



*Strategy and Action Plan of Special Needs Education,  
for the years 2009-2011*

**Tbilisi**

**2008**



## Definitions of Terms

**Additional individual work** - work of the teacher for the purpose of achievement of goals of the national plan, apart from the lessons (hours) determined by the national and school educational plans.

**Temporary supplementary classes** - means the supplementary classes, temporarily established in accordance with educational needs of the students, where they are provided with an opportunity to overcome the difficulties, arisen during the learning process, e.g. lagging behind in a certain subject due to illness or other causes, catch-up classes, etc. The necessity of existence of additional classes disappears, when all the students have overcome their learning difficulties.

**Daycare center** - state program for facilitating integration and adaptation of the people with disabilities, approved by the order of the Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, which envisages development of daycare centers of various profiles, that will contribute to individual development of the people with disabilities (including children) and their involvement in public life.

**Individual Educational Plan (IEP)** - is a written document, the content, volume and the rule for children with special educational needs of which are developed according to the level of academic preparation and interests of the student with special educational needs. The individual curriculum is compiled, assessed and reviewed by the multidisciplinary team of inclusive education, the parent of the student with special educational needs and, where possible, by the student with special educational needs himself/herself. The individual curriculum is based on the national curriculum and takes into account all the educational needs of the student with special educational needs, as well as the ways for satisfying these needs and all the additional activities, which are necessary for achieving the goals, envisaged by the individual curriculum.

**Inclusive education** - implies involving the students with all types of special educational needs in the mainstream education, along with their peers. Inclusive education also implies teaching the students with special educational needs based on individual and/or modified curricula.

**Multidisciplinary team of inclusive education** - is a team of specialists, which includes a psychologist, an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, a special teacher and a general education teacher. Composition of the multidisciplinary team may change according to necessities. The following specialists can also be invited into the team composition: a neurologist, a psychiatrist, an audiology teacher and/or any other specialist. A school may have a permanently functioning multidisciplinary team within its school staff. **Mobile multidisciplinary teams** may also exist on the premises of the management bodies of the educational system (Ministry, resource-center).

**Functions of the multidisciplinary team of inclusive education are:** a) Identifying and evaluating the children with special educational needs; defining their individual needs and abilities; b) Determining the educational interests of the child with special educational needs, based on assessment, and providing recommendations to parents for selection of the educational institution; c) Providing consultations to schools for developing individual educational plans and effectively introducing them into educational practice; d) Practical and methodological assistance to schools in implementation of the projects for introducing and developing inclusive education; forming a group in the school, which will be working on the issues of inclusive education; e) Monitoring and assessment of academic and social achievements of the children with special educational needs, involved in the learning process in schools; identifying the factors which hinder inclusive education; developing the ways for resolving problems and the recommendations, which will define the actions, necessary for effectively implementing future activities. f) Identifying the children with special educational needs from databases of the resource-centers, district polyclinics and social security departments; supplementing the existing database.

**Integrated class** - a class consisting of the children with special educational needs, where studies are conducted based on a special corrective program and which is located within the space (building) of a general educational school. Students of the integrated class are involved in all of the school activities (field trips, celebrations, exhibitions, etc.), apart from the educational process.

**Maximally supportive and least restrictive environment** - implies that absolute majority of the children with special educational needs receive education together with their peers, who do not have special educational needs and that children with special educational needs are redistributed to specialized schools only in the cases when educational needs of the child are so diverse and acute, that they cannot be satisfied in a general educational space.

**Modified curriculum** - a component part of the national curriculum - a different educational plan for the students with special educational needs.

**Partial inclusion** - refers to the special timetables of the student with special educational needs, in accordance with which this student attends only the lessons envisaged by his/her individual curriculum.

**Resource room** - is a room, existing within the space of the schools of mainstream education, which is equipped with all the material-technical means that are necessary for meeting special educational needs of students: adapted furniture, various visual teaching aids, audio-video equipment, computer, printer, copier. Resource room is served by the school psychologist, special teacher, speech therapist and all those teachers, who take part in the process of inclusive education of the children with special educational needs. Resource room is a part of the timetables of students with special educational needs, where they are provided with an opportunity to rest, according to

necessity, or to study individually and/or in groups. Frequency and duration of the presence of the student with special educational needs in the resource room is defined by his/her individual curriculum.

**'Full' inclusion** – refers to the timetables of student with special educational needs, according to which s/he attends all lessons.

**Child (student) with special educational needs** – all the children, who are characterized by the following: 1. physical and mental development disorders; 2. visual and hearing disorders; 3. speech, behavior and emotional development disorders; 4. those who need long-term treatment/hospitalization; 5. those who represent national minorities; 6. those who are vulnerable and 7. those are threatened by being excluded from the educational process, due to learning difficulties.

**Identifying and evaluating children with special educational needs** – identification of the child with special educational needs implies revealing and determining disorders related to psychical development and learning difficulties of the child, while evaluation refers to defining the nature, quality and causes of these disorders.

**Specialized school** – a school, which conducts special and corrective educational programs, as well as the upbringing activities of the children deprived of parental care and the children with special educational needs.

**Special teacher** – is a teacher with higher education, who is thoroughly well-acquainted with the issues of upbringing, development, education of the children with special educational needs, as well as with the issues of their integration into society. Special teacher is capable of using in practice the techniques of psycho-pedagogical teaching, pedagogically evaluating the students with special educational needs and compiling the individual educational plan. Functions of the special teacher also include helping and assisting teachers of the general educational school in the process of inclusive education of the children with special educational needs.

**Activities of a psychologist** – imply the following: conduct of psychological and pedagogical tests; interpreting the test (assessment) results; obtaining, integrating and interpreting all the information related to the child's behavior and learning; providing consultation to other members of the team, in order to plan the learning process to be carried out based on the information obtained as a result of testing, interviews with parents and behavior assessment and so that all of the child's educational needs are maximally taken into account; planning and conducting psychological consultations with children with special educational needs and their parents; planning the behavior improvement strategies, together with teachers.

**Children (students) with disabilities** – are the children, whose status is defined according to the diagnostic criteria of the category of people with disabilities. Specifically, such children, the vital functions of the body of which have been damaged

as a result of illness, trauma, delayed mental or physical development, which predetermines full or partial decrease of the learning ability and/or substantial complication of daily life, which leads to temporary or permanent disability of their capacities and the necessity of social protection.

*“The general educational schools, which are established based on the principles of inclusive education are the most effective route towards overcoming discriminative attitudes, creating a favorable environment, building an inclusive society and achieving the universal goals of education.”*

*Salamanca Declaration, UNESCO, 1994*

## **I. Introduction**

Receiving education is a fundamental right of all children. The state is obliged to ensure accessibility of education and equal opportunities for all children, regardless their needs, ethnic, religious or racial origin.

This Strategy has been developed based on the Constitution of Georgia, the Law of Georgia on General Education, the Law of Georgia on Vocational Education, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the national curriculum of Georgia for the years 2008-2009 and the international Program “Education For All”.

For a long time, homogeneity in the educational system was a natural phenomenon for Georgian society, which was part of the Soviet legacy. Children with special educational needs (hereinafter in the text: “children with SEN”) were strictly segregated from society and did not have the opportunity of receiving education in the mainstream educational environment, together with peers. Changes in the sphere of education of the children with special educational needs began to be implemented by the NGO sector from the year 1994, although this issue still remained beyond the scope of attention of the state.

Education of the children with SEN, was recognized by the state, as a priority, from the year 2004, when a reform of the education system began. Government of Norway provided substantial financial and methodological assistance to the process of introduction of inclusive education in Georgia. The National Curriculum and Assessment Center of the Ministry of Education and Science implemented the Project: “Introduction of Inclusive Education in 10 Schools of Tbilisi”, which “contributed greatly to integration of the children with disabilities and socially isolated children into society”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Monitoring Report of the Child’s Rights Committee, 2007.

Results of the project and experience of the NGOs made it apparent, that the state needs a uniform, agreed strategy and action plan in the sphere of education of the children with special educational needs, which must reflect the necessary legislative, administrative and methodological changes.

Educational needs of all children must be maximally reflected during planning and implementation of the national educational policy. In the sphere of education of children with special educational needs, countries are guided by the UNESCO Program “Education for All”, the goal of which is for all children, notwithstanding their educational needs, to have the following opportunities, by the year 2015:

- To study in a general educational school, located near the place of the child’s residence;
- To receive knowledge through diverse, flexible, academic and social skills-oriented educational programs;
- To be involved in an continuous educational process, including preschool education, vocational education, professional education and higher education;
- To fully participate in any aspect of the school and public life;
- To be an equal-rights student and to maximally develop his/her potential.

By striving towards the abovementioned long-term goals, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, as a result of multilateral consultations<sup>2</sup> and with support from the USAID and “Save the Children”, developed this Strategy and Action Plan for the years 2009-2011. The indicated period was defined as the transitional, preparatory stage of the process of achieving the long-term goals of education of the children with special educational needs. Through implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan of the transitional period, the Ministry will contribute to methodological and material-technical perfecting of specialized schools and will begin introduction and development of **inclusive education**<sup>3</sup>.

For the purpose of preparing the development and introduction of the Strategy, the Ministry will carry out several necessary measures. First of all, the Ministry will renounce the accepted **terminology** and introduce the term: “child with special educational needs (CWSED).”<sup>4</sup> **Introduction of the term CWSED** enables to avoid,

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<sup>2</sup> The 15-member working group on elaborating of inclusive education, formed on the premises of the Ministry’s Childcare Department, includes representatives of the Ministry, mainstream educational and specialized schools, University education, local and international NGOs and organizations of parents of the children with special educational needs.

<sup>3</sup> The researches, conducted in the 1990’s by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the sphere of education of the children with special educational needs, have made it clear, that the most successful and internationally recognized model of education of the children with SEN is inclusive education. Inclusive education is an approach, which ensures the accessibility, for all children, of the education corresponding to their capabilities and skills, in the context of general education, i.e. in mainstream educational schools.

<sup>4</sup> The Law on General Education, of 2005, and the National Curriculum of Georgia for the Years 2008-2009”.

within the education system, the division of children according to the status of disabilities, learning skill, social condition, nationality or any other characteristic.

Consequently, the Ministry defines the following children as the children with special educational needs:

- Children with disruptions of physical and mental development;
- Children with vision and hearing impairments;
- Children with speech, behavior and emotional development disorders;
- Children who need long-term treatment/hospitalization;
- Children who represent national minorities;
- Children who are vulnerable;
- Children who are threatened with being excluded from the educational process, due to learning difficulties.

Also, specialized and inclusive education of the children with SEN will not be successful and effective without adequate human/professional, material/technical and financial **resources being supplied**. At this stage, the Ministry will also turn specialized schools into educational **resource-units**, to which there will be assigned the task of facilitating education of the children with SEN, through sharing the approaches, methodologies and effective teaching strategies, developed by the Ministry.

## **II. Principles and Values of the Strategy**

The Ministry's Strategy for education of the children with special educational needs is based upon the following principles and values:

- The starting point of the educational policy are the educational interests of the child;
- It is necessary to ensure a high standard of education for all children;
- It is necessary to ensure equal opportunities for all students;
- Each student must be provided with the opportunity to study, together with peers, at a general educational school.

## **III. Goals of the Strategy**

The **main goals** of the Strategy of education for the children with SEN are as follows:

- To develop and introduce the **national model** of education for the children with SEN;
- To ensure accessibility of education for the children with SEN;
- To facilitate improvement of the quality of education of the children with SEN at the preschool, primary, basic, high-school, artisan and vocational education levels;
- To support formation, between the state sectors, of an agreed, uniform vision.

## **IV. Priorities of the Strategy**

The Strategy comprises the 8 priorities listed below:

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## 1. To develop the national model of education for the children with special educational needs

**Context and justification:** Currently there is a possibility of receiving formal education for the children with special educational needs in specialized schools in Georgia, while informal education can be received at the daycare centers. Inclusive education is accessible only to a small part of the children with SEN, while the majority of the children with SEN remain without any education at all. In exceptional cases, children receive education at home. Unfortunately, for the absolute majority of the children with SEN, there exists no adequate system of evaluating the educational needs, appropriate curricula or a favorable environment for their education. This situation is caused by the combination of many factors<sup>5</sup>, of which the main one is non-existence of the national model of education for the children with SEN, that would be oriented towards creating the optimal educational environment for the child, proceeding from his/her specific educational needs and in which there would be clearly defined the following: all possible forms<sup>6</sup> of education for the children with SEN and relevant standards.

In order for high-quality education to become accessible to all children, there has to be developed a national model of education for the children with SEN, the introduction and functioning of which will further be regulated by a normative Act and will be subject to monitoring. The national model of education for the children with SEN must include the following components:

- The system for identifying the children with SEN and assessing their educational needs;
- The criteria and system for recommending educational institutions/programs, based on the results of identification and assessment of the children with SEN;
- Professional standards for the teachers (special teachers) of education of the children with SEN;
- Standard rules for clarifying the types of inclusive education (integrated class, partial inclusion of the student with SEN in the general educational process, complete inclusion of the student with SEN in the general educational process and temporary auxiliary classes) and introducing them, with the following necessary minimum: list of necessary services; teaching materials and visual aids; the necessary level of knowledge of the school administration and teachers in inclusive education; responsibility of the administration and teachers, their work hours and defining other activities; relations with educational resource-centers; requirements

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<sup>5</sup> Review and analysis of the Inclusive Education Policies and Practice: Assessment of existing situation in Georgia and in other European and non European countries, Report USAID, Save the Children, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Inclusive education, specialized education, informal education at daycare centers and home education.



towards assisting personnel and their work hours; list of auxiliary means, such as transportation, the minimum of physical adaptation of the environment, etc.

- Mechanisms for funding education of the children with special educational needs;
- Standard rules for managing the educational process of the students with SEN in conditions of general educational schools, specialized schools and daycare centers. The abovementioned rules include: the rules for compiling, implementing and monitoring individual educational plans; the rules for evaluating academic achievements of students and transferring them to the next level;
- The system of attestation of the students with SEN.

**Objectives:** Consequently, it is necessary for a group of experts on education of the children with SEN to develop the national model of education of the children with SEN, described above, and components of the indicated model should be established as strategic priorities for action.

### **Implementation:**

It is necessary to undertake the following actions:

- a) To form a group of experts on education of the children with SEN;
- b) Work of the expert group must be based upon research, evidence and best experience of the education for the children with SEN;
- c) The expert group should develop the national model of education for the children with SEN and it must be submitted for discussion by the public, including schools, educational resource-centers and the Ministry;
- d) The expert group should also develop and disseminate, from the name of the Ministry, a glossary of the terminology related to education of the children with SEN.

## **2. To introduce the national model of education for the children with special educational needs**

**Context and justification:** Development and pilot testing of the national model of education for the children with SEN, its guidelines, identification tool and relevant regulatory mechanisms will make it possible to introduce inclusive education on the scale of whole Georgia, as well as to strengthen the currently existing practice of inclusive education.

**Objective:** To begin introduction of the national model of education for the children with SEN, on the scale of the country.

### **Implementation:**

It is necessary to undertake the following actions:

- a) Under management of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, with assistance from the expert group and resource-centers, to undertake complete piloting of the national model in all 9 regions of Georgia, while observing relevant regulations and guidelines;

- b) Program grants should be allocated from the Ministry of Education and Science to those general educational schools, which have started or are starting the process of introduction of inclusive education. Such program grants can be allocated for the purpose of inviting a specialist to the school, for purchasing textbooks and visual aids, adapting the educational environment and for special measures;
- c) Results of the piloting should be submitted for discussion by the public, including schools, educational resource-centers and the Ministry;
- d) Introduction of the national model should be started, for which purpose there should be developed a plan for re-training of the teachers' staff, a plan for forming and preparing multidisciplinary teams, a plan for re-training the school administrations and resource-centers;
- e) The abovementioned re-training plans should be implemented in all the schools and districts of Georgia;
- f) Monitoring of the process of introduction of inclusive education should be conducted, relevant analysis and recommendations should be prepared and annual reports should be produced.

### **3. Regulations and guidelines of education for the children with special educational needs**

**Context and justification:** Introduction of the national model, in itself, implies that, along with the national model, there must be developed the regulations, necessary for its introduction and functioning, a list of rights and obligations and normative requirements. Without such mandatory Acts, it will be impossible to introduce the national model.

**Objective:** It is necessary to create the regulations, guidelines and funding mechanisms, corresponding to the inclusive and special education. These changes should include the following:

- Determining the structure of management of inclusive and special education, defining the units, duties and functions, included in it;
- Defining the funding mechanisms of inclusive and special education;
- List of the rights and obligations of the administrations and teachers of general educational and specialized schools;
- List of the rights and obligations of parents and/or caregivers;
- Rules and requirements for preparing/re-training and certification of professional staff;
- The rule and criteria for accepting the children with SEN into general educational schools, specialized schools and daycare centers;
- The rule for mobility of education of the children with SEN, description of the so-called "system of free circulation" and the norms and measures necessary for its implementation;

- Effective mechanism for relations and coordination between agencies.

#### **Implementation:**

- a) The expert group should develop the relevant guidelines, regulations and requirements;
- b) Guidelines, regulations and requirements must be discussed by the multidisciplinary teams, resource-centers and the Ministry;
- c) Final approval of the guidelines, regulations and requirements should take place, they should be published and disseminated to all the educational institutions and resource-centers.

#### **4. Introduction of the tool and system for identifying the children with SEN and assessing their educational needs**

**Context and justification:** Identification of the children with SEN and assessment of their educational needs does not take place in Georgia; decisions related to education of the children with SEN depend completely upon whether they have the disability status. Planning of the state policy through such an approach may predetermine incorrect distribution of resources. For example, many children with the status of ‘people with disabilities’, such as for example those with diabetes or asthma, do not have special educational needs<sup>7</sup>; on the other hand, children who manifest the syndromes of lack of concentration and of hyperactivity, dyslexia, or other reading, writing or speech disorders, do not have the status of persons with disabilities, although they do have special needs in terms of education. Children representing national minorities and vulnerable groups of population (street children, IDPs, etc.), as well as all those children, who are facing difficulties in the learning process, due to various reasons, also require assessment and identification of educational needs.

Non-existence of identification of educational needs significantly hampers development of the necessary educational recommendations and leaves the parents in an unclear situation. The latter are unable to make an informed choice as to where should their children be studying: in a general educational or a special school, at home or at a daycare center.

Educational work of the currently existing specialized schools is also substantially hampered exactly due to non-existence of a system of identification of needs.<sup>8</sup> Children are not being accepted into these schools based on any standard, fair and universally acceptable system; it is also impossible to determine capabilities of the child and to develop the individual plan for his/her education.

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<sup>7</sup> The study, conducted in 2008, in Kutaisi by the NGO Save the Children and the Coalition for Independent Living demonstrated that only 45 of 142 children with a disability status (within the age category of 5-12 years), had special educational needs, 22 of which were not attending school.

<sup>8</sup> There is the total of 13 specialized schools in Georgia.

Due to lack of a system of identification of educational needs, creation of a system of assessment of education and progress of education of the child is also being delayed, non-existence of which, in its turn, makes it impossible to objectively evaluate the results of education and to introduce a system of free educational plan of the child within the educational space.

**Objectives:** Consequently, it is necessary to:

1. Create a valid and standardized tool for assessment of educational needs of the child, which will single out the strengths and weaknesses of the child's skills and capabilities and will evaluate the following: a) highest psychical functions of the child, such as perception, attention, memory and speech; b) academic functions, such as writing, reading, counting; c) motor and emotional functions and d) adaptation, self-serving, daily life and social skills;
2. Development and introduction of such tools on the scale of the country will create the following possibilities: each student will be able to become maximally involved in the educational process; it will be possible to effectively plan the programs supporting education of the children with SEN, to improve the mechanism of funding inclusive education and to create an accurate database of the children with special educational needs.
3. Develop the regulations and procedures for identification and assessment of the children with SEN; define the groups, responsible for and authorized to determine the with SEN status.

**Implementation:** It is necessary to undertake the following actions:

- a) The expert group on education of the children with SEN, based on review, adaptation and standardization of various existing tests, should develop a tool for identifying the needs of the children with SEN and the methods for its introduction. This tool should then be submitted for discussion by the public, including schools, educational resource-centers and the Ministry;
- b) The tool should be pilot-tested in all 9 regions of Georgia;
- c) The final, tested version of the tool for identifying the children with SEN and assessing their educational needs should be approved and multidisciplinary teams should begin studying and introducing this tool;
- d) Multidisciplinary teams should be formed (where they exist – strengthened) on the premises of every educational resource-center in Georgia, so that in the future the following functions may be imposed upon them:
  - Recommending identification of educational needs of the children with SEN and the relevant form of education;
  - Assessing the knowledge and skills of the children with SEN;
- e) Supporting teachers in the process of development of individual educational plan;
- f) Monitoring of the child's educational achievements;

- g) Providing assistance to general educational schools in formation of multidisciplinary teams and facilitation of their professional development;
- h) Activities of the currently functioning multidisciplinary teams should be strengthened, so that they can become capable of introducing the national model of education for the children with SEN in their pilot schools and facilitate pilot-testing in other, minimum three neighboring schools.

## **5. University education and professional development of teachers**

**Context and justification:** The educational system is experiencing a serious shortage of the SEN specialists. The educational system does not possess a sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers, psychologists and speech therapists. The existing situation is caused by a combination of factors, the most significant of which is the generally low social status and insufficient remuneration for the profession of teachers.

**Objective:** To create a strong school of professional staff of inclusive and special education in Georgia and to establish professional standards of special teacher. In order to introduce humane approaches of inclusive and special education, which are new for Georgia, it is necessary to develop long-term programs for preparation of the specialists of this sphere. Only by means of a sufficient number of well-educated specialists will it be possible to introduce those approaches, which are recognized by the UN Convention and are being successfully implemented in other countries since a long time ago.

**Implementation:** Through cooperation of universities and the Ministry, a working group should be formed, which will work on the following issues:

- Within the Bachelor's and Master's educational programs there should be introduced and/or intensified teaching of the subjects, necessary for working with the children with SEN; teaching of the basics of inclusive and special education should be introduced as a mandatory module; new modules and textbooks should be created, including methodological educational materials;
- A university program of special educational should be created, with awarding of the relevant degree (teacher or specialist of special education);
- Professional and educational standards and a system of certification of teachers of special education should be created; accelerated certification training courses should be introduced;
- Preparing an accredited program/curriculum for re-training individuals as specialists of special education; developing new modules and a textbook;
- Introducing mandatory training courses for professional development of teachers of specialized schools;
- Introducing mandatory training courses for acquainting the teachers of general educational schools with the principles and practice of education for the children with SEN;
- Training courses for intensive increase of qualification should be introduced in those schools, where inclusive education has been or is being introduced;

- Popularization of profession of the general and special education teacher;
- Coordination and intensification of joint work between inclusive, mainstream educational and special schools and educational faculties of the university, for the purpose of planning and implementation of field practical studies of the students.

## 6. Improving the quality of education in specialized schools

**Context and justification:** Simultaneously with recognizing the priority of inclusive education for the children with SEN, the state is aware that mainstream educational schools cannot ensure meeting of all the types of educational needs. It is necessary to ensure accessibility of special (non-inclusive) education through specialized schools. There are 926 students in 13 specialized schools of Georgia. They are funded with vouchers. The existing specialized schools have, as a rule, small staff, which, in conditions of the existing mechanisms of funding, creates the motivation to increase the number of children mechanically, and causes a negative attitude towards inclusive education, as far as possible transfer of a student to a mainstream educational school means the loss of the voucher.<sup>9</sup>

The majority of the schools are in quite grave conditions, in terms of both material-technical and methodological development. Teaching methods have almost not changed at all since the 1960's. There is a significant shortage of teaching materials, textbooks (especially the expensive ones, in Brail script) and visual aids, not to mention modern technical equipment. It is difficult for the teachers to develop modified programs, which would fit the uniform national educational curriculum, due to scarcity of modern methods and instructions. All of the abovementioned clearly raises the necessity of introducing training and professional development courses for teachers.

In many countries of the world, specialized schools are the main resource for facilitating development of inclusive education. It is exactly these schools that are the leaders, in terms of the teaching strategies, tailored educational plans, as well as the knowledge and experience related to individual approaches towards educational needs of the child. It is necessary to give a similar function to specialized schools in Georgia as well.

**Objective:** Improvement of the quality of education in specialized schools, so that they may turn into resource-units of inclusive education in the future.

**Implementation:** In order to overcome this situation, a program for improvement of the educational process in specialized schools and for facilitating

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<sup>9</sup> Review and analysis of the Inclusive Education Policies and Practice: Assessment of existing situation in Georgia and in other European and non European countries, Report USAID, Save the Children, 2008.

development/introduction of new methodologies must be implemented. The indicated program should include following activities:

- Research of the needs of specialized schools, from the point of view of quality of education;
- Assessment of effectiveness of the existing methodologies and identification of modern methods (and relevant specialists);
- Introduction of experimental classes in specialized schools, for testing new methods and approaches;
- Preparing methodical guidebooks for modifying and simplifying the national curriculum, as well as for compiling individual curricula for specialized schools, in each of the following spheres: mental retardation, visual and hearing disorders, difficulties in communication, etc.
- Introducing the methods and techniques for developing individual educational plans, based on the assessment outcomes of students;
- Introducing models of integrated education and strategies for development of cognitive, academic, communication and functional skills;
- Introducing the system of evaluating academic achievements and progress;
- Developing the plans of extracurricular activities of informal education for specialized schools and daycare centers;
- Introducing cooperation between specialized schools and general educational schools, for the purpose of facilitating inclusive education;
- Updating the material-technical basis of special schools.

## **7. Early education of the children with special educational needs**

**Context and justification:** It is universally acknowledged, that early identification and rehabilitation of the child's special educational needs plays a decisive role in his/her further development. Such intervention at preschool age (0 to 5 years) also enables to considerably diminish the future educational needs of the child.

**Objective:** Development of the program of early education of the children with SEN, in order to stimulate the child's development and education as early as possible.

**Implementation:** Government of Georgia has approved the national Strategy and Action Plan for Early Child Development for the years 2007-2009. The measures defined in the indicated plan must ensure accessibility, fairness and inclusiveness of high-quality preschool education.

In order for inclusive education of the children with SEN to be conducted effectively, the following is necessary: 1. Introduction of the models of early development of children; 2. Facilitation of the programs of education for the children with SEN in preschool upbringing institutions; 3. Developing the methods and guidebook of education of the children with SEN; 4. Developing the rule and procedures for

transferring the children with SEN from early intervention and education centers to schools.

For effectiveness of early intervention and education for the children with SEN, it is important to establish direct contact and conduct coordinated work between the early intervention and education centers, kindergartens, specialized and inclusive schools.

## **8. Vocational education of the students with special educational needs**

**Context and justification:** Vocational education and employment of the persons with disabilities poses a serious problem in any age group. Specialized schools and daycare centers include many young people aged from 18 to 28. For example, 34 of 139 students of the Tbilisi public school No.198 for children with intellectual disabilities, are aged from 17 to 28.<sup>10</sup> Such situation, apart from requiring additional state resources, also hampers development of the skills of independent living of the young people themselves, their self-realization and integration.

**Objective:** For the purpose of improving this situation, it is necessary to introduce a system of vocational education of the children with SEN in specialized schools, as well as in general educational schools and centers of professional education.

**Implementation:** Revival of vocational education began in Georgia from the year 2006. In 2007, the Ministry of Education started the initiative of integration of vocational education, which implies introduction of courses of vocational education, as an optional class, in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades.

Program for facilitating vocational education envisages introduction of such education, during the school year 2008-2009, in up to 40 schools of Georgia; in the future, this number is going to increase. Funding will be provided through grants, based on competition, by the Ministry, based on the concepts of development of vocational education, submitted by schools to the Ministry.

Vocational education of the children with SEN must become fully integrated with the indicated initiative of the Ministry. One of the important criteria for evaluation of the grant applications must be assessment of their inclusiveness and determining, to what extent does the program satisfy the vocational education needs of the children with SEN ; the resources (including human resources) necessary for individual assessment of the children with SEN and compiling the educational curriculum must be taken into account.

Apart from the above, it is important to establish inclusive vocational educational workshops and to develop training programs, where the students with SEN and their peers will have the opportunity of learning together and experiencing professional

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<sup>10</sup> Review and analysis of the Inclusive Education Policies and Practice: Assessment of existing situation in Georgia and in other European and non European countries, Report USAID, SAVE the CHILDREN, 2008.



growth. It is also necessary to establish close coordination between special and mainstream educational schools and centers of professional education, for the purpose of providing students with professional education, which implies mutual sharing of professional experience and branch expertise. The already existing state professional education centers should take into account the vocational education needs of the students with SEN and plan their curricula in such a way, so as to provide the children with SEN with vocational education programs, to introduce appropriate methodologies and adapt the physical environment of professional education centers.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia recognizes, that ensuring accessibility of education and creating favorable educational environment and conditions is especially important for those children who, due to their special educational needs, either remain completely outside of the educational process or receive inadequate education. In order for educational needs of all children to be fully reflected in the process of planning and implementation of the educational policy, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia has defined strategic priorities of education for the children with special educational needs and has developed the Action Plan, for the years 2009-2011, for ensuring implementation of the strategy.

### Action Plan

| Priority  | Activity  | Indicator   | Result  | Implementer   | Year      |
|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1. Developing the national model of education for the children with special educational needs | 1.1. Forming a group of experts on education of the children with SEN   | 1. Group of experts selected through competition (maximum 11 experts)<br>2. The group has started work                          | Implementation of the defined goals and objectives at a high professional level   | Department of Programs of the Ministry of Education and Science   | 2009      |
|   | 1.2 Developing the national model of education for the children with SEN and submitting it for discussion of schools, educational resource-centers and the Ministry | 1. National model of education for the children with SEN developed  | Education of the children with SEN will be implemented, on the scale of all Georgia, according to the uniform national model, i.e. high standards   | Group of experts on education of the children with SEN and the Department of Programs of the Ministry   | 2009      |
|   | 1.3 Developing a glossary of terminology, related to education of the children with SEN and disseminating it, from the name of the Ministry                         | 1. 5 000 copies of the glossary printed;<br>2. Glossary disseminated to the educational resource-centers and schools of Georgia | Specialists and teachers, working in the sphere of education for the children with SEN, as well as parents, on the scale of all Georgia, will become acquainted with the newest concepts and terms, recognized by the state | Group of experts on education of the children with SEN, the Department of Programs of the Ministry, the national Center of educational curricula and assessment | 2009      |
| 2. Introduction of the tool and system for  | 2.1 Selecting the tool for identifying the  | 1. The tool for identifying the needs of  | Each student will be placed in the center of the  | Group of experts on education of the  | 2009-2010 |

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| identification of the children with SEN and assessing their educational needs | needs of the children with SEN, creating the methods for its introduction and submitting it to schools, educational resource-centers and the Ministry  | the children with SEN is being developed<br>2. Results are submitted quarterly to the Department of Programs of the Ministry<br>3. Final presentation has been held and the tool has been presented to schools, educational resource-centers and the Ministry | educational process; programs for facilitating education of the children with SEN will be planned effectively; the mechanism for funding inclusive education will be improved; an accurate database of the children with SEN will be developed  | children with SEN and the Department of Programs of the Ministry   |      |
|   | 2.2 Pilot-testing of the tool for identifying the needs of the children with SEN in all 9 regions of Georgia   | The tool has been tested in 9 regions of Georgia  | Pilot-testing of the tool will facilitate the process of determining its validity and its further standardization   | Department of Programs of the Ministry and the national Examination Center   | 2010 |
|   | 2.3 Final approval of the tool for identifying the children with SEN and assessing their educational needs and beginning of the process of studying and introduction of this tool by multidisciplinary teams | The standardized tool for identifying the children with SEN and assessing their educational needs, as well as its user manual, have been developed  | 1. Adequate identification and assessment of the children with SEN will be carried out, the educational process will consequently be planned effectively and academic or social achievements of the child will become measurable<br>2. Increase of qualification and professional development | Group of experts on education of the children with SEN, the Department of Programs of the Ministry and multidisciplinary teams | 2010 |

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|  |  |  | of the specialists, working in this sphere, will be facilitated  |  |      |
| 3. Regulations and guidelines of education for the children with SEN | 3.1 Developing the guidelines, regulations and requirements  | List of guidelines, regulations and requirements is developed  | Education for the children with SEN will be carried out based on a uniform regulation, on the scale of all Georgia, and will facilitate prevention of inadequate education, cases of discrimination, as well as assist schools in effectively planning and implementing the process of education for the for the children with SEN | Group of experts on education of the children with SEN   | 2009 |
|  | 3.2 Discussion of the guidelines, regulations and requirements by multidisciplinary teams, resource-centers and the Ministry | 1. Presentation of developed guidelines, regulations and requirements held<br>2. Recommendations for perfecting the rules are adopted, as a result of discussion | Perfecting the guidelines, regulations and requirements  | Department of Programs of the Ministry of Education and Science and the group of experts on education of the children with SEN | 2009 |
|  | 3.3 Final approval and publishing of the guidelines, regulations and requirements and delivering them to all the educational | 1. Guidelines, regulations and requirements are approved by the Ministry<br>2. The regulations are   | Education for the children with SEN will be carried out based on a uniform regulation, on the scale of all Georgia, and will facilitate  | Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia   | 2009 |

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|  | institutions and resource-centers  | published as a brochure, in 5 000 copies, and disseminated to educational institutions and resource-centers   | prevention of inadequate education, cases of discrimination, as well as assist schools in effectively planning and implementing the process of education for the for the children with SEN  |  |           |
| 4. Introducing the national model of inclusive education | 4.1 Complete pilot-testing of the national model of education for the children with SEN in all 9 regions of Georgia, while observing the relevant regulations and guidelines     | Pilot testing of the national model of education for the children with SEN in 9 regions of Georgia is conducted   | Effectiveness of the model will be determined, its strengths and weaknesses will be assessed and the necessary or desirable changes, to be introduced to the national model of education for the children with SEN will become identified | Department of Programs of the Ministry, the group of experts on education of the children with SEN, educational resource-centers and multidisciplinary teams | 2010      |
|  | 4.2 Allocation of program grants to schools, for the purpose of intensifying activities of the existing multidisciplinary teams and improving the quality of inclusive education | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program grants allocated to 16 schools in 2009</li> <li>2. Program grants allocated to 21 schools in 2010</li> <li>3. Program grants allocated to 26 schools in 2011</li> </ol> | Improving the quality of education for the children with SEN  | Department of Programs of the Ministry of Education and Science and partner public schools   | 2009-2011 |

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|  | 4.3 Presenting the results of pilot-testing for discussion by schools, resource-centers and the Ministry   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Presentation of the results of pilot-testing of the national model held</li> <li>2. Recommendations for perfecting the model are adopted, as a result of discussion</li> </ol>  | Perfecting the national model of education for the children with SEN  | Department of Programs of the Ministry   | 2010      |
|  | 4.4 Introducing the national model of education for the children with SEN: 1. Preparing a plan for re-training of the staff of teachers (mainstream educational and specialized schools) 2. Developing a plan for creating and preparing multidisciplinary teams 3. Preparing a plan for re-training administrations of schools and resource-centers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan for re-training of the staff of teachers developed</li> <li>2. Plan for creating and preparing multidisciplinary teams developed</li> <li>3. Plan for re-training administrations of schools and resource-centers developed</li> </ol> | Development of the plans will assist the Department of Programs of the Ministry and all other responsible departments and unites in effectively planning and implementing professional growth of the specialists of education for the children with SEN | Department of Programs of the Ministry   | 2009-2010 |
|  | 4.4 Implementation of the indicated plans of re-training in all regions of Georgia and announcing the  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Minimum 7 partner organizations selected through competition</li> <li>2. Re-qualification training courses</li> </ol>   | Professional growth of the specialists of education for the children with SEN, increasing the qualification of teachers   | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners selected based on the tender principle | 2010-2011 |

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|  | appropriate tender for selecting partners  | conducted in 9 regions of Georgia: minimum 30% of the teachers, minimum 60% of the schools and all of the resource-centers   | and improving the quality of education for the children with SEN in all regions of Georgia  |   |      |
|  | 4.5 Formation of multidisciplinary teams and starting activities on the basis of educational resource-centers of Georgia   | Multidisciplinary teams have begun working on the basis of 15 educational resource-centers in Georgia  | Highly qualified services will be provided to the children with SEN, their parents and teachers, in order to provide the children with SEN with high-quality education  | Department of Programs of the Ministry and educational resource-centers | 2009 |
|  | 4.6 Implementing monitoring of introduction of the national model of education for the children with SEN; preparing an analysis of the monitoring results and relevant recommendations, preparing the annual report form | 1. Monitoring of introduction carried out in all regions of Georgia<br>2. Analysis of the monitoring results and recommendations prepared<br>3. The annual report form developed | Annual monitoring of introduction of the national model of education for the children with SEN will facilitate its effective introduction, necessary modification and further perfecting and development of the model | Department of Programs of the Ministry                                  | 2011 |
| 5. University education and professional development of teachers | 5.1 Creating a group working on university education and professional development of   | 1. The group working on university education and professional development of   | Effective planning and implementation of university education and professional development of teachers  | Department of Programs of the Ministry                                  | 2009 |

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|  | teachers  | teachers selected through competition<br>2. The group begins work   |  |  |           |
|  | 5.2 Developing the professional standard of a special teacher   | 1. Professional standard of a special teacher developed   | Special teacher is a highly qualified expert of special education  | Department of Programs of the Ministry   | 2009      |
|  | 5.3 a) Introduction and/or intensification, within the Bachelor's and Master's Programs, of teaching of the subjects, necessary for working with the children with SEN;<br>b) Introducing the basics of inclusive and special education, as a mandatory module, into the curriculum; c) Preparing new modules, textbooks and methodological educational materials | 1. Teaching of the subjects, necessary for working with the children with SEN, has started within the Bachelor's and Master's Programs<br>2. The basics of inclusive and special education are included in the curriculum, as mandatory modules<br>3. New modules, textbooks and methodological educational materials are developed | Georgian system of higher education will ensure preparation of highly qualified specialists in the sphere of education for the children with SEN | Department of Programs of the Ministry, the Center working on university education and professional development of teachers, the National Curriculum and Assessment Center | 2009-2010 |
|  | 5.4 Developing a university program of special education, in compliance with modern standards, with awarding of the   | University program of special education developed, with the appropriate curriculum and syllabus   | Preparing specialists in compliance with modern standards and making students interested in special pedagogy                                     | Department of Programs of the Ministry, the Center working on university education and professional  | 2009      |



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|  | corresponding degree (teacher of special education)   |   |  | development of teachers, the National Curriculum and Assessment Center  |           |
|  | 5.5 Preparing an accredited program/curriculum for re-training of persons as specialists of special pedagogy; developing new modules and a textbook | 1. An accredited program/curriculum for re-training of persons as specialists of special pedagogy developed<br>2. new modules and a textbook prepared | 1. High professional standard of the teacher of special education will be established<br>2. Demand for knowledge and professional development will increase<br>3. Every teacher will have the opportunity of undergoing certificate training and testing and become a qualified teacher of special education | The National Curriculum and Assessment Center, the group of experts on education of the children with SEN and partners selected based on the tender principle | 2009-2010 |
|  | 5.6 Introduction of mandatory training-courses for professional development of teachers of specialized schools                                      | 120-hours per year mandatory training courses for teachers of all specialized schools are introduced  | Professional development of teachers of specialized schools and improving the quality of education in specialized schools  | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners selected based on the tender principle  | 2009-2010 |
|  | 5.7. Introduction of mandatory training courses for teachers of mainstream educational schools, for acquainting them with the principles and        | 60-hour mandatory training courses introduced for teachers of mainstream educational schools  | Professional development of teachers of mainstream educational schools, facilitation of introduction of inclusive education and improvement of the   | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners selected based on the tender principle  | 2009      |

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|  | practice of education for the children with SEN   |   | quality of inclusive education teaching   |   |           |
|  | 5.8 Conduction of intensive training in those schools, where inclusive education has been or is being introduced  | 15-hour intensive training courses conducted in all those schools, where inclusive education has been or is being introduced  | Professional development of teachers of general educational schools, facilitation of introduction of inclusive education and improvement of the quality of inclusive education  | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners selected based on the tender principle                        | 2009      |
|  | 5.9 Popularization of profession of the teacher of mainstream and special education   | 1. Wide-scale campaign of popularization of profession of the teacher of mainstream and special education planned 2. Publications, TV-stories and features prepared | Increase of popularity of profession of the teacher of mainstream and special education, high school seniors and college students becoming interested in the new professions and obtaining of a positive attitude and trust from the society, for introduction of inclusive education | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners selected based on the tender principle                        | 2009      |
|  | 5.10 Intensification of coordination and joint work between inclusive, mainstream educational and special schools and university education faculties, for | Field practice work conducted by minimum 30 students, both in mainstream educational schools, specialized schools and daycare centers                               | Improving the quality of education of the specialists of education for the children with SEN, practical utilization of theoretical knowledge by students and obtaining  | Department of Programs of the Ministry, the group working on university education and professional development of | 2009-2011 |

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|  | the purpose of planning and implementing field practical work of the students                                       |  | of knowledge, based on evidence and specific cases   | teachers   |           |
| 6. Quality of education in specialized schools | 6.1 Assessment of the needs of specialized schools, in terms of quality of education                                | 1. Needs assessment of the specialized schools completed<br>2. Results and analysis of the research prepared and published | Identification of the needs of specialized schools, developing recommendations for satisfying them, based on the needs' analysis, and defining a plan for development of specialized schools | Department of Programs of the Ministry and the group of experts on education of the children with SEN                      | 2009      |
|  | 6.2 Assessment of efficiency of existing methodologies and identifying modern methods (and appropriate specialists) | 1. Assessment report submitted to the Department<br>2. Minimum 7 specialists identified                                    | Methodological development of specialized schools and improvement of the quality of education for the children with SEN  | Department of Programs of the Ministry and the group of experts on education of the children with SEN                      | 2009-2010 |
|  | 6.3 Introduction of experimental classes in specialized schools, for approbation of new methods and approaches      | Minimum one experimental class opened in each specialized school   | Methodological development of specialized schools and improvement of the quality of education for the children with SEN  | Department of Programs of the Ministry, the group of experts on education of the children with SEN and specialized schools | 2009      |
|  | 6.4 Preparing methodical guidebooks for modifying, simplifying and compiling individual                             | Methodic guidebooks developed and published in each of the following branches: mental development                          | Methodological development of specialized schools and improvement of the quality of education for  | National Curriculum and Assessment Center, the group of experts on education of the children with SEN,                     | 2009-2010 |

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|  | curricula for specialized schools, in each of the following branches: mental development disorders, vision and hearing disorders, communication difficulties, etc. | disorders, vision and hearing impairment, communication difficulties and behavior disorders   | the children with SEN   | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners selected based on the tender principle   |           |
|  | 6.5 Introduction of the methods and techniques of compiling individual educational plan, based on the results of assessment of students                            | Methods and techniques of compiling educational plans have been introduced in all the institutions of education for the children with SEN | Methodological development of specialized schools and improvement of the quality of education for the children with SEN | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners selected based on the tender principle, the group of experts on education of the children with SEN | 2009      |
|  | 6.6 Introduction of the models and strategies of integrated education, for development of academic, communication and functional skills                            | Integrated educational models introduced in all the institutions of education for the children with SEN                                   | Methodological development of specialized schools and improvement of the quality of education for the children with SEN | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners selected based on the tender principle, the group of experts on education of the children with SEN | 2009      |
|  | 6.7 Introduction of the system of assessing academic performance and progress  | The system of assessing academic performance and progress introduced in all the institutions of education for the                         | Methodological development of specialized schools and improvement of the quality of education for the children with SEN | Department of Programs of the Ministry and the group of experts on education of the children with SEN  | 2009-2010 |

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|   |  | children with SEN  |  |   |           |
|   | 6.8 Developing the plans of extracurricular activity of informal education for specialized schools and daycare centers                           | Plan of extracurricular activity of informal education developed                                 | The education for the children with SEN, no matter where it is implemented, will be subjected to a certain standard and all aspects of the child's activity will be conducted according to his/her educational needs | Department of Programs of the Ministry, the group of experts on education of the children with SEN, the National Curriculum and Assessment Center | 2009-2010 |
|   | 6.9 Introduction of cooperation between specialized schools and general educational schools, for the purpose of facilitating inclusive education | Minimum 10 children annually transferred from specialized schools to general educational schools | Facilitation and development of introduction of inclusive education  | The group of experts on education of the children with SEN, the Department of Programs of the Ministry  | 2009      |
|   | 6.10 Updating the material-technical resources of specialized schools  | The material-technical resources of all specialized schools updated                              | Methodological and material-technical development of specialized schools and improvement of the quality of education for the children with SEN   | Department of Programs of the Ministry, the National Vocational Agency  | 2009-2011 |
| 7. Early education of the children with special educational needs | 7.1 Introduction of the model of early development   | Program of early development annually conducted in minimum 20 families                           | Children find it easier to enter into contact with the outside world and it is simpler for them to become involved in the educational system   | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners   | 2009-2011 |

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|  | 7.2 Facilitation of early education programs for the children with SEN in preschool educational institutions  | 1. Early education programs for the children with SEN developed<br>2. Number of the children with SEN in preschool educational institutions is no less than 50 children a year | Avoid or significantly diminish educational needs of the child  | Department of Programs of the Ministry and partners   | 2009-2010 |
|  | 7.3 Developing the methodic and guidebook of early education of children  | Methodic guidebook of early education of the children with SEN developed   | Every person or agency, interested in early education of the children with SEN, will have the opportunity to become acquainted and use in practice the modern guidebook of early education for the children with SEN, based in research and evidences | The group of experts on education of the children with SEN, the Department of Programs of the Ministry, the National Curriculum and Assessment Center | 2010      |
|  | 7.4 Introduction and implementation of the rule and procedures for transfer of the children with SEN from early intervention and education centers to schools | The rules and procedures for transfer of the children with SEN from early intervention and education centers to schools developed and approved by the Ministry                 | Implementation of universal rules and procedures will ensure correct planning of future education of the children with SEN, their prepared and painless transfer to new educational institutions  | The group of experts on education of the children with SEN, the Department of Programs of the Ministry  | 2009      |
|  | 7.5 Development and introduction of the   | The mechanism of direct contact and  | Activation of the mechanism will ensure   | The group of experts on education of the  | 2009      |

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|  | mechanism of direct contact and coordination between early intervention and education centers, kindergartens, specialized and inclusive schools           | coordination between early intervention and education centers, kindergartens, specialized and inclusive schools developed and introduced | correct planning of future education of the children with SEN, their prepared and painless transfer to new educational institutions   | children with SEN, the Department of Programs of the Ministry   |           |
| 8. Vocational education of the students with SEN | 8.1 Allocation of program grants to mainstream educational and specialized schools, for introduction and development of vocational education and training | Minimum 10 grants allocated every year   | The children with SEN will have the opportunity of mastering various vocational skills and crafts, based on individual curriculums and while taking into account their interests, inclinations and capabilities | The National Vocational Agency,   | 2009-2011 |
|  | 8.2 Development of inclusive vocational educational workshops and training programs   | 1. Training programs developed<br>2. Minimum 20 inclusive vocational educational workshops opened and functioning                        | The students with SEN and their peers will have the opportunity of learning and experiencing professional growth together   | The National Professional Agency, the National Curriculum and Assessment Center, The group of experts on education of the children with SEN | 2009-2010 |
|  | 8.3 Introduction of coordination between specialized and general educational schools and professional   | Mechanism of coordination developed and introduced   | Existence of such a mechanism will make the following possible: mutual exchanging of vocational experience and  | The National Professional Agency the Department of Programs of the Ministry   | 2009      |

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|  | educational centers, for the purpose of providing students with professional education |  | branch expertise, fitting the curricula of the state vocational educational centers to the needs of vocational education of the students with SEN, introduction of appropriate methodologies, providing the children with SEN with programs of vocational development and adapting the physical environment of the centers of vocational education |  |  |
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