



## **Towards Inclusive Practices and Positive Behavior Support in Education and Social Work**

### **Country reports**

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## General Information About the Project

The project “Towards Inclusive Practices and Positive Behavior Support in Education and Social Work” addresses the need to improve inclusive education and services in Ukraine, North Macedonia, and the V4 countries. The primary goal of the project is to integrate best practices from partner countries and develop training programs for higher education staff in Ukraine and North Macedonia. This initiative aims to enhance the knowledge and skills of the training participants in modern behavioral science-based techniques (e.g. ABA) and improve the quality of inclusion process management and support of people with neurodevelopmental disorders and challenging behavior. The Russian-Ukrainian war has significantly impacted the education system in Ukraine. Traditional pre-service teacher and social work education programs have largely failed to incorporate modern strategies and technologies necessary for working with children with special needs in inclusive settings, particularly children exhibiting severe challenging behaviors (Afuzova, 2021). Similarly, in North Macedonia, especially the Albanian minority, professionals working towards inclusion face challenges due to a limited number of curricular training materials available in the Albanian language.

By early 2023, more than 1.8 million children had fled Ukraine as refugees, while 2.5 million children were internally displaced (UNICEF, 2023). The Russian aggression has had a major impact on the education sector: many schools and special education programs have been severely affected as a result of the war. From August 2022 to January 2023, 61 educational facilities were destroyed and 118 were damaged. Many children with disabilities face additional barriers in displacement due to a lack of accessible facilities and specialized care. More than 60% of directors (managers) of educational institutions reported that under martial law, children with SEN attend an institution (unit) of preschool education. In addition, one in five directors noted that the educational process for children with SEN is organized through distance learning. According to 13% of heads, children with SEN study in mixed form. A smaller percentage of heads reported that children with SEN have left Ukraine or that a teacher's assistant visits children at home and conducts classes (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Statistical data, 01.12.2023). Majority of these families have sought refuge in the V4 countries, while some have also moved to North Macedonia. According to United Nations (UN) estimates, there are 6.33 million Ukrainian citizens abroad, not including children. Applying the Eurostat coefficient (33.4% of children), the estimated number of Ukrainian children abroad is 2.1 million. In the European Union (EU), 33.4% of the 4.24 million people granted temporary protection are children, which is at least 1.4 million people. However, it should be noted



that this figure does not include data from countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and others. Additionally, some children residing in countries like France may not be included in official statistics, and certain countries may lack data disaggregated by age. Consequently, the actual number of Ukrainian children abroad is likely to be higher than reported. Furthermore, there is a paucity of data regarding the number of children with special educational needs (SEN) among the Ukrainian diaspora.

As a part of the project's implementation, a new curriculum will be developed, based on empirically proven effective strategies for fostering socially adaptive behavior. The curriculum will also focus on training the university personnel to utilize program materials and disseminate knowledge about these effective practices. The training will be provided to Ukrainian and North Macedonian higher education institutions employees, who will subsequently educate students who receive pre-service and additional in-service education in these institutions. Additionally, the training program will be adapted for implementation in V4 countries to strengthen the professional preparation of teachers, psychologists, and social workers.



# Current State of Inclusive Legislation in V4 countries, Ukraine and North Macedonia

## Inclusion Legislation

In June 1994, representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organizations gathered in Salamanca, Spain, to form the *World Conference on Special Needs Education*. The resulting Salamanca Statement reaffirmed the global commitment to “Education for All”, emphasizing the necessity and urgency of providing education for all children, young people, and adults "within the regular education system"(UNESCO, 1994). The document states that children with special educational needs "must have access to regular schools." It adds that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all. Moreover, the Statement highlights that inclusive schools not only provide effective education for the majority of children but also enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the overall education system.

The adoption of the Salamanca Statement initiated the implementation of several legal acts and amendments in the legislation of countries that ratified the Salamanca Declaration in favor of supporting the rights of individuals with special education needs. These legal frameworks serve as a foundation for the development of inclusive education policies in the V4 countries, Ukraine, and North Macedonia.

## Czechia

The primary objective of inclusive education in Czechia is to create conditions that support human development and ensure the integration of individuals with disabilities into all social activities on equal terms with others. Inclusive education refers to a system of educational services guaranteed by the state, that is grounded in principles of non-discrimination, acknowledgment of human diversity, effective involvement, and the inclusion of all participants in the educational process.

Legislation in the Czech Republic regarding individuals with mental disabilities focuses on ensuring their rights, promoting their social inclusion, and ensuring access to appropriate support and services. Below are the key aspects of this legislation:



- **Anti-Discrimination Act (Act No. 198/2009 Coll.):**

This act prohibits discrimination based on disability, including mental disabilities, across various areas such as employment, education, healthcare, and access to goods and services. It ensures that individuals with mental disabilities are afforded the same rights and opportunities as others.

- **Social Services Act (Act No. 108/2006 Coll.):**

This law regulates the provision of social services, including offering support for people with mental disabilities through personal assistance, daycare centers, sheltered housing, and other forms of support. These services aim to help individuals with mental disabilities live independently and integrate into society.

- **Education Act (Act No. 561/2004 Coll.):**

This act provides a framework for inclusive education, ensuring access to mainstream education for children with mental disabilities. It mandates the development of individualized education plans (IEPs), the provision of special education services, and accommodations to facilitate the inclusion of students with mental disabilities in regular schools.

- **Employment Policy:**

Czechia has implemented policies to support the employment of people with mental disabilities. This includes incentives for employers to hire individuals with disabilities, vocational training programs, and sheltered workshops that provide employment opportunities in a supportive environment.

- **Guardianship and Legal Capacity:**

The Civil Code (Act No. 89/2012 Coll.) includes provisions of guardianship and the legal capacity of individuals with mental disabilities. Reforms in this area aim to protect the rights of individuals with mental disabilities while promoting autonomy and decision-making abilities. Supported decision-making is encouraged to enable individuals to make their own choices with appropriate assistance.

- **Healthcare Services:**

Legislation guarantees access to tailored healthcare so that people with mental disabilities have access to healthcare services tailored to their needs. This includes psychiatric care, psychological support, and rehabilitation services. The Mental Health Care Reform focuses



on improving mental health services, focusing on community-based care, and reducing the reliance on institutional care.

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):

The Czech Republic is a signatory to the CRPD, which commits the country to uphold the rights of people with disabilities, including mental disabilities. This international treaty influences national legislation and policies, promoting the inclusion and full participation of people with mental disabilities in all aspects of life.

- National Action Plans:

The Czech government periodically develops national action plans to improve the situation of people with disabilities, including those with mental disabilities. These plans outline specific goals, measures, and timelines to enhance accessibility, support services, and the overall quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

- Decree No. 291/1991 Coll.:

This decree authorized primary school principals to establish specialized and special classes to integrate students with disabilities individually.

- National Program for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic:

This document, developed after 2000, served as a key strategic framework for advancing inclusive education.

- Act on Education No. 561/2004 Coll.:

This Act shall regulate pre-school, basic, secondary, tertiary professional and other education at schools and school facilities, lay down conditions under which education and training (hereinafter referred to as “education”) are executed, define the rights and duties of natural and legal persons involved in education, and specify the scope of competencies of the bodies executing state administration and self-government in the system of education.

- On September 1, 2016, the Law "On Amendments to Certain Regulatory Acts in the Field of Education" (No. 82/2015) came into force, bringing fundamental changes, new opportunities, and certain complications in the integration process. As a result of these changes, for example, the number of clients of school counseling centers has increased, and they are also burdened with a greater burden of administration and organization. This affects not only the quality of work but also the overall process of implementing inclusive education and all participants, not least the state of pedagogical and psychological counseling.



- Decree No. 27/2016 Coll.:

On the Education of Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Students with Special Needs,  
as amended on 1 January 2018

These legislative measures and policies reflect the Czech Republic's commitment to creating an inclusive society for people with mental disabilities, ensuring their rights are protected and their needs are met.

## Slovakia

According to the current legislation in Slovakia, the education of each child/student (hereinafter referred to as student) must be based on their individual educational needs and natural interest in developing within the process of lifelong learning (Bezáková, Bougdar et al., 2022). Inclusive education in Slovakia is regulated by several legal frameworks, the most important of which following laws:

- Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training (School Act) (Zákon č. 245/2008 Z. z. o výchove a vzdelávaní – školský zákon)
  - Establishes the legal foundation for general, vocational, and special education.
  - Defines inclusive education and mandates equal access for all students.
  - Regulates individualized education plans (IEPs) and specialized support services.
- Act No. 139/2019 Coll. on Pedagogical staff (Zákon č. 139/2019 Z. z. o pedagogických zamestnancoch),
  - Defines qualification requirements for teachers, special educators, and support staff.
  - Establishes professional development programs to improve inclusive teaching methods.
  - Introduces special training for educators working with students with disabilities.
- Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on amendments to certain laws (anti-discrimination law) (Zákon č. 365/2004 Z. z. o rovnakom zaobchádzaní v niektorých oblastiach a o ochrane pred diskrimináciou a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov - antidiskriminačný zákon),
  - Prohibits discrimination based on disability in education, employment, and social services.
  - Ensures reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in mainstream schools.





- Promotes inclusive policies to reduce segregation in education.
- Act No. 36/2005 Coll. on the Family (Zákon č. 36/2005 Z. z. o rodine)
  - Protects the rights of children, including those with disabilities, in educational and social settings.
  - Defines parental responsibilities regarding the educational inclusion of children with special needs.
- Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the Social Legal Protection of Children and Social Guardianship (Zákon č. 305/2005 Z. z. o sociálnoprávnej ochrane detí a o sociálnej kuratele), as well as related decrees and regulations.
  - Ensures social support for children with disabilities in educational and social institutions.
  - Establishes collaborative efforts between schools, social services, and healthcare providers.
  - Introduces specialized intervention programs for at-risk children and families.

## North Macedonia

In North Macedonia, the right to education for every child is guaranteed through: Statute of the state, International Convention and National Legislation. The Statutes of the states regulates the right through two articles where is stated that:

- Article 44: “Everyone has the right to education. Education is available to everyone under equal conditions. Primary education is compulsory and free.”
- Article 48: “Members of communities have the right to education in their own language in primary and secondary education.” (ОДЛУКА ЗА ПРОГЛАСУВАЊЕ НА УСТАВОТ НА РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА, 1991)

North Macedonia is a signatory to several international treaties that guarantee the right to education:

- a) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (УНИВЕРЗАЛНА ДЕКЛАРАЦИЈА ЗА ЧОВЕКОВИТЕ ПРАВА, 1948).
  - Article 26: “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Primary education shall be compulsory.”
- b) Convention on the Rights of the Child (Конвенција за правата на детето, 1989). North Macedonia ratified this convention in 1993. In Articles 28 and 29, it is established that:



- States shall make primary education compulsory and free.
  - Secondary education shall be accessible to all.
  - States shall take measures to prevent discrimination in education.
- c) Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Европска конвенција за заштита на човековите права)
- Protocol 1, Article 2: “No one shall be denied the right to education.”
- d) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Меѓународен Пакт за економски,социјални и културни права, 1976)
- Article 13: Affirms that primary education should be compulsory and free, and secondary and higher education should be accessible to every citizen according to their capabilities.

Regarding National framework, North Macedonia guarantee the rights to education through several laws and by-laws

- a) Law on Primary Education: This law regulates the educational process in primary schools and defines the activity of primary education as part of the single educational system (Закон за основно образование, 2019).
- b) Law on Secondary Education: This law regulates the organization, functioning and management of secondary education, including high school and vocational education (Закон за средното образование, 2020).

Inclusion is a multi-faceted process that requires collaboration among various stakeholders. According to Rasaimi-Ramadani (2023), the first major systemic change in the education of students with disabilities in North Macedonia occurred in 2018 with the adoption of the new Primary Education Law adopted in 2019 (Закон за основно образование, 2019). This law aims to accommodate the diverse needs of all students, by ensuring essential participation of all students in educational process (Krstevska Dojchinoska & Petrushev, 2022). In this law, article 35 defines students with special needs in terms of the law as follows: - students with disabilities are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various social barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others, - students with behavioral or emotional disorders problems or with specific learning difficulties and - students who come from unfavorable socio-economic, cultural, and/or linguistically deprived environments, which is similar but not the same with the rulebook of ICF of North Macedonia (17.01.2023). In accordance

with the legal provisions according to Krstevska Dojchinoska and Petrusheve (2022), the following by-laws were drawn up:

- Concept for inclusive education, which provides specific guidelines on how inclusive practices will be implemented in practice, from 07/06/2020 (Trpevska, Contova, & Cashllarov, 2020)
- Rulebook on the method of evaluating students with disabilities, (17.01.2023)
- Based on Article 22 paragraph (11) of the Law on Primary Education, on 27.10.2020 the Minister of Education and Science issued Guidelines on the way of cooperation between primary schools with a resource center, learning support centers and other primary schools. This Guideline governs the way of cooperation between primary schools with a resource center, learning support centers and other primary schools, (2020)
- Rulebook on the standard, the description of competencies and work tasks for the educational and personal assistant in primary schools, from 02.12. (2020)
- Rulebook on the method of requesting an educational/personal assistant and the method of selection of an educational/personal assistant, dated February 15, (2021)
- The Bureau of Educational Development has issued a second revised edition of the School Inclusive Team Guide 2020, (Boshkovska Rozalija, et al., 2020).

We ought to underline the fact that the new law of primary education, transform the special schools in our country into a resource center, and has the tendency for every child with special needs to attend mainstream school, with support of resource centers and learning support centers, however, excludes them from special schools. From 2023 the majority of used-to-be special schools, now resource centers, have 0 enrollment of students with special schools, which means all children with special needs are in mainstream schools. The law itself is inclusive in terms of embedding children with special needs in mainstream schools, however is exclusive for children who to not benefit from mainstream school. Inclusive education is implemented in over 75% of the countries in the world, but success in implementation depends on the socioeconomic status of the country and educational and cultural traditions (Rashikj-Canevska, 2023), for what North Macedonia cannot be praised about.

The effective implementation of these by-laws is the responsibility of professional teams within schools, comprising of pedagogues, special educators and rehabilitators, psychologists, teachers, and in some cases, social workers. All of this professionals are required to complete a four-year (240 ECTS) university programs to obtain the diploma and the necessary qualifications to work in schools.



## Poland

In Poland, the legislative framework for the integration of individuals with disabilities has witnessed substantial evolution over time. The Polish Constitution of 1997 guarantees the right to education for all citizens, mandating free access to public education, including higher education institutions (HEIs), and compulsory education until the age of 18. Legislation, such as the Act of 16.12.2016 on Education Law and the Teachers' Charter of 1982, ensures equal access to education, allowing parents to choose between public and non-public schools for their children. Additionally, HEIs maintain autonomy as per the relevant Act of Parliament. Furthermore, the Polish education system has been undergoing modifications to align with the tenets of equitable educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities, underscoring the significance of inclusive education within integrated settings. The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012 serves to reinforce Poland's dedication to promoting inclusion across all stages of compulsory education.

Both citizens and institutions are entitled to establish educational institutions, including schools and higher education institutions (HEIs). Parents are free to choose a public or non-public school for their children. The autonomy of HEIs is ensured following the principles outlined in the relevant Act of Parliament.

The principal Acts pertaining to school education, encompassing all levels from pre-primary to post-secondary non-tertiary education, are as follows:

- the Law on School Education and the Provisions introducing the Law on School Education of 2016;
- the School Education Act of 1991;
- the Teachers' Charter of 1982.

Despite some improvements, a high proportion of students with disabilities remain in segregated educational settings. While the proportion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools increased between 2010 and 2018, the level of segregation and disparities in educational attainment remains high. For example, in 2018/2019, 46% of pupils with special educational needs in primary schools attended mainstream classes, 19% were in inclusive classes, which are mainstream classes with three to five students with special educational needs, and 33% in special primary schools.

Current legislation (i.e., Polish Constitution, Act of 16.12.2016 of Education Law, Children's Rights Convention, Convention on Persons with Disabilities) ensures the right of all children, including those with disabilities, to attend any type of school, while the education system should ensure support adapted to children's needs, including targeted approaches.



Poland is taking steps to improve the quality of inclusive education. Supported by the European Commission's structural reform support program, the Ministry of Education and Science (the Ministry) has developed, in cooperation with the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, solutions for improving the quality of inclusive education, based on a list of recommendations and priority actions.

Priorities for inclusive education include:

1. Ensure access to assistance is provided as early as possible to the child and family.
2. Improving the quality of teaching (educational materials, new postgraduate courses for teachers financed by the Ministry of Education, funds for hiring specialists, psychologists, pedagogues, and speech therapists in schools, and for organizing additional specialized classes for students).
3. A new way to assess needs.
4. Creating various vocational training pathways and supporting people with disabilities to enter the labor market.

## Ukraine

The evolution of inclusive education in Ukraine has been shaped by the country's legislative framework. Following Ukraine's independence in 1991, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine enacted the Constitution of Ukraine (1996) which enshrined the fundamental rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of all Ukrainian citizens.

The legislative framework of Ukraine regulates the organization of an inclusive educational environment, and the introduction and implementation of an inclusive form of education by the following regulatory documents:

- The Law of Ukraine "On Education" (2017, revised) – Defines inclusive education and mandates equal access to learning environments.
- The Law on "Preschool Education" (2001, amended) – Provides regulations for early childhood inclusion and introduces specialized preschool programs for children with disabilities.
- The Law on "Complete General Secondary Education" (2020) – Establishes inclusive education standards for primary and secondary schools.
- The Law on "Vocational (Vocational Technical) Education" – Ensures accessibility and accommodations for students with disabilities in vocational schools,





- The Law on Professional Higher Education" – Establishes inclusive education provisions in technical colleges and professional training institutions,
- The Law on "Higher Education" – Mandates equal access for students with disabilities in universities and higher educational institutions (HEIs) ,
- The Law on" Out-of-School Education" – Regulates inclusive extracurricular activities and non-formal education,
- The Law on" Social Services" – Defines social protection measures for children with disabilities, including educational support services.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has issued several key orders to implement and expand inclusive education:

- "On Approval of the Action Plan for Implementation of the Concept of Creation and Development of the Early Intervention System for the Period up to 2026", which focuses on early screening, parental support, and multidisciplinary interventions for children with developmental delays.
- "On Approval of the National Strategy for Creating Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine for the Period up to 2030", which aims to increase accessibility in schools, workplaces, and public spaces.

Several resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine define the procedural framework for inclusive education implementation:

- "Procedure for Organizing the Activities of Inclusive Groups in Preschool Education Institutions",
- "On Approval of the Procedure for Organizing Inclusive Education in General Secondary Education Institutions",
- "Procedure for organizing inclusive Education in vocational (vocational-technical) education institutions",
- "On approval of the Procedure for organizing inclusive education in professional higher education institutions",
- "Procedure for Organizing Inclusive Education in Higher Education Institutions",
- "On Organizing Inclusive Education in Out-of-School Education Institutions" (Procedure for Organizing Inclusive Education in Out-of-School Education Institutions),
- "On Approval of the Regulation on Special Schools and the Regulation on Educational and Rehabilitation Centers",

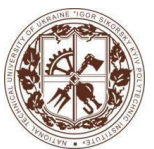




- “On Approval of the Regulation on Inclusive Resource Center” etc.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has issued several orders and letters to clarify the implementation of inclusive education policies, that include guidelines for inclusive teaching methods (recommendations on curriculum adaptations, assistive technologies, and individualized education plans (IEPs), training requirements for teachers in inclusive classrooms, standards for the development of inclusive schools (define the infrastructure and accessibility criteria for public schools).

In light of the experience of European countries, particularly in the period since 2016, Ukraine has set out on a strategic course of development oriented towards integration into the European educational space. This integration is to be achieved through the implementation of an inclusive education system, which is to serve as the primary form of education for children with special educational needs.



## Education for specialists in the fields of special education, psychology, and social work

In general, the educational system for training specialists to work in inclusive settings has a similar structure across the partner countries. These countries have an extensive network of higher education institutions that provide education and training for individuals pursuing careers in special education, psychology, and social work. Most educational programs for these professionals are based on contemporary knowledge, encompassing both foundational and modern theories. In the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, several universities provide the opportunity to study one of the most modern scientific disciplines: behavioral analysis. This educational program prepares professionals in the field of applied behavior analysis. However, there is a deficit of specialists in the partner countries who are qualified to work in inclusive settings.

### Czechia

An essential component of the modern education system is the system of support for people with special educational needs. Inclusion is a key component of this support. Inclusive education is the leading component of educational services for children with special educational needs in the Czech Republic. It has developed specialized programs and curricula to prepare special education teachers, psychologists, and social workers for work in inclusive settings. These programs strongly emphasize understanding the principles of inclusion, the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities, and the practical skills required to support these individuals effectively. Universities such as Charles University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno, and Palacký University in Olomouc offer comprehensive training combining theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience. Courses cover various topics, including developmental psychology, special education methodologies, and social work practices tailored to inclusive environments.

For special education teachers, the training involves extensive coursework in adaptive teaching strategies, curriculum development for diverse learners, and assessment techniques. These programs also include practical experiences in inclusive classrooms where future educators can apply their knowledge in real-world settings, collaborate with general education teachers, and develop individualized education plans (IEPs) for students with special needs. This practical component is crucial for preparing teachers to create supportive and effective learning environments that accommodate all students, regardless of their abilities.



Psychologists and social workers are similarly prepared through rigorous academic and practical training. Psychology programs emphasize developmental and educational psychology, counseling techniques, and mental health interventions suitable for inclusive settings. Social work programs focus on case management, community resources, and advocacy, ensuring that graduates can support individuals with disabilities and their families comprehensively. Both fields incorporate internships and fieldwork, allowing students to gain experience in schools, community organizations, and other relevant settings. This integrated approach ensures that future psychologists and social workers are well-equipped to promote inclusion, address diverse needs, and work collaboratively within multidisciplinary teams to support individuals in inclusive environments.

The Czech Republic has some universities providing world-class special education, social work, and psychology programs. These institutions are noted for their academic excellence, innovative research, and commitment to preparing students for careers in their respective fields. They provide a variety of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs to cater to different academic and professional aspirations. Here are some of the top institutions:

- Charles University (Univerzita Karlova)

Location: Prague

Programs: Charles University is one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Central Europe. It offers comprehensive programs in psychology, social work, and special education. The Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts are particularly renowned for their research and teaching in these disciplines. The Faculty of Education offers Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral programs in Special Education. Renowned for its comprehensive curriculum and research opportunities, this university is a leading destination for those seeking a career in special education.

- Masaryk University (Masarykova univerzita)

Location: Brno

Programs: Masaryk University is the second-largest university in the Czech Republic. Its Faculty of Social Studies and Faculty of Education offer well-regarded psychology, social work, and special education programs. The university is known for its modern approach and emphasis on research. The Faculty of Education offers a range of degree programs in Special Education, including undergraduate and graduate degrees focused on inclusive education and support services for people with disabilities. It offers degree programs in special education with various specializations, including educational and developmental support for individuals with disabilities. The university provides Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral programs in Social Work at the Faculty of Social Studies. The



faculty is well-regarded for its research and applied training opportunities. It offers comprehensive programs in social work, including practical placements and community engagement.

- Palacký University Olomouc (Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci)

Location: Olomouc

Programs: Palacký University is the second-oldest university in the Czech Republic. The Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts provide high-quality programs in special education, social work, and psychology. This faculty has strong programs in special education, offering undergraduate and graduate degrees focused on inclusive education and support services for people with disabilities. The university is also noted for its supportive academic environment and research initiatives. The university offers a Bachelor's program in Social Work with an emphasis on practical training and internships.

- University of Hradec Králové (Univerzita Hradec Králové)

Location: Hradec Králové

Programs: This university offers strong programs in social work, special education, and psychology through its Faculty of Education. The university is known for its practical approach and community engagement.

- University of Ostrava (Ostravská univerzita)

Location: Ostrava

Programs: The Faculty of Social Studies at the University of Ostrava provides robust programs in social work and psychology. The Faculty of Education also offers specialized courses in special education. The university is recognized for its dynamic curriculum and research contributions.

- University of West Bohemia (Západočeská univerzita v Plzni)

Location: Pilsen

Programs: The Faculty of Education at the University of West Bohemia offers programs in special education and social work, with a focus on practical training and research.

## Slovakia

For each student in inclusive education, there should be, according to the current amendment to Act No. 139 /2019 Coll., the school support team, whose task, according to § 84a of this law, is to coordinate the development of inclusive education, to ensure the application of approaches and strategies in education that are derived from various disciplines of science and technology. In



addition, the team's task is to cooperate with counseling and prevention facilities and other entities in supporting children, students, and their legal representatives in the field of education and training, to provide counseling to children, students and their legal representatives and methodological support to teaching staff, and to participate in the development of the school education program.

School support teams include the school's special education teacher and all paraprofessionals, as well as other school personnel, such as teaching assistants. The size of school support teams can vary. Still, besides the school special educator, the team usually includes a school psychologist, guidance counselor, educational advisor, social worker, or school speech-language pathologist. The team may also include therapeutic educators, if they are part of the school or professionals from the helping and support professions, including a social worker.

Given the importance of special educators, psychologists, and social workers within the support team and the implementation of effective inclusive education in Slovakia, great emphasis is also placed on the training of professionals in these helping professions in this context.

Students of special education are prepared for inclusive education from the bachelor's degree, where, in addition to the theoretical foundations of inclusive education, emphasis is placed on the components of inclusive education within the preschool and after-school education of children and students with special educational needs. The bachelor's degree prepares the student for the profession of an educator in an after-school club, for the position of a pedagogical assistant, and for a Master of Vocational Training. In the master's program, the focus is also on inclusive teaching in several subjects and on the work of a special education teacher in the support team and special education diagnostics and counseling.

Social work students are taught a series of mandatory and elective courses to master the theory and practice of social work in its interdisciplinary and intersectoral contexts, e.g., supporting the implementation of social inclusion and promoting inclusive education. These include, for example, Social Work with Youth at Risk, Equal Opportunities, Special Education, or Social Work with People with Disabilities at the Bachelor's level. At the Master's level, courses include School Social Work and Social Work with Socially Excluded Populations.

Students of the Psychology program are prepared to pursue the profession of psychologist in various specializations, namely clinical psychologist, counseling psychologist, school psychologist, or occupational psychologist. In the course of school psychology students acquire knowledge about the concept of the work of a school psychologist, his/her professional tasks and basic activities in the school environment, and legal and ethical standards in the work of a school psychologist. They acquire information about work with intact students, gifted students, and students with behavioral, learning, and career problems, preventive programs, and methods of work of a school psychologist.



They are also able to analyze a problem situation concerning the school environment and the wider social environment and to take a position on problem situations.

## North Macedonia

Graduates of teacher education programs in North Macedonia are qualified to work in both private and state schools. However, when examining the extent to which social and educational inclusion is incorporated into teacher training curricula, Ramadani Rasimi (2023) highlights key differences among faculties.

Among the four main faculties preparing teachers, three include Inclusive Education as a course, while the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Tetova (UT) does not. The University “Goce Delčev” – UGD and UT each offer two courses focused on teaching methods for students with special needs. At UGD, Inclusive Education is a mandatory course, while UT offers Special Pedagogy as a mandatory course. Both universities provide Methods for Students with Special Needs as an elective course. In contrast, University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” – UKIM and University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – Bitola (UB) each offer only one mandatory course on Inclusive Education.

At the master’s level, these four universities offer 13 study programs, but only a few include coursework in inclusive education. UGD incorporates one elective course on inclusive education in three master’s programs. At UT, only Teacher Education offers Inclusive Education as an elective course. UB provides an obligatory course titled “Strategies for Learning and Teaching Children with Special Needs” only in its Social Pedagogy program. Despite the emphasis on inclusive education in some areas, no program currently offers Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) or behavioral sciences coursework.

In North Macedonia, only two state universities offer four-year bachelor’s degree programs in Special Education and Rehabilitation. These are University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” – UKIM (Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Special Education and Rehabilitation) and University of Tetova (Faculty of Pedagogy, Special Education and Rehabilitation Program). Both universities provide courses on inclusive education and working with students with disabilities. Graduates are trained in learning support, monitoring student development, assisting teachers, career guidance, parental counseling, community collaboration, educational research, and school safety. They are also qualified to assess special educational needs, develop and manage specialized education programs, and support individuals with disabilities in various institutions such as rehabilitation centers, autism treatment centers, social work institutions, and mental health facilities.





At the master's level, UKIM and UT offer nine study programs in Special Education and Rehabilitation, including a two-semester (60 ECTS) master's program in Inclusive Education, which is open to graduates from all educational fields. However, despite the increasing focus on inclusive education, no undergraduate or graduate program includes coursework in ABA.

Psychology is one of the most sought-after fields in educational and humanistic sciences in North Macedonia, with seven universities offering bachelor's degrees in psychology. These include three state universities (UKIM, UT, and the University of Mother Teresa) and four private universities (International Slavic University, Balkan University, South East European University, and MIT University). All seven programs include Psychology of Persons with Special Needs in the curriculum, but only the International Slavic University includes Inclusive Education as a mandatory course.

At the master's level, five universities offer nine study programs, yet only the International Slavic University provides a course titled "Specific Educational Assessment and Rehabilitation of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder", while UKIM offers "Bases of Behavior Evolution" as an elective course. According to the Rulebook on Competencies of School Psychologists (2019), school psychologists are responsible for supporting teachers, counseling students and parents, and promoting parental involvement in school life. Psychologists are also trained to work in schools, mental health institutions, social service agencies, and private practices, but they must obtain a license from the Chamber of Psychologists before practicing professionally.

Social work degrees are available at four universities, including UKIM, UT, the University of Mother Teresa, and South East European University. Among them, only UKIM offers an elective course on working with children with special needs. However, no university currently offers ABA coursework in social work programs. At the master's level, UT does not offer graduate programs in social work, while the remaining universities also lack coursework related to ABA. UKIM provides two elective courses focused on working with students with special needs.

According to the Rulebook on Competencies of Social Workers in Schools (2019), social workers assist teachers, provide counseling, and promote parental involvement. They also engage in broader community-based services, including case management, addressing social inequalities, and advocating for vulnerable groups. Social workers play an important role in developing social policies in education, employment, and housing.

Despite the increasing focus on inclusive education, no study programs in teacher education, special education, psychology, or social work include Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) coursework. The introduction of ABA-related courses would enhance professional competencies in behavioral science-based interventions within inclusive education and disability services.



## Poland

Under current legislation, an individual qualified to teach in a school can work in inclusive education as a special educator if they have additionally completed one of the following:

- Postgraduate studies in special pedagogy or inclusive education.
- A teacher training institution specializing in special pedagogy.
- A qualification course in special pedagogy.

The following requirements have been set in the Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science of September 14, 2023, on detailed qualifications required of teachers (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 2102).

According to the baseline report prepared for the Ministry, the most acute problems are the lack of specialists, mainly psychologists and psychiatrists, cooperation models between relevant institutions, low awareness of special needs and inclusive education, including among parents, and teachers' need for support and knowledge about children's most common disorders.

To address these challenges, on May 17, 2022, the President of the Republic of Poland signed amendments to the Law on the Education System. These new regulations aim to standardize the employment of specialists in kindergartens and mainstream schools and are being implemented gradually from September 1, 2022, to September 1, 2024.

The new regulations will significantly improve access to assistance provided as early as possible and as close to the child as possible, to eliminate barriers that impede the child's development and learning. In addition, a very important task will be to improve the quality of education that takes into account the different educational needs of students at successive stages of learning. There is also a need for closer cooperation between ministries and more accurate addressing of funds for their implementation. The document also takes into account demands related to improving the situation of children and adolescents who experience mental problems and are under psychiatric care.

On September 1, 2022, new standards for hiring teachers of pedagogues, special educators, psychologists, speech therapists, and educational therapists in both mainstream and integrated kindergartens and schools took effect. Another increase in the employment of specialists is planned from September 1, 2024. Ultimately, thanks to the introduced changes, in 2022 the number of employed specialist teachers is planned to increase from approximately from 22,000 to 51,000, or by 143%.

Another element is the creation of the position of a special educator in kindergartens and mainstream and integrated schools, who will support teachers and implement specialized activities directly with students. The qualification requirements for this position were defined very broadly and include several options:



1. A unified master's degree under the new educational standard for special education in any sub-discipline and pedagogical preparation.
2. A unified master's degree program under the new training standard in a field of study in which there is exclusive training preparing for the teaching profession, in the field of re-socialization pedagogy, speech therapy, corrective pedagogy (pedagogical therapy) or early support of child development and pedagogical preparation.
3. A unified master's degree program under the new training standard for speech therapy and pedagogical preparation.
4. Bachelor's and master's degree studies conducted under the new educational standard in the field of re-socialization pedagogy, speech therapy, corrective pedagogy (pedagogical therapy) or early childhood development support in a faculty other than special pedagogy AND pedagogical preparation.
5. Bachelor's and Master's degree programs or unified master's degree programs conducted under the new educational standard in the field of pedagogy education AND postgraduate studies conducted under the new training standard for inclusive education AND pedagogical preparation.
6. Second-degree studies conducted by the new educational standard for special education in any sub-discipline AND pedagogical preparation.
7. Studies according to the old standards of education in special pedagogy AND pedagogical preparation.
8. Bachelor's and master's degree or unified master's degree studies conducted in accordance with the regulations in force before August 3, 2019 in the field of pedagogy AND postgraduate studies in special pedagogy or inclusive education or a teacher training institute in special pedagogy or a qualification course in special pedagogy AND pedagogical preparation.
9. Qualifications required to hold the position of a teacher in kindergartens AND postgraduate studies conducted in accordance with the new standard of education in the field of early childhood development support.

A novelty is the regulation at the level of the qualification regulation of the requirements for the so-called "support teacher". The variants in the requirements for the support teacher are very similar to the ones for special educators.



The recent report investigating education in psychology in Poland shows that in recent years there has been an increase in interest in studying psychology. Both the number of universities offering studies in this field and the number of students themselves are growing. In 2018, there were 144 offers of psychology studies at Polish universities, while in 2023 the offer increased to 254. In 2019, 34,178 people studied psychology, and in 2022 there were already 56,370, an increase of about 65%.

The number of people studying psychology is also increasing in European countries. According to Eurostat data, from 2016 to 2021 in all European Union countries, the percentage of those studying psychology at the graduate level, relative to the number of all students, increased from 2.4 to 2.7%. At the undergraduate level, from 2 to 2.65%.

In Poland, the largest number of people continually study psychology at academic institutions. However, the increase in the number of students is much greater at professional universities, which are not required to undergo evaluation of scientific activity.

In the period under review (2019-2022), the increase in the number of students at academic universities was 30%, while at vocational universities it reached as much as 313%. In 2019, more than 29.9 thousand people studied psychology at academic universities and more than 4.2 thousand at vocational universities. In 2022, it was more than 38.9 thousand at academic universities and nearly 17.5 thousand at professional universities.

## Ukraine

The Ukrainian government continues to ensure equal access to education by implementing policies that promote inclusivity at all levels. The National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030 prioritizes the development of an inclusive educational environment, meeting the special educational needs of students, and ensuring equal opportunities for all learners. The Law of Ukraine "On Education" obliges public authorities and local governments to create conditions that guarantee the rights of individuals with special educational needs, considering their abilities, interests, and individual circumstances. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine plays a key role in shaping inclusive education policies. As of September 1, 2023, 314 higher education institutions (HEIs) operate in Ukraine, excluding those in temporarily occupied by Russia territories and regions affected by war.

Psychology education in Ukraine is provided at 170 higher education institutions across various academic levels. Nine institutions offer entry-level degrees (junior bachelor's/professional junior bachelor's), while 154 universities provide bachelor's programs. At the master's level, programs are available at 127 institutions, and Ph.D. training in psychology is offered at 61 institutions.



Graduates of psychology programs are qualified for a range of professional roles, including positions as psychologists, practical psychologists, university lecturers, vocational education instructors, and researchers. They may also work in inclusive resource centers, social service agencies, and psychological support institutions, with opportunities to lead research laboratories and rehabilitation programs.

The specialization of Medical Psychology (specialty 225) is available in six institutions, offering master's programs, while one institution provides Ph.D. training in this field. Graduates who complete their specialization and obtain a medical psychology qualification are eligible to work as medical psychologists. Educational and professional programs in psychology are developed in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, including the Laws of Ukraine "On Education" and "On Higher Education" and relevant Cabinet of Ministers resolutions regulating qualifications, licensing conditions, and curriculum content. The academic council of each university approves the structure and content of psychology programs in accordance with Article 36, Paragraph 8 of the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education."

The following disciplines are among the mandatory components of educational and professional programs in the curricula: "Inclusion in Education", 'Fundamentals of Inclusive Education', 'Psychocorrection of School Maladjustment in Inclusive Education', 'Psychological Foundations of Inclusion', 'Psychological Support in Integrated and Inclusive Institutions', "Pathopsychology (with Neuropsychology), Differential Psychology, Basics of Psychocorrection, Psychology of Deviant Behavior, Psychological Rehabilitation, Psychotherapeutic Techniques, Psychology of Cognitive Behavior, etc.

The variable components of educational and professional programs include such disciplines as: "Fundamentals of Psychotherapy", 'Neuropsychological Support of Developmental Processes', 'Cognitive Psychology', 'Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches in Psychotherapy', 'Fundamentals of Neurology and Neuropsychology', 'Psychological Foundations of Inclusive Education', 'Support of Inclusive Education', "Personality in an Inclusive Space, Psychocorrection and Psychotherapy of Behavioral Disorders in Childhood and Adolescence, Early Intervention, Game and Behavioral Psychotherapy, Psychology and Correction of Behavioral Disorders, Psychology of Subjects of Inclusive Education, etc.

A bachelor's degree in Social Work (specialty 231) can be obtained at more than 80 higher education institutions in Ukraine, while 56 universities offer master's degrees in social work. These institutions include national and state universities, humanities and pedagogy universities, economic and polytechnic institutes, and municipal and private institutions. Graduates pursue careers as social work specialists, project managers, corporate social responsibility managers, child protection





inspectors, and professionals in municipal social protection agencies. Training increasingly emphasizes inclusive education, preparing graduates to work with children and adults with disabilities, families in crisis, and socially vulnerable groups.

Social work education includes both core and elective courses related to inclusive education. Foundational subjects cover human rights, social justice, mental health, and disability studies, while core courses such as Inclusive Society and Psychology and Sociology of Disability are part of the general professional training. Elective courses vary by institution but may include Psychological Support for Children in Inclusive Education, Teaching Strategies in Inclusive Education, Social Justice in an Inclusive Society, Social Rehabilitation, Social and Pedagogical Work with Children with Disabilities, Universal Design and Assistive Technologies, and Behavioral Disorders in Children: Diagnosis and Intervention. Since Ukraine is still in the process of developing its inclusive infrastructure, many educational programs focus on social protection and social security systems rather than practical inclusive education strategies. However, universities are gradually updating curricula to meet the increasing demand for specialists trained in inclusion and accessibility.

The analysis of educational programs has shown that the general professional training cycle for social work specialists in most higher education institutions includes, as a mandatory component, not only familiarization with social work technologies but also fundamental courses on human rights, mental health, and pathologies. Key subjects such as Inclusive Society and Psychology and Sociology of Disability form part of this core curriculum. However, most disciplines specifically focused on preparing students for work in inclusive settings are offered as elective courses. Each institution has the flexibility to design its own set of electives based on faculty expertise and student demand. Examples of such courses include Psychological Support for Children in Inclusive Education, Teaching Strategies in Inclusive Education, Social Justice in an Inclusive Society, Social Rehabilitation, Social and Pedagogical Work with Children with Disabilities, Universal Design and Assistive Technologies, Behavioral Disorders in Children, Diagnosis and Intervention, and Psychology of Subjects in Inclusive Education.

Given the current conditions in Ukraine, it is difficult to consider the country fully inclusive or even approaching inclusivity in many aspects of daily life. As a result, many educational programs remain largely theoretical, with a strong emphasis on the social protection and social security system for specific population groups. However, educational components are gradually being updated to reflect the increasing demand for inclusivity, and professional development programs are evolving accordingly. If universities are able to attract faculty members specializing in assistive technologies, behavioral intervention strategies, and the organization of support services for specific client groups, they could significantly enhance student training. This would help align professional competencies





with the emerging needs of Ukraine, where the consequences of war and heightened social vulnerability are affecting an increasing segment of the population, necessitating new expertise and skill sets for future specialists.

Beyond the system of educational qualifications, Ukraine is also enhancing its professional qualification framework, which facilitates the development of new mechanisms for training, continuing education, and certification of specialists based on their existing academic credentials. This evolving system aims to create more flexible pathways for professional development, ensuring that specialists in social work and related fields are better equipped to respond to the rapidly changing social landscape and the growing demand for inclusive education and support services.



# Development of Applied Behavior Analysis field

## Overview of the History of ABA in Europe and Its Recognition

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a scientific approach to understanding and modifying behavior. It is widely utilized as an intervention for individuals, particularly those with developmental disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), to support the acquisition of new skills, modify behaviors, and reduce harmful or disruptive actions. ABA is rooted in behaviorism, focusing on how behaviors are learned and influenced by environmental factors.

The foundational principles of ABA emphasize that behavior is learned and can be taught, modified, or unlearned through structured interventions. A key element of ABA is positive reinforcement, which increases the likelihood of a behavior recurring when followed by a rewarding consequence. To facilitate learning, complex skills are broken down into smaller, manageable steps, allowing learners to progress through structured instruction. Objective measurement of outcomes is another fundamental aspect of ABA, as data collection is essential for tracking progress and making necessary adjustments to interventions. Additionally, functional behavior analysis (FBA) is a core method used to examine the purpose of a behavior, identifying underlying causes such as the need for attention or task avoidance, which can then be addressed through targeted interventions.

The applications of ABA are extensive, spanning efforts to enhance social skills, communication, cooperation, and sharing while also addressing challenging behaviors such as tantrums, aggression, and self-injury. ABA is also used to teach life skills, daily routines, hygiene, and self-care, as well as to improve academic performance, attention, and task completion.

Various techniques are employed within ABA to achieve these outcomes. Discrete Trial Training (DTT) is a structured method that teaches specific skills through repeated practice with reinforcement. Natural Environment Teaching (NET) focuses on applying skills in real-life settings to promote natural learning opportunities. Additionally, prompting and fading techniques are used to guide learners toward correct responses while gradually reducing support to encourage independence. Generalization is a crucial goal, ensuring that learned skills are applied consistently across different settings, people, and situations.

The success of ABA programs depends on collaboration and consistency among therapists, teachers, caregivers, and families. ABA is now recognized as an effective human service approach in a variety of contexts, though it remains most closely associated with interventions for individuals on the autism spectrum.



## The History and Development of ABA in Europe

The foundations of ABA were established in the United States, emerging from behaviorism in the 20th century, particularly through the work of B. F. Skinner. In Europe, behavior analysis began to take shape in the 1960s, with the influence of Skinner and other American behavior analysts. The Experimental Analysis of Behavior Group (EABG) was formed in the United Kingdom, initially focusing on operant conditioning in animals. Over time, its scope expanded to include human operant behavior, applied behavior analysis, and professional training standards (Arntzen & Pellón, 2021).

Following this, ABA organizations were established in various European countries, including Ireland, Norway, and Italy (Arntzen & Pellón, 2021; Keenan et al., 2022). Today, 21 distinct behavior analysis organizations operate across Europe (Trellova & Bourland, 2024).

However, the recognition of ABA as a professional field remains limited in many European countries. Few nations officially recognize behavior analysts as a regulated profession, and the field remains largely unregulated. In the absence of professional oversight, consumer protection is not guaranteed, as there is no universally defined scope of practice or standardized competency requirements for ABA professionals (Keenan, Dillenburger, et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, the field of ABA continues to grow in Europe, with increasing efforts to establish training programs, ethical guidelines, and professional recognition to ensure high-quality service delivery.

## The Development and Current Status of Applied Behavior Analysis in Partner Countries

### Czechia

Historically, awareness of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in the Czech Republic has been limited. Until the early 2000s, families of children diagnosed with autism had little access to structured, evidence-based therapies and primarily relied on traditional or non-scientific methods. The introduction of ABA was largely facilitated by international exposure, as Czech parents and professionals began to engage with Western models where ABA was already well-established. Increased global discourse on ASD, along with greater access to international training resources, contributed to growing interest in ABA as a viable intervention.



A critical factor in the development of ABA in the Czech Republic has been the gradual establishment of educational and training opportunities. Academic institutions such as Masaryk University and Charles University have incorporated behavioral principles into psychology, special education, and related disciplines, raising awareness of ABA while fostering interdisciplinary approaches to behavioral interventions. To support these efforts, a five-year plan was implemented to provide financial backing for university-based training in behavior analysis. As part of this initiative, the first cohort of fifteen Czech behavior analysts completed international master's programs in behavior analysis, and the Centre for Applied Behavior Analysis at Masaryk University was established (Roll-Pettersson et al., 2020). By 2021, the number of trained behavior analysts in the country had grown to approximately 40 (Kingsdorf & Pančocha, 2020).

During this five-year period, the Czech Society for Applied Behavior Analysis (CSABA) was established in 2016, followed by the creation of the Czech Medical Society's Working Group on Applied Behavior Analysis (Kelly et al., 2018). CSABA has played a significant role in ABA advocacy, professional development, and the establishment of ethical standards. The organization organizes workshops, conferences, and collaborations with international experts to address the shortage of qualified practitioners.

In 2016, the Government Committee for Citizens with Disabilities at the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic launched an initiative aimed at improving services for individuals with autism and their families (Vládní výbor pro zdravotně postižené občany [Government Committee], 2016). This initiative emphasized the need for a comprehensive professional training system for autism specialists and the integration of behavioral services into national healthcare coverage. Shortly after, Act No. 201/2017 Coll. was passed, amending Act No. 96/2004 Coll., which formally recognized the professions of behavioral analyst, behavioral analyst assistant, and behavioral technician as medical professions. This legislation also established the educational and professional requirements for these roles under the Act on Allied Health Professions (Keenan et al., 2022). Following this, the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic issued regulations defining the required theoretical and practical training for these professions (Coll. No. 39/2005) and further specified their professional scope of practice (Coll. No. 55/2011).

By 2021, CSABA membership had grown to over 50 professionals, including behavior analysts, assistant behavior analysts, behavior technicians, and other specialists using ABA-based interventions. However, despite these advancements, ABA services remain largely privately funded, as public funding is limited, and health insurance companies do not yet classify ABA interventions as essential for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities.



## Slovakia

ABA has been gradually gaining recognition in Slovakia since 2013, when a small group of behavior analysts, trained in the United Kingdom and the United States, returned to Slovakia and began offering private ABA services for families of children with autism. By 2022, the country had nine professionals, including six behavior analysts. However, further expansion was hindered by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB)'s decision in 2019 to discontinue certification eligibility for non-U.S. residents, limiting options for professional certification in Slovakia (BACB, 2019).

Several additional factors continue to restrict the development of ABA in Slovakia. The limited number of trained behavior analysts has made it difficult to meet the growing demand for services. Additionally, there is a lack of ABA literature and training programs in the Slovak language (Hrebeňárová & Trellová, 2016). Furthermore, behavior analysis is not recognized as an independent profession, and ABA is often misunderstood by parents and professionals alike, who view it primarily as an autism therapy rather than a scientific discipline of behavior (Trellová & Sádovská, 2023). The absence of a national ABA association or certification body further complicates the establishment of professional standards.

Despite these challenges, ABA is beginning to be incorporated into Slovakia's healthcare and education systems. The Ministry of Health includes ABA-based interventions in its Standard Practice Guidelines for Autism Spectrum Disorders, and the Ministry of Education recommends ABA principles in educational methods for children with autism, particularly prompting and reinforcement strategies. However, ABA has not yet been formally integrated into state curricula as a required educational practice.

Until 2016, ABA training in Slovakia was provided only through workshops and hands-on courses taught by behavior analysts. These courses were designed for parents of children with autism and other developmental disorders, as well as professionals in early intervention, education, speech therapy, psychology, and social work. In 2016, the first academic ABA courses were introduced at the Faculty of Education, University of Prešov, within the Special Education program. These courses are taught by certified behavior analysts and include one mandatory course (Theoretical Foundations of ABA) and four elective courses. They are available to students in special education, elementary education, and psychosocial disabilities programs. However, ABA-related content at other universities is limited to brief mentions within broader courses on education, social work, and speech-language pathology, and these courses are not taught by certified ABA professionals.

The slow expansion of ABA training in Slovakia is largely due to the lack of university-based ABA programs and low demand from employers for ABA-certified professionals. Kingsdorf





& Pančocha (2023) argue that motivation to pursue ABA training is lower in Slovakia due to uncertainty about career prospects in the field. While ABA is recommended for autism education, it is not required in state curricula, reducing incentives for professionals to pursue advanced ABA training. Expanding the number of ABA courses available at universities for educators, social workers, psychologists, and related professionals could increase interest in the field and contribute to its broader adoption.

Currently, no university in Slovakia offers Verified Course Sequence (VCS) programs for either behavior technicians or behavior analysts. The closest option is available at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, which many Slovak professionals attend due to the linguistic similarities between Czech and Slovak. However, educational and professional staff in Slovakia can access an innovative training program in Applied Behavior Analysis, which is accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic under Section 55 of Act No. 138/2019 Coll. and is offered by private organizations.

## North Macedonia

North Macedonia faces significant challenges in the development of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services, primarily due to a shortage of both human and financial resources. As a result, the adoption of evidence-based interventions for supporting children with autism has been significantly slower than in North America and other regions with well-established ABA practices.

Although ABA has been widely recognized in Western countries for decades, its introduction in North Macedonia only began in 2014, primarily through internationally funded projects aimed at professional development and training programs for caregivers and educators. Given the scarcity of organizations providing ABA training, these initiatives have played a crucial role in increasing awareness of ABA-based interventions. However, it appears that the Biological Behavior course at Balkan University does not include any ABA-related content, highlighting the limited integration of ABA principles into academic curricula. Here we should mention an organization called “Blue Firefly”<sup>1</sup> which is an organization that provides therapeutic services for children with autism and one of the services has been therapeutic treatments by two licensed ABA behavioral therapists and residents of the United States. Their services have been temporary from 2023 until now, which means they have not been engaged full-time. The benefits of these services have been noticed by the parents of children with autism and in the meantime a special educator who has worked at the organization has been trained.

<sup>1</sup> For more information consult the webpage [bluefirefly.mk](http://bluefirefly.mk)





There is a strong demand for ABA training among parents of children with autism in North Macedonia, yet therapeutic resources remain scarce, and formal educational programs for training ABA professionals are lacking. This raises concerns about the quality of ABA-related training being provided to caregivers and practitioners. A significant issue is that many trainers in North Macedonia lack foundational ABA knowledge, limiting their ability to effectively support families and caregivers. This underscores the urgent need for structured ABA education and legislative regulations to ensure that service providers receive adequate training in behavioral principles.

To improve the quality of ABA services, training programs should be aligned with the specific needs of caregivers, and the overall educational structure of ABA should be strengthened in North Macedonia. Expanding professional education and establishing official guidelines for ABA training would help standardize practices and enhance service delivery (Kingsdorf et al., 2022).

## Poland

Historically, Poland has demonstrated a strong interest in applied behaviour analysis (ABA) for more than two decades: as of 2021, 22 professionals in the country have received BACB certificates, including one BCBA-D and one BCaBA. Since the 1990s, numerous institutions have been implementing ABA interventions for people with autism.

Recognition of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) in educational institutions is becoming more and more evident. There are many kindergartens, schools and special centres in major Polish cities that use ABA principles. In addition, postgraduate studies in ABA are available at several universities, including the University of Social Sciences and Humanities and the University of Gdańsk (Keenan et al., 2022).

In addition there are two key professional associations that have been established in Poland in recent years. These are the Polish Association of Behavioural Therapy (PABT) and the Polish Society of Behavioural Psychology (PSBP), which were established in 2002. The aim of these organisations is to develop the field of behavioural therapy, promote training and disseminate knowledge about effective therapeutic methods.

In 2020, PABT organised specialised training courses with over 1000 participants. In addition, a Polish licence for behavioural therapists is currently being developed to standardise the training and practice of behavioural therapists in Poland. Despite the expansion of the field, the lack of official recognition and regulation of behavioural analysts is a significant challenge, requiring ongoing efforts to raise professional standards and training.



Despite these achievements, several systemic problems hinder the widespread adoption of ABA in Poland. Firstly, there is a significant shortage of qualified professionals. Secondly, the demand for ABA services far exceeds the supply of certified practitioners. Thirdly, the lack of a strong domestic training infrastructure means that many professionals have to seek certification abroad, which is both time-consuming and expensive. Fourthly, there are also problems in terms of accessibility of these services to the public. The resource-intensive nature of ABA therapy, coupled with its prevalence in private services, often renders it unaffordable for many families. State health insurance programmes typically exclude ABA coverage, thereby placing the financial burden on parents.

Notwithstanding government support, there remains limited awareness of the evidence-based effectiveness of ABA among educators, health professionals and policymakers. Misconceptions about its methods and outcomes can give rise to scepticism or resistance, particularly within traditional educational and healthcare settings.

Furthermore, the absence of a unified regulatory framework governing the practice of ABA in Poland has resulted in a lack of standardisation in the quality of services provided. The establishment of a unified system of certification, supervision and ethical standards is essential to ensure consistent and effective implementation (Keenan et al., 2022).

## Ukraine

The development of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in Ukraine began with parent-led initiatives, as concerned parents organized ABA courses to address the growing need for evidence-based interventions for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Previously, therapeutic options were limited to non-standard methods, often relying on traditional or alternative approaches. However, parental advocacy and exposure to international best practices contributed to increased awareness of ASD and ABA-based interventions. Many Ukrainian families seeking effective treatments consulted online resources and attended seminars conducted by international and local experts.

A significant milestone in the development of ABA in Ukraine was the launch of a BCBA exam preparation program, initiated by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). This program led to the first graduation of ABA-trained specialists in 2012.

In 2015, a group of prominent behavior analysts in Ukraine established the Ukrainian Association of Behavior Analysts (UABA), a nonprofit organization aimed at promoting ABA education, training, and research. The following year, Ukraine hosted its first international conference on behavior analysis, marking an important step in the field's professionalization. Between 2015 and



2021, numerous workshops, webinars, and national conferences were conducted to increase awareness and accessibility of ABA services. In 2019, Ukraine saw the certification of its first two BCBAs, both of whom joined the UABA board. As of early 2022, approximately ten ABA centers were operating across Ukraine (Keenan et al., 2022).

However, the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 severely disrupted the expansion of ABA services. Many UABA members were forced to flee the country, but they continued practicing ABA remotely and actively contributed to the association's work. They remain engaged in training initiatives and program development for future ABA specialists. Despite these efforts, Ukraine has yet to establish accredited ABA programs at universities, and current ABA courses continue to be delivered privately rather than within the higher education system.

Despite ongoing challenges, ABA in Ukraine continues to develop. New ABA centers are emerging, and training seminars are being held to educate professionals and families about ABA-based interventions and ethical service delivery. However, most progress has been concentrated in urban areas such as Kyiv, Lviv, and Kharkiv, while rural regions remain underserved.

The current state of ABA in Ukraine can be classified into three main areas:

## 1. Professional Development

- **Training and Certification:** The number of Ukrainian professionals seeking international ABA certification is increasing. However, due to the lack of domestic certification pathways, most ABA training remains online or conducted abroad.
- **Workshops and Seminars:** Various advocacy groups and organizations frequently organize seminars and workshops introducing ABA principles to educators, therapists, and parents.
- **Ukrainian Association of Behavior Analysts (UABA):** The UABA has set key objectives, including the formal recognition of the behavior analyst profession and the development of a national ABA training program offering bachelor's and master's degrees in ABA. The association actively seeks integration with the broader European ABA professional community. Currently, UABA has 70 professionals, including behavior analysts and technicians, and plans to continue expanding its membership and conducting monthly webinars for professionals.

## 2. Service Delivery

- **Private Therapy Centers:** The majority of ABA services in Ukraine are privately funded and provided through therapy centers specializing in autism treatment. These centers are predominantly located in major cities, leaving rural areas with little or no access to ABA services.



- Home-Based Interventions: Some families choose home-based ABA programs, often guided by online resources and remote consultations with certified professionals.

### 3. Parent Advocacy and Support Networks

- Parents play a crucial role in promoting ABA awareness and advocating for policy changes.
- Advocacy groups and social media platforms serve as key channels for sharing information, organizing community events, and advocating for increased ABA accessibility.

Despite these advancements, regulation of ABA services remains a challenge. Unethical service provision and unqualified individuals falsely presenting themselves as behavior analysts pose risks to the credibility and effectiveness of ABA.

As Ukraine continues to integrate evidence-based interventions such as ABA, there is significant potential to enhance the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. With continued efforts, ABA could become a core component of therapeutic and educational interventions, fully integrated into the practices of psychologists, special educators, and social workers.

## Role of Applied Behavior Analysis in Inclusion

As can be seen from this report, inclusion, particularly in education and social integration, remains a priority across Europe. Rooted in the principles of equality and non-discrimination, inclusion aims to provide equal opportunities for individuals with diverse needs, including those with disabilities. Notwithstanding the legislative support for the inclusion of diverse groups in European countries, practical challenges persist. Many educational institutions and workplaces across Europe lack the requisite resources to adequately support the diverse needs of their student and employee populations. Common barriers include insufficient training for educators and staff on inclusive practices, limited access to individualized interventions, and variability in inclusion implementation across regions and countries.

ABA is a scientifically validated approach that is pivotal in supporting inclusion focusing on improving social, communication, and learning skills through positive reinforcement. In Europe, the adoption of ABA within inclusive educational settings varies significantly across countries due to differences in educational policies, availability of trained professionals, and cultural acceptance of ABA methodologies.



# Results of interviews with specialists about their experience with inclusive settings and their experience with behavioral programs

## Survey of Potential Trainers

The primary objective of this project is to develop educational behavioral courses aimed at enhancing the preparedness of pre-service and in-service educators, social workers, and other professionals working in inclusive settings across partner countries. To ensure that the training materials align with the needs of the target audience, a needs assessment was conducted to determine the necessity for training, the specific content required, and the most effective format for course delivery.

To achieve this, a structured interview survey was conducted using a 20-question questionnaire designed to explore three key domains:

- Personal and professional background.
- Work experience and training in ABA.
- Knowledge and familiarity with ABA principles.

The survey was administered to both potential trainers and trainees, ensuring a comprehensive dataset on the awareness and accessibility of ABA training in their respective countries. At least one social worker, special education specialist, and psychologist from each partner country participated in the study. A total of 20 professionals were interviewed, with all interviews being audio-recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

The structured interview process followed a standardized protocol:

1. Introduction and explanation of the interview's purpose.
2. Obtaining informed consent for participation and audio recording.
3. Conducting the interview, ensuring clarity, and allowing elaboration where needed.
4. Closing the interview with a summary and outlining next steps.

A qualitative analysis was conducted to assess specialists' awareness of ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) educational programs and their experience using ABA methods in their respective countries. The findings provide insight into the accessibility of ABA education, the practical application of ABA techniques, and the challenges professionals face in inclusive settings.





## Integration of ABA in Professional Training

Some participants reported that ABA was a fundamental component of their training, while others indicated that it was offered only as an elective or was entirely absent from their education. Several professionals noted that behavioral training was fragmented and not systematically integrated into university programs.

## Participation in ABA-Related Training Programs

- Many specialists pursued additional ABA training outside their formal education through postgraduate courses, private workshops, or NGO-organized events.
- Some notable ABA programs attended by participants included:
  - "Behavioral Therapy in Theory and Practice."
  - Courses organized by specialized training institutions such as the Step by Step Foundation.
- A significant number of participants lacked formal ABA education, highlighting accessibility barriers in many partner countries.

## Institutions Providing ABA Training

- ABA-related courses were mainly provided by universities (e.g., SWPS University, Masaryk University) and private organizations.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played a crucial role in ABA education, offering specialized training to professionals and parents.

## Experience Using ABA in Professional Settings

**Years of Experience:** Participants reported working with behavioral challenges for periods ranging from 3 to over 13 years.

**Populations Served:** Many professionals had extensive experience working with neurodiverse individuals, including those with autism and developmental disabilities.

## Common Behavioral Challenges Encountered

- Aggression (hitting, kicking, verbal aggression).
- Self-injurious behaviors.
- Refusal to follow instructions.
- Severe emotional dysregulation and eating disorders.





## Training Needs and Accessibility

**Gaps in ABA Education:** Many participants acknowledged a lack of formal training in ABA, with limited access to structured courses and practical experience.

**Interest in Expanding ABA Knowledge:** A majority of professionals expressed a strong desire for further training in modern ABA techniques.

## Challenges in Accessing ABA Training:

- ABA courses were often not integrated into standard education programs.
- Limited availability of certified ABA trainers in partner countries.
- Cost and accessibility barriers to international certification.

## Work Environments and Specializations

Participants held a range of academic degrees, including Master's and Ph.D. degrees in psychology, education, rehabilitation, and applied behavior analysis (ABA). The respondents worked in diverse roles, such as:

- Preschool directors and school administrators.
- Clinical supervisors and private practitioners.
- University lecturers and academic researchers.
- The professionals were employed in a variety of environments, including:
  - Kindergartens and special education schools.
  - Private therapy centers.
  - University departments specializing in behavioral science.

## Summary of Key Insights:

- Awareness of ABA educational programs and methods is inconsistent, with notable gaps in accessibility and formal training.
- Many participants have significant practical experience but express a need for more structured and advanced ABA training.
- A majority of participants encounter a wide spectrum of challenging behaviors in their work, underscoring the importance of ABA techniques in their practice.
- Collaboration with NGOs and academic institutions plays a crucial role in providing ABA training, but broader integration into standard education systems may be needed.



## Conclusion

The awareness and accessibility of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) educational programs vary significantly across partner countries, with some regions offering structured courses while others lack formal training altogether. Many professionals working in inclusive education possess practical experience but express a strong need for more structured and advanced ABA training. The demand for ABA interventions is evident, as the majority of participants regularly encounter a wide spectrum of challenging behaviors, such as aggression, self-injury, and noncompliance. These findings underscore the critical role of ABA techniques in supporting educators and specialists in inclusive settings.

While collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions has facilitated access to ABA training in certain regions, broader integration into university curricula and national education systems is necessary to ensure sustainable and standardized implementation. The disparity in ABA training availability across countries calls for targeted efforts to address these gaps and enhance the overall quality of behavioral support services.

Based on the qualitative analysis of interviews, the development of a structured training curriculum for ABA is both necessary and timely. The proposed training program will focus on expanding access to formal ABA courses and workshops, particularly in underrepresented regions. Practical components, such as hands-on training and case studies, will be emphasized to enhance the applicability of ABA techniques in real-world educational and therapeutic settings. Additionally, fostering partnerships between universities, NGOs, and private organizations will be essential in standardizing and disseminating ABA knowledge. Encouraging professionals to pursue continuous education in ABA will ensure that they remain equipped to address evolving challenges in inclusive education.

## Comparison of Approaches to Inclusive Education and Behavioral Programs in Partner Countries

Comprehensive statistical data detailing the exact percentage of ABA utilization during the inclusion stage across Europe is limited. However, several studies and reports provide insights into the prevalence and application of ABA in various European contexts:



The extent to which ABA is integrated into inclusive education and behavioral support systems varies across Europe. While comprehensive statistical data on ABA utilization remains limited, several studies and reports provide valuable insights into its application in different contexts.

- **Czech Republic:** Surveys indicate that while ABA practices are present, their implementation is not yet widespread. This highlights the need for broader adoption and increased training opportunities.
- **Higher Education and Training:** There is a growing movement across Europe to standardize ABA training and integrate it into university programs for autism professionals. Unified training approaches can enhance the quality and consistency of ABA services in inclusive education.
- **Professional Recognition:** The recognition of behavior analysts as professionals differs across European countries. Some nations have established certification processes, while others lack formal pathways for ABA practitioners, affecting the availability and quality of services in inclusive settings.

The adoption of ABA within inclusive education is influenced by various factors, including national education policies, funding availability, and societal perceptions of behavioral interventions. While some countries have made significant strides in incorporating ABA into their education systems, others remain in the early stages of adoption. Addressing these disparities requires concerted efforts to standardize training, promote professional recognition, and increase public awareness of ABA's benefits.

In conclusion, ABA is widely recognized as an effective intervention for supporting individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in inclusive settings. However, its level of utilization during the inclusion stage varies across Europe. Future initiatives should prioritize efforts to harmonize training, enhance certification opportunities, and improve awareness to ensure that ABA practices are effectively integrated into educational and therapeutic frameworks throughout the continent.

## Future Work

The next phase of this project involves the development of a comprehensive Curriculum for the training program, ensuring accessibility to ABA education for a broader audience. The structured curriculum will encompass key topics essential for effective behavior analysis training, including:



- Concepts and principles of behavior analysis
- Basics of assessment and application of behavioral change methods
- Verbal behavior
- Basics of Behavioral Measurement
- Fundamentals of intervention and implementation of applied behavioral analysis programs I
- Fundamentals of intervention and implementation of applied behavioral analysis programs II
- Reducing challenging behaviors
- Professional and ethical principles for behavioral techniques
- Inclusion

### Curriculum Structure

Each lesson will consist of two lectures with structured learning materials, including:

- Two one-hour Presentations with an accompanying script and guided notes (fill-in-the-gap format)
- Short reading materials providing additional information related to the topic
- Applied examples to enhance comprehension
- Quizzes to measure progress and understanding

The qualitative analysis yielded findings that have established the basis for the development of a comprehensive training Curriculum. The Curriculum is being adapted to align with the e-learning course format, with the objective of enhancing accessibility for a broader audience comprising pre-service and in-service teachers, social workers, and other helping professionals. The curriculum content, as outlined in output number 2, will be utilized to develop e-learning materials intended for asynchronous learning. These materials will encompass audio and video lectures, presentations, exemplars of protocols, reading materials, and online tests.

As stipulated by the project's guidelines, the Curriculum is to be adapted to align with the E-learning course format. This adaptation is intended to enhance accessibility for a broader audience, comprising pre-service and in-service teachers, social workers, and other helping professionals. The project plan entails the utilization of curriculum content for the development of e-learning materials, which will be employed for asynchronous learning. This learning will encompass audio and video lectures, presentations, exemplars of protocols, reading materials, and online tests. The materials will be made available to a diverse group of individuals, including trainers, partner academic staff from



Ukrainian and North Macedonian higher education institutions, pre-service and in-service teachers, psychologists, social workers, and students of higher education institutions.

In the future, the development of materials for in-depth study of specific topics may be undertaken. Furthermore, the implementation of a training course using the E-learning platform for specialists with practical training is a possibility.

The project also includes an in-person training of partners' high educational institution academic staff, specializing in inclusion and behavior analysis. The team of experts will train trainers who will in turn teach students at universities, as well as teachers, social workers, and other professionals working in the field of education, to use the curriculum and e-learning platform in their daily practice. This training will include in-person training on the use of behavioral techniques to support positive behavior.

The project's overarching objective is to ensure a lasting impact on inclusive education and behavioral support services across partner regions by equipping educators and professionals with essential ABA knowledge.

Thus, further support for improving the provision of social, psychological and educational services can be expanded by developing and adding programs that provide in-depth training in behavioral interventions.



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*ПРАВИЛНИК ЗА ФУНКЦИОНАЛНАТА ПРОЦЕНКА. МИНИСТЕРСТВО ЗА ТРУД И СОЦИЈАЛНА ПОЛИТИКА. (2023). Службен Весник На Република Северна Македонија Бр. 104/19, 146/19, 275/19, 302/20, 311/20, 163/21, 249/21, 99/22 И 236/22.*

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*УПАТСТВО за начинот на соработка помеѓу основните училишта со ресурсен центар, центрите за поддршка на учењето и другите основни училишта. (2020). Службен Весник На Република Северна Македонија Бр. 161/19 И 229/20.*

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