early years settings;

- inspection of children's social care (local authority services)

- inspection of local area SEND services, where the local authority and health in partnership deliver services for children and young people with SEND.

Ofsted evaluates the sectors of the education system which it inspects in its [annual report](#).

Self-evaluation is an essential element of school improvement, providing the basis for planning, development and improvement in schools. Ultimate responsibility for institutional self-evaluation rests with the school governing board and the headteacher of each school. They evaluate all aspects of the school's work and set objectives for improvement.

Ofsted carries out **external inspection** of maintained schools and academies. Inspectors currently make graded judgements using a four-point scale on the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management, before reaching an overall effectiveness judgement for the school. Where applicable, inspectors also make a judgement about the quality of early years provision and sixth form provision.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The **LGSCO** regularly meets with the DfE to discuss thematic issues arising from its casework.

The LGSCO uses the focus reports and public interest reports to highlight systemic failings – for example, a [report highlighting the national shortage of educational psychologists](#) and the impact of this on children and young people waiting for needs assessments was published. The report was accompanied by a [press release](#).

The **Children's Commissioner's office** regularly meets with ministers, parliamentarians, senior officials and relevant public sector leaders working with children and young people. The Children's Commissioner uses unique insight and evidence to make recommendations and inform policy-making. Engagement with formal policy-making processes includes but is not limited to:

- acting as a statutory consultee on particular pieces of legislation affecting children;

- giving evidence to Select Committees;

- responding to government consultations and inquiries;

- briefing ministers and parliamentarians;

- campaigning on particular pieces of legislation.

The Commissioner also engages with national and local media to raise the profile of issues affecting children and young people.

Data collected in monitoring and evaluation processes

Institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education

Ofsted is responsible for inspecting services that provide education and skills for learners of all ages, outside of higher education. It also inspects services which care for children and young people. Ofsted publishes reports for each inspection and an annual Chief Inspector's report.

The EIF (2019) was introduced for use in four types of setting:

- Registered early years providers

- Maintained schools and academies

- Non-association independent schools

- Further education and skills providers.

The EIF includes a common set of judgements with consistent criteria for reaching those judgements. It aims to ensure comparability between education settings, as learners move from one provider or phase of education to another. The framework references relevant legislation throughout and is complemented by inspection handbooks for different phases/provider types, detailing how inspection criteria are applied in each setting.

Institutions under authorities other than the Ministry of Education

The **Ombudsman** is not a regulator – it does not look at whole systems and extrapolate data. The Ombudsman listens to individual stories and builds thematic pictures including issuing subject-specific focus reports. Where appropriate, it frames its findings around equality and rights-based frameworks and publishes guidance on the issues raised.

Section 2F of the Children Act 2004 states that any person exercising functions of a public nature must supply the **Children's Commissioner** with any information they possess relating to those functions that the Commissioner may reasonably request for the purposes of promoting and protecting the rights of children in England, or the function under section 2D.

Section 2E of the 2004 Act enables the Children's Commissioner, or a person authorised by the Commissioner, to enter any premises other than a private dwelling for the purpose of interviewing a child, or for the purpose of observing the standard of care provided to children accommodated or otherwise cared for there.

The Commissioner regularly exercises these powers, for example to request unpublished data from government departments and public bodies, and to visit and engage with children in a range of settings. This includes for purposes related to inclusion, equity and diversity in education.

Policies and frameworks related to monitoring and evaluation – UK (England)

Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, all local authorities have a responsibility to monitor and support the performance of the schools they maintain. They also have a duty

to promote high standards in education and to promote the educational fulfilment of every child. However, not all schools are under the responsibility of the local authorities. The academy schools are independent from the local authorities and are under the DfE. Academy schools are operated by multi-academy trusts.

The legislative basis for the current inspection system for publicly-funded schools is the Education Act 2005, as amended by the Education Act 2011.

Inspection arrangements are outlined in the EIF (2019) and the School Inspection Handbook, which is updated periodically by Ofsted. These detail how inspectors gather evidence both before and during a school inspection to assess how well it is performing.

The Ofsted/CQC Local Area SEND Inspection Framework, published in November 2022, focuses on the 'lived experiences' of children and young people with SEND and their families. This should ensure that services are meeting needs more effectively. In addition, it looks at:

- the impact of partnership working;

- outcomes for children and young people;

- the experiences of children and young people and their families of education, health and care;

- the extent to which their needs are met;

- the quality of the participation;

- whether support is timely;

- how children and young people with SEND are included in their local community;

- the quality of leadership;

- the quality of provision in the range of alternative providers which educate many children and young people with SEND.

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a wide range of legislation relating to different 'protected characteristics' (age, race, sex, disability, etc.) and put in place a public sector equality duty requiring all public bodies to identify and address inequalities in a planned way.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years underpin the system for supporting those with special educational needs and disabilities to succeed in education or training.

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