Republic of Macedonia is a democratic and social state in which everyone is equal before the law wherein one of the fundamental values of the constitutional order of the country is the respect of the democratic principles and the human rights. The country also ratified the European Convention on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Council of Europe (ECHR-1950) and Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In its basic provisions, this Convention stipulates that the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, national or social origin, political or religious opinion, property and social status. The Protocol provides for a general prohibition of the discrimination and strengthens and expands the existing non-discrimination provision comprised in Article 14 of the European Convention on the protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Respecting the concept of inclusion in education, Republic of Macedonia is striving majority of children with special needs to be included in mainstream pre-school institutions and schools, which adjust the implementation of the programme with special educational plans and offer additional help from special educators and other educational experts (pedagogues, psychologists and social workers).

The Bureau for Development of Education under jurisdiction of Ministry of Education and Science is creating educational plans and programs for preschool, elementary, secondary, specialized education, adult education and education for children with special needs. They are publicly offered at the website of this institution. The Bureau for Development of Education also has an obligation to collect and analyse information and data regarding preschool, elementary, secondary, specialized education, adult education and education for children with special needs which contribute towards educational development of the country.

**Definition of target groups**

According to the Social Protection Law of Republic of Macedonia persons with special needs are described into following categories:

1. Persons with visual impairments (with poor eyesight and blind);
2. Persons with hearing impairments (hard of hearing and deaf);
3. Persons with disabilities in voice, speech and language;
4. Persons with physical disabilities;
5. Persons with intellectual disabilities (mild, moderate, severe and profound);
6. Persons on the Autism Spectrum Disorders
7. Persons with chronic diseases and
8. Persons with several disabilities (persons with combined disabilities in development).
Mainstream pre-school education embraces following categories of children with special needs:

- children with visual disabilities;
- children with hearing disabilities;
- children with intellectual disabilities;
- children with physical disabilities;
- chronically ill children;
- children with autism.

In primary education, children with special needs can obtain their education in special elementary schools, in regular schools within special departments or in regular schools within regular departments. Following categories of children with special needs are comprised:

- children with visual disabilities;
- children with hearing disabilities;
- children with intellectual disabilities;
- children with autism ASD;
- children with social behaviour disorders.

Secondary education for children with special needs can be realized in special secondary schools for children with:

- children with visual disabilities;
- children with hearing disabilities;
- children with intellectual disabilities.

An estimation of child’s psycho-physical condition (defining the types and degree of disadvantages, impairments and disabilities of children with special needs) made by professional institutions (public medical institutions who are specialized for working with children with special needs) is not mandatory for parents, nor is enclosing this medical report in the enrollment process in educational institutions (pre-school institutions or schools), except for special educational institutions (special elementary or secondary schools).

**Specific support measures**

According to the [Laws on Primary Education](#) and the [Law on Secondary Education](#), schools must ensure that children with special needs have adequate conditions for education – they adjust the organization and mode of the programme implementation and offer additional expert assistance. Adjusted methods of assessment of knowledge and progression through the programme may also be provided.

In addition to the relevant laws, in 2010 the Government has adopted the [National strategy for standardization of the rights of the persons with disabilities and impairments](#). The Strategy foreseen realization of seven specific measures related to educational needs and requirement of this target groups:

- Development of programmes for inclusion of the children with special needs in the educational system, including pre-school education;
- Application and improvement of the existing legislation provisions that define the field of discrimination in the educational process in all levels of education;
- Individualized work with the children by engaging of special educators also in the regular schools in addition to the special education schools;
- Guidance of the SEN pupils according to their needs and preferences;
- Provision of educational degree that will enable vertical transfer through the educational levels;
- Development of motivation programmes for the parents through their education that will contribute to awareness raising about the inclusive approach in the education;
- Provision of training for the teaching staff, school directors and professional associates in the school for support and implementation of the inclusive education.

The realization of this measures and activities is responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Municipalities as local educational authorities.

**Individualized programmes**

In cooperation with parents, pre-school institutions and schools compile an individualized programme for each child with special needs, specifying the forms of work, methods of expert or physical assistance, transfer between programmes and the necessary adjustments in organizing, testing and assessing of knowledge, progressing through the programme and the organization of teaching time.

**Additional expert assistance**

The purpose of additional expert assistance (usually special educator) is to overcome disabilities, impairments and deficiencies and, in schools, also to provide teaching assistance. The extent of additional expert assistance depends on whether the child attends a pre-school institution, a elementary or secondary school, and also on the child's disabilities and needs.

Additional assistance is performed by professionals from different disciplines in accordance with different types of disadvantages (special educators and rehabilitators, social workers, pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists). Teaching assistance is conducted by teachers who have acquired supplementary professional knowledge.

**Reduced number of children in a department**

In a class or group with a child with special needs, there are less children as prescribed by the norms for grouping children into classes. The decision is laid down within the Laws for primary and secondary education in Republic of Macedonia.

**Faster progression of talented and gifted children**

Pupils who achieve above-average results - without supplementary training - may progress faster to a higher grade. They can thus complete primary education earlier than in nine years, with recommendation of the School Council. Secondary school students may also complete the programme requirements in less time as average students.

**Cooperation with other institutions**

Pre-schools institutions and schools cooperate with special schools and institutions for education of children with special needs, which employ special educators and rehabilitators who can offer children in mainstream pre-school institutions and schools additional expert assistance.

Specialized institutions for deaf, blind and children with physical disabilities, which, within the scope of their professional competences, social work centres, conduct treatment and evaluation of children, play a very important role as well in educational progress of every child.