

## Executive summary

The **Accessible School for All** project is a pilot project implemented by the Educational Research Institute (IBE), UNICEF and the Ministry of National Education (MEN) in cooperation with universities and NGOs. Its main objective is to improve the competence of specialist teachers (educationalists, psychologists, special educators, speech and language therapists) in providing adequate support for all target groups (children/students, parents, teachers).

The main aim of the evaluation study was to assess the effectiveness of the project and the quality of the support from the perspective of the key groups involved in its implementation. Specific objectives included:

1. **to evaluate the achievement of the operational objectives of the project**, such as reaching the target groups, carrying out the planned work and achieving the set indicators;
2. **analysis of the process of recruitment and selection of educational institutions**, including evaluation of the structure of the institutions, compliance of the structure of participants with the project assumptions and effectiveness of the selection system;
3. **an evaluation of the implementation of training, workshops and consultations**, including an analysis of the number of participants, availability and quality of support, and evaluation of training materials and diagnostic tools;
4. **an analysis of the implementation of interventions in kindergartens and schools**, including an assessment of the number and types of interventions, their effectiveness and the factors influencing the selection and effectiveness of interventions.

The research framework was based on Theory-Based Evaluation (TBE). The research design included several steps: identifying the causal problem, developing a theory of change and a chain of project effects, and gathering evidence to verify the theory of change. The evaluation study included desk research (project documentation, legal acts, data on schools and project participants, training materials, intervention reports and statistical data). 557 questionnaire interviews were conducted among specialist teachers (CAWI/CATI), representing a 55% response rate in relation to the identified population. 9 interviews were conducted, including 3 with institutional representatives (IBE, MEN, UNICEF) and 6 with subject matter experts. 3 online group interviews were conducted and 6 case studies were carried out in educational institutions (1 kindergarten, 3 primary schools, 2 secondary schools). Benchmarking as a comparative analysis included 3 projects selected in consultation with the Contracting Authority. Two evaluation workshops were conducted as part of the study: a structuring workshop and a recommendation workshop.

The 'Accessible Schools for All' **project attracted a great deal of interest**. Within two weeks of the start of recruitment, more than 700 heads of educational institutions and ultimately more than a thousand teachers had signed up. 97.1% of participants were women. The largest professional groups were special educators (34%), pedagogues (28%) and psychologists (24%). Participants came mainly from primary schools (73%), kindergartens (15%) and general secondary schools (8%). The majority (67.3%) learned about the project from principals who were informed at conferences on inclusive education, as well as through emails and the websites of the Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

Training within the project was delivered as an **e-learning course** on the Integrated Learning Platform (ZPE). Participants had free access to the platform, which allowed them to take classes at any time

and at any pace. The online courses in the 'School Accessible for All' project were **highly rated** by participants, who appreciated the flexibility of the schedule, allowing them to adapt the learning to their professional and private obligations. Respondents highlighted the **high content value of the materials**, which were well thought out and addressed real-world challenges. The variety of tools available, such as exercises and educational videos, was also highly rated, which fostered a personalised approach to learning.

In the second phase of the training, conducted in the form of **workshops**, specialist teachers discussed key issues in the implementation of the intervention. More than 60% of participants attended the workshops and 86% of them completed Phase II of the project, earning a 'Badge+' certificate for at least 70% attendance. However, participants indicated that the badge award did not fully reflect their time commitment, which was in line with the scope of their postgraduate studies. The workshops were **well appreciated for the high quality of the presenters and the quality of the teaching materials**. Participants emphasised the usefulness of the knowledge gained in their daily work and the value of active participation, which fostered the exchange of experiences. **Individual content-related counselling** was also an important element. For some participants, the amount of material to be assimilated in a short period of time was a challenge, and they also expressed a desire to choose workshop topics in the future to better suit their needs.

At the next stage of the project, participants selected at least five of the 24 proposed **interventions to implement in their institutions**. The survey showed that the majority of teachers were **in the early stages of implementing the interventions** - 40% of the surveyed population of professionals had implemented at least one intervention. Participants indicated that the choice of intervention was influenced by the number of students requiring support (86.5% of indications), specific problems in the school (86.1%) and the need for professional development (78.2%). Teachers selected those interventions that were actually most needed by the educational institutions, which confirms that the project activities were well planned in relation to the needs of the direct addressees (professionals) and further project stakeholders (institutions and their staff, children and parents).

As part of the project, free **specialist consultations** were introduced for educational staff, parents (legal guardians) and adult students of the participating institutions. The consultations were **educational and supportive in nature** and aimed to equip participants with tools to deal with difficult situations. To date, approximately 1,000 hours of meetings have taken place. **The consultations were considered a strength of the project**, especially those aimed at parents. Participants praised the **individual approach** of the professionals, their **professionalism** and the **convenient forms** of consultation, such as online meetings and telephone calls. **Anonymity and quick access** to support were also highlighted. However, some participants indicated that the number of available appointments was insufficient. The organisers showed openness to suggestions for changes to the consultation format, which had a positive impact on the effectiveness of the consultation.

**The project was highly appreciated by stakeholders for its careful planning and high level of content. The flexibility of the project** allowed for adaptation to the needs of the participants, e.g. by creating a separate pathway for kindergartens. The project aimed to influence specialist teachers, but it was also assumed that **the effects would spread to other stakeholders** such as subject teachers, establishments, pupils and parents. It contributed to an increase in knowledge about inclusive education and the creation of a welcoming climate in the establishments. **Teachers highly valued the model of education based on practical learning, and most of them gained access to new diagnostic tools**. The support offered by the IBE at various stages of the project was also evaluated positively. **Key outcomes include:** (1) an increase in knowledge of inclusive education, noted by 85% of respondents; (2) an improvement in the climate in the institutions, especially in the area of children's

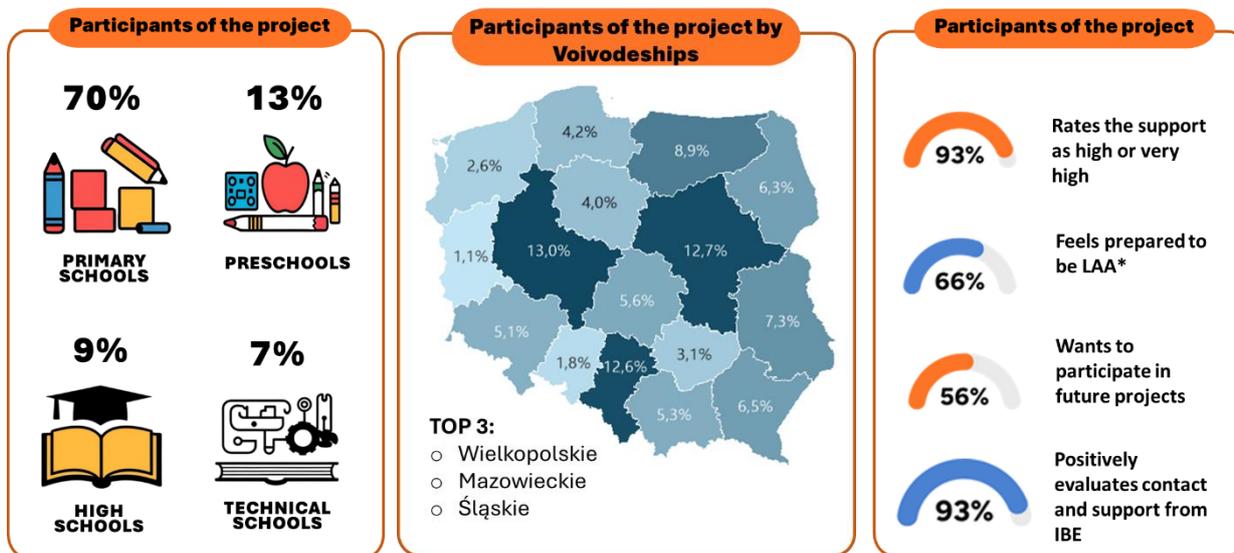
mental health, noted by 84% of respondents; (3) access to professional diagnostic tools was gained by 81.5% of respondents; (4) a change in staff attitudes towards inclusive education (66%) and the integration of refugee children from Ukraine (64%).

In the context of the design changes, an analysis of the current programme has shown that its extensive structure and time-consuming nature often place an undue burden on teachers. Therefore, the **main recommendation is to modify the programme** as follows: (1) A compulsory basic level e-learning training module for all participants (simplified from the current scope). (2) Possibility for the participant to choose up to three interventions to implement. (3) Selection of an advanced level e-learning training module and appropriate workshops depending on the interventions selected. (4) Implementation of at least one intervention by the participant. In the context of a collaborative project, we suggest considering a **multi-year funding formula**. The current one-year formula, linked to the financial year and not the school year, makes the implementation of the project much more difficult. The optimum solution would be to introduce multi-year funding, even if subsequent tranches are subject to the availability of funds from the main funders. In the report we also identify some additional recommendations of a more operational nature.

It is worth noting that this evaluation focused on aspects related to the implementation of the project and concentrated on capturing the perspective of the main stakeholders, in particular the project participants and the educational institutions. In contrast, **the project itself is a pilot and in this respect, in the opinion of the evaluation team, it is being implemented as a model**. The project involves a wide range of stakeholders, including international organisations, government and the scientific and professional community, including through the work of a steering committee. It is geared towards learning and rapid implementation of lessons learnt, allowing for continuous optimisation. The project has a large research component that assesses the actual impact on students of the supported establishments.

The project, **implemented by the Educational Research Institute in cooperation** with universities, is carried out in agreement between UNICEF and the Ministry of National Education. This enables the knowledge gained, practical solutions and experiences to be widely used at both national and international levels (potential directions for such activities are indicated in the summary of the report). In the national and EU context, the growing challenges of adapting the education system to the needs of students with diverse learning needs are becoming increasingly apparent. Legislative changes introduced and planned in Poland provide an opportunity to put the experiences tested in the model into practice. The Polish Presidency provides an opportunity to promote such solutions in the EU forum. This is also particularly important in the context of future challenges related to the reconstruction and improvement of educational services in Ukraine after the end of Russia's aggression against the country. Indeed, many of the practical project solutions developed are already available in Ukrainian.

## The project in figures



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