Definition of the target groups

The entitlement to special needs education is linked to the children and pupils' benefit of an adapted and adjusted education – not to diagnosis.

People of all ages have a legal right to special education, but special education is not compulsory. Parents or guardians must therefore give their written approval before anything can be done by the educational-psychological service concerning the child’s or the pupil’s needs.

Special education is based upon an individual administrative decision. Parents can make complaints if they are not satisfied with the special education provided for the pupil. The County Governor is the final body of appeal for decisions concerning individual pupils. If it supports the parent’s view, the municipality has to comply with the requirements of the County Governor.

Specific support measures

Early childhood education and care

Most children in pre-primary education who need special education assistance are offered facilities in ordinary kindergarten institutions. Very few are offered places in special kindergarten institutions or in special departments. When this is the case it is most often children with large disabilities. In 2010 about two percent of the children in kindergarten received special education. Most of the cases are related to language or behavior problems. It is usually the head teacher, pedagogical leader(s) and special educators that are responsible for the special needs education. Assistants are often used in giving the special assistance, but they are not responsible for the content.

Primary and lower secondary education

All tuition must be adapted; this principle covers both ordinary tuition and special needs education. Special needs education, which is enshrined in Section 5-1 of the Education Act, is a more comprehensive form of adapted tuition. Under this statutory provision, pupils are entitled to specially adapted tuition.

Pupils and training candidates who do not benefit sufficiently from ordinary tuition are entitled to special needs education. Special needs education could involve schemes relating to progression and working methods, deviations from the curriculum, teachers with particular qualifications, or organisational adaptation. Pupils receiving special needs education are subject to the same assessment practices that apply to all pupils.

In order to make an administrative decision, the school must assess the ordinary tuition and ascertain
Pupils entitled to special needs education have an individual education plan (IEP) developed in accordance with the results and advice given by the educational-psychological service. The IEP may include educational mapping, content (attainment targets and learning goals), methods (tasks, learning aids/material, and assessment) and organisation (learning environment and staff). The plan is evaluated once a year in an annual report. The IEP should not last longer than 3 years. Then a new expert assessment is to be made.

According to the Education Act [1], special needs education is to be provided within the class or core group insofar as it is possible and appropriate. The individual pupil’s administrative decision on special needs education must describe how the tuition should be organised. Special needs education may be provided within the class / core group, in a separate group, or alone. Pupils who receive special needs education may also be affiliated with a group other than their class, or they may receive instruction in other, alternative learning environments.

In the school-year 2018-19, 7.8% (49,755) of all pupils in primary and lower secondary school have an administrative decision about special education. Of these pupils:

- 43% get special education mainly integrated in an ordinary class.
- 13% get their special education individually.
- 36% get their special education in groups of 2-5.
- 8% get their special education in groups of more than 6.

**Upper secondary education**

Vocational training is an integral part of the upper secondary education system.

Pupils and training candidates in upper secondary education and training who do not benefit sufficiently from ordinary tuition are entitled to special needs education in the same way as pupils at the primary and lower secondary stages. This entitlement does not apply to apprentices, however.

Pupils may access special needs provision within ordinary study programmes, within an adapted or alternative study programme in school, or in workplace training.

The provisions for enrollment in higher education have a preferential regard for applicants with extensive special needs in cases where passing a particular study programme is crucial to a student’s chances of completing tertiary education or training.

In addition to preferential rights for specific study programs, applicants with severely impaired ability are also prioritized, applicants who have the right to education in or through sign language, and applicants who have been given extra time to complete the studies.

Pupils that receive special needs education in upper secondary are divided in two groups. One group consists of pupils aiming to obtain full qualifications and an ordinary diploma. The other group receives special needs education with a view to obtaining a lower level qualification - a so-called planned basic qualification. The Education Act refers to basic qualifications as any form of education or training that does not lead to full university or college admissions certification or to a full vocational qualification. Basic qualifications are documented in the form of a training certificate and may be planned or unplanned.

A basic qualification is a qualification at a lower level than a full vocational qualification or university and college admissions certification. The pupil or training candidate receives training that is based
around those subjects, or parts of subjects, that she or he is able to master. Some pupils make significant departures from the curriculum in all or most subjects, while for others it is a case of minor deviations from the ordinary curricula.

The main difference between an apprentice and a training candidate is the ultimate objective of the training. An apprentice must meet all the attainment targets in the curriculum, while a training candidate must reach some of the targets. There are sometimes significant variations in the degree to which training candidates are in a position to reach the attainment targets. It is also possible to convert a training candidate contract into an apprenticeship contract, and vice versa, during the study programme.

A training candidate will enter into a contract with a training establishment and sit an attainment test. This is a less extensive test than the apprenticeship and journeyman’s examinations.

There is a slight increase in special education in vocational programs and a slight decline in study preparatory programs. 4,900 pupils in upper secondary, which equals 2.6% of the pupils, receive special education one hour a week or more. The percentage varies from 1.6% to 4.2% across the counties (2018-19).

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