

Individualized Education Program

...on the way to inclusive education



EN

Upbringing and education is a purposefully organized comprehensive process of learning and socialization aimed at students' development in accordance with their dispositions in an effort to develop their own aspiration to become a harmonious person both from the physical and mental point of view.

[Section 2 (f) and (g) of the School Act 245/2008]

Introduction

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is **an effective tool for the integration of a student with special educational needs (SEN)**. However, if we want to move towards comprehensive support for the student and school on the path to inclusive education, we need to know the basic principles of its creation, meaning and especially practical application. The importance of an IEP in the life of schools has increased significantly in recent years, not only due to a higher number of students with SEN, but also due to the arrival of teaching assistants (TAs) and school support teams (SSTs) **in an effort to create better conditions for students to fulfil their potential**. The paper itself is often just a formal document. How to apply it in practice? Does the IEP help to implement inclusive principles? What does the legislation say about it and what should it contain? Many of these questions are asked in schools not only by parents and teachers, but also by TAs or newly created SSTs. Creating an IEP is a work of art. Only a "lived" IEP can be a truly effective tool for student support in today's conditions. It seems very important to us to write a little more about it and to place it comprehensively in the light of an inclusive philosophy with full respect for legislative possibilities. If the IEP is lived, it can be **a suitable map when accompanying students in their class** on the way to their potential. Especially at the beginning of setting up processes. You can try how, when and in what way in the next edition of inclusive bulletins. May these inspirations strengthen your sense of freedom and security to follow the best interests of the child and their adults...

Viktor Križo and Vladimíra Ďurčová

What is an Individualized Education Program?

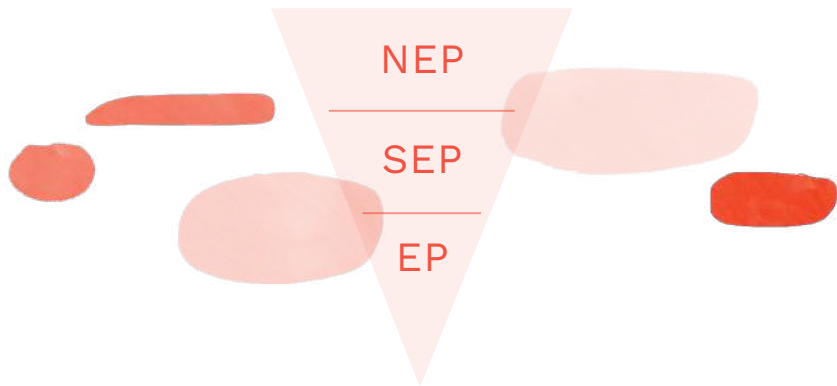
It is a lived document that sets out possible support measures for students with SEN **when adjusting the conditions, content, forms, methods and approaches in upbringing and education** (Section 2(i) of the School Act). The IEP is currently a standard part of the conditions for the education of students with SEN in school integration, but also in individualized education or in a special school and class, although the School Act does not make it mandatory, but only if it is necessary to prepare it (Section 94(1b)). The IEP (in accordance with Section 7(a)) is drawn up when a student needs some specific adjustments in relation to the school education program (SEP) or their class. The Act in Section 7(5) allows, as an alternative, to proceed according to individualized education programs intended primarily for special schools (National Institute for Education, 2017). In practice, however, it turns out that these education programs can serve in integration as inspiration or methodological support for counselling centres or schools in recommending or preparing the IEP, but certainly not as an obligation.

- assists in **setting up support measures** for the student where they may differ from the SEP of the class or school;
- it is prepared in accordance with Section 7(a) by educational staff authorized by the headteacher of the school (in practice, often a school special teacher as a coordinator of students with SEN) in close cooperation with the class teacher, the SST, parents, the TA and counselling centre and, if possible, with the student;
- the law does not specify how it should look formally because it should be tailored to a **specific child**; the actual support of the student is more important than the formal side of the IEP.

School education program and IEP

The SEP is the basic document of the school, according to which upbringing and education at school takes place (Section 7(1) of the School Act) and is based on **the National Education Program (NEP)**. This document is the main document that should contain all the important principles of the functioning of education in a given school or class. It is the most important tool for inclusive education:

- it sets out **the principles, activities, plan and functioning of the SST as well as the work of the PA in supporting all students** – ideally if the SEP also has a separate part of inclusive education or the SST, where inclusive support for all children is described, including SEN and the principles of creating the IEP;
- **it describes an assessment system** that can and should be based primarily on self-reflection (self-assessment), motivation and support. The assessment system takes into account the peculiarities of students and allows teachers to constantly adapt the assessment to the educational needs of the student (Section 2(h));
- **it describes a curriculum** that is flexible and open to the disposition of the student (Section 2(g) of the School Act) – specific curricula or headings from the textbook may not be defined in the SEP because it would be more difficult to adapt the content to a specific student, class;
- the IEP is created really **efficiently and economically**, ideally on one A4, briefly and only in those matters that are not listed in the SEP. The form should not be more important than the content of the document.

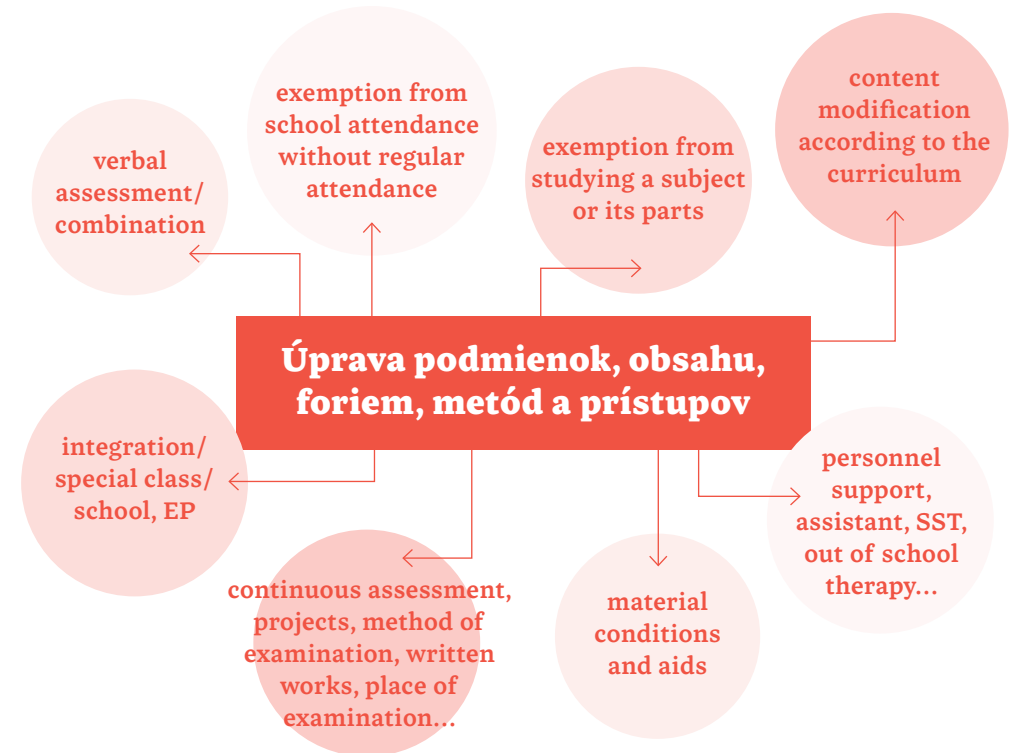


EXAMPLE

- the school stipulates in the SEP that a calculator, formula booklets, tables in mathematics and science will be used as a normal part of teaching for all children and meaningless memorization will not be required (then such a measure is no longer necessary to be included in the student's IEP);
- the school will describe the functioning of the SST, and the TA in the SEP and thus no longer has to produce various plans of an educational/career counselor, school psychologist, prevention coordinator, etc. each year and describe in detail the personnel support in the IEP;
- the school enables an assessment system in the SEP that the teacher, in cooperation with the SST, will tailor to each student (whether integrated, a foreigner, has experienced a difficult life event, etc.) – e.g. extension of time for everyone if they need it during dictations, oral or written assessment, thus, it doesn't have to be in the IEP.

Principles of creating the IEP

The following points offer the basic principles and rules of IEP creation on the path to inclusive education:



- The IEP, the Education Plan and the Counselling Report are three mandatory documents for a student with SEN.
- **The preparation of the IEP** requires **sufficient time for observation and setting of conditions** (approx. 30 to 60 days, depending on the student's situation and difficulties, e.g. it may take longer to set optimal conditions for a student with pervasive developmental disorder). The law does not specify by when the IEP is to be prepared.

- It is ideal if **all teaching staff, assistants and professional staff** involved in the education of the student **participate in creating the IEP**.
- It is advisable to **hold professional consultations when a student enters integration**, when they move to the lower secondary school or when any changes affect the teaching process. During the consultations, the participants get acquainted with the student's SEN with the support of the SST, they will try to implement the recommendations of the counselling centre into the subject and begin to consult the procedure with the assistant if assigned to the student.
- Pursuant to Section 7(a) of the School Act, the **parent** is a co-creator of the IEP by **expressing their consent**, not just being familiar with it. It is necessary to **actively involve them** in the process of creation, then provide them with a copy, allow them to comment on it, e.g. by email, agree with them on the support of the student at home.
- Depending on the age of the student, also inform them or involve them in proposing measures as a means of supporting their own efforts, freedom and responsibility.
- **The IEP can be adjusted continuously at any time** (e.g. also by email, through edupage, in the form of minutes from meetings, adding something using a pen, etc.) flexibly and according to the current needs of the student with consensual consent and by simply informing all participants (parents and other teachers). Again, it is appropriate to consult this if the situation requires so.
- This document is variable in case of more difficult diagnoses, it should be adapted to **the child's current needs**.
E.g.: adjustment of the environment, ability to concentrate, relaxation pauses.
- It is not necessary for the IEP to be created anew every school year, it should be updated continuously as needed, e.g. when transitioning to lower secondary school, when changing schools, etc.

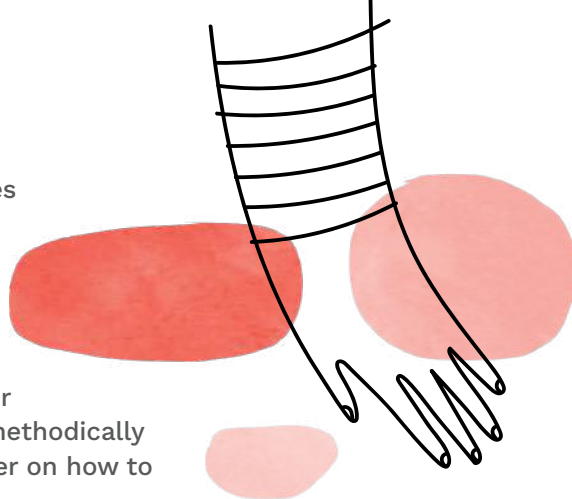
- The appearance, form and content of the IEP are not determined by any regulation, also because the IEP is to reflect the uniqueness of the student's needs.
- It should always be borne in mind that the most important thing is what is really done for the student ("lived IEP"), what can be seen and checked on the satisfaction of the student, their classmates, teacher and parents.
- The progress of the student and their IEP should also be continuously monitored and consulted with the counselling and prevention centre that recommended integration.
- **The aim of the IEP is also to ensure that the student does not gradually need specific support.**
- **The assessment of the student** is carried out in view of their progress, not in comparison with other students.
- **Written evaluation of the IEP** (former Form H) **is not required**, it is important that the IEP always reflects the current needs of the student and that the student's progress is communicated orally or by email.

INFO

Practical articles on the topic can also be found in our **Counselling section**:
inklucentrum.sk/sluzby-kurzy/poradenstvo/

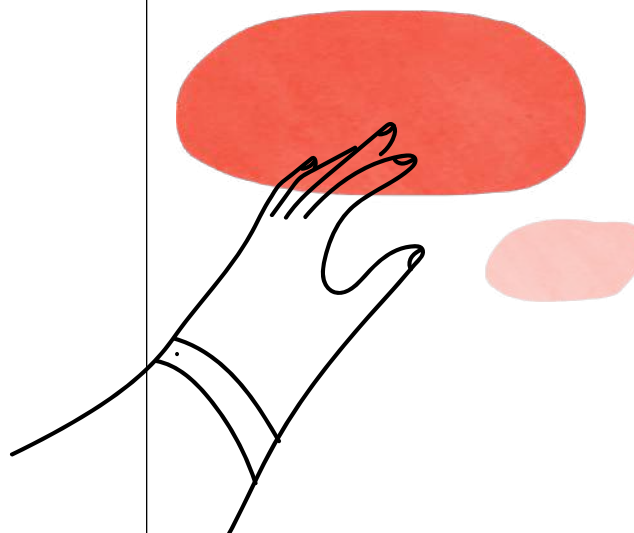


- **Studying specific subjects is not mandatory** and sometimes it can be ineffective and not very inclusive. A special teacher or other professional provides the student with support and interventions individually, in groups or directly in the classroom or methodically guides the assistant or teacher on how to work with the student.
- The student's **schedule may be adjusted** if it is in their interest (e.g. ADHD, behavioural disorders, autism, etc.) and if **temporary** circumstances require it, within the framework of the IEP pursuant to Section 7(a)(3) of the School Act. Such an adjustment also anticipates **cooperation with counselling and prevention centres**. More extensive and longer-term adjustment or exemption from attendance is appropriate through the decision of the headteacher pursuant to Section 5 of Act No. 596/2003. This whole process is to be **inclusive** from less to more participation and it certainly **must not lead to the long-term exclusion of the student in classes** and to forced home schooling. It is necessary to thoroughly go over it with the child and the parent and win their support for such a measure or, depending on the circumstances, go through it in the class with all students.
- **Students with mental disabilities** do not make automatic progress in integration according to the curricula and textbooks of a special school, rather the opposite. **They follow the SEP of their school, the IEP** and, if necessary, they can also be inspired by a special school. Otherwise it is not integration, but the creation of a special unit in an ordinary school.
- If the student's state of health does not allow them to learn at school (e.g. bedridden patient, etc.), the school will ensure the student's participation in education for at least 2 hours a week,



e.g. by sending a teacher and an assistant to their family, through the **individualized education status** (Section 24(3) of the School Act). In cases of long-term exemptions, it is necessary for the designated teacher to submit semi-annual reports on the progress of the student, the report being the basis for the pedagogical committee to close the grading. In this case, commission exams are not taken (Section 24(8) of the School Act).

- Content modifications in the IEP do not need to be made by copying the entire curriculum of the subject every year. Just state the changes (goals, content, performance) compared to the SEP of the school. **Conciseness and flexibility are very important**. The IEP should rather point out in which subjects and which types of skills are weak or, on the contrary, developed above average and how to make adjustments (by simplifying some thematic units or – in the case of gifted students – by expanding, enriching or accelerating the curriculum). Together with the parent, the student and the SST, the teacher should therefore be able to change the curriculum flexibly and to evaluate it after some time and set the student's next career direction, e.g. a simple sentence: *"The assistant and the teacher will modify and simplify the thematic units in mathematics according to the student's current progress."*



- **Exemption from the subject, the second foreign language** is based on the student's possibilities and the agreement of the school, parent and counselling centre. The student may attend the classes but will not receive grades (attended). Exemption from the second foreign language for integrated students or from other subjects in connection with their disabilities (e.g. PE) follows the request of the parent and the decision of the headteacher with the recommendation of the counselling centre (or general practitioner) according to the cause of the disadvantage. Any adjustments must be made with respect to the choice of secondary school.
- The instructions for Testing 5 and 9 show that **students with SEN can use compensatory aids during testing**, including formula booklets, PCs, calculators, dictionaries or other aids, while assuming that the students use them throughout their school attendance, i.e. usually during lessons or exams. Their inclusion in groups of students with disabilities is not determined by the counselling centre, but by the school.
- According to Section 5(3)(d) of Decree No. 326/2008, the IEP is archived 5 years after the completion of the student's studies.

Inspiration from the Czech Republic, where **the Catalogue of Support Measures** for individual diagnoses was prepared, can also be helpful in creating IEPs in Slovak conditions. It should be noted that all measures in the IEP must be individualised. As an example, we present support measures for students with mental disabilities and autism. It concerns a modification in the learning regime.

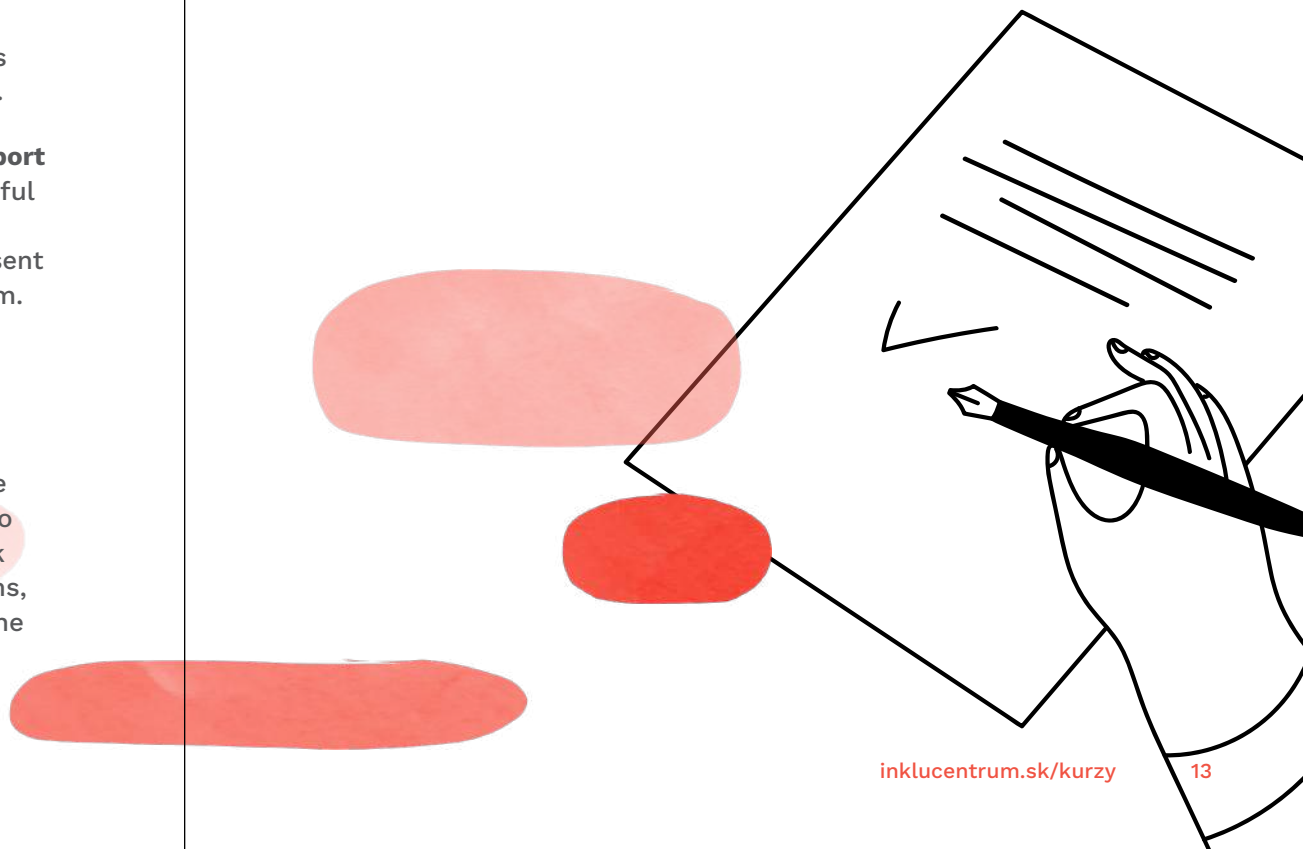
- **Modification of the learning regime, e.g. for a student with mental disability:** in terms of time, it is possible to shorten lessons, combine lessons, part of the classes can be carried out individually. The possibility to work in several places in the classroom (carpet, cushions) or to create another workplace to change the forms of teaching and include rest moments (work zone, place for individual work, for relaxation, specialized rooms, place to store compensatory aids). The measure responds to the fact that the student gets tired quickly.

- **Modification of the learning regime, e.g. for a student with autism**, where it is necessary to respond to problems with attention, sensory perception, anxiety or compulsive behaviour, for example by arriving later to school to avoid a crowded dressing room, have lunch earlier, use of the teachers' bathroom, etc.

Find more inspiration for various SEN on:
<http://katalogpo.upol.cz/>

INFO

More about the adjustment of attendance and the difference between IEP, IUP or individualized education **in the Inkluscentrum's article:**
inklucentrum.sk/uprava-dochadzky/



Counselling centres, administration and IEP

An important step towards a successful IEP is also **the counselling and prevention centres or specialized counselling and prevention centres and close cooperation with the SST, the school and parents in setting up the child's support**. The counselling centre is often far from the child's real life at school and cannot always set up remote support. That is why there are experts in schools, colleagues from the SST, who should have confidential relationships with counsellors so that measures to support the child in IEP can be taken at any time and quickly.

- If there is a functioning SST in the school, **the Counselling Report may be very brief** and may list some recommendations in the recommendations section, but in the end, the counsellor also expresses in writing their trust in the school setting up the IEP with the following or similar wording: *"The school support team will adequately adjust our recommendations, i.e. conditions, contents, forms, staffing, assessment, methods and approaches in the student's Individualized Education Program according to their current needs and in cooperation with the class teacher, parent and student."*
- If the support in the school is not yet sufficiently set up, the **counselling centre formulates conclusions so that it does not restrict the school** in a specific way or implementation of the recommendation but trusts that the school can set recommendations in a possible consultation with the counselling centre.
- If the counsellor is unable to rely on school and support settings, they **formulate more or less strict recommendations**; in the event of major concerns, they may also exhaustively determine what must, may and must not be observed in order to legally protect the best interests of the child in this way.

- Several recommendations, if the cooperation between the counselling centre and the SST is good (schedule adjustment, exemption from a subject, etc.), can also be set in advance in the Report (e.g. for children with ADHD, ASD, etc.) so that the SST can introduce measures according to the child's needs at any time and does not have to wait for a written report, as it is inflexible, it burdens everyone. Mutual information can take place continuously (email, phone call).
- It is less appropriate to write in the reports a recommendation to follow the education programs of special schools and implement specific subjects, as this is often impracticable. The counselling centre should recommend intervention, support and the **specific method and form should be chosen by the school as needed**.

Schools should not be afraid of school inspections, but that the student's potential is not sufficiently supported and that they do not act in the student's best interest (*Article 3 of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, cf. also General Comment No. 4/2016 on the Right to Inclusive Education*).

You can also read about the myths and questions about integration in the [Inklucentrum's article](#).

INFO

Previews of documents for effective IEP and SST activities can be found here: inklucentrum.sk/ako-efektivne.../

IEP structure inspiration

Personal data

(Student's name, date of birth and class or school/schools from which they transferred)

Brief description of the conclusions of the examinations

(type and severity of the student's disability)

Brief description of the student, their resources and risks

The IEP is based on the SEP school with the following specifics

(indicate only those facts that are different from the SEP, modification of the content in a subject, extension of the content of a subject/subjects, supplementation of the curriculum with a new/specific subject/subjects, exemption from any of the subjects or parts of the subject; exemption from the obligation to attend school, specific individualized or group interventions by professional staff, special teaching or compensatory aids, specific procedures, ways of working in the class, assessment, description of professional support, teaching assistant, or interventions in counselling or health care facilities, etc.):

Prepared by

Class teacher (also responsible for informing and cooperating with other teachers):

School special educator/SST:

In cooperation with and with informed consent by:

The parent/legal representative expresses their informed consent to the individualized education program of their child in accordance with Section 7(a)(1) of the School Act. They declare that they have been duly informed of the consequences of their consent: (signature)

Interim notes, changes, modifications

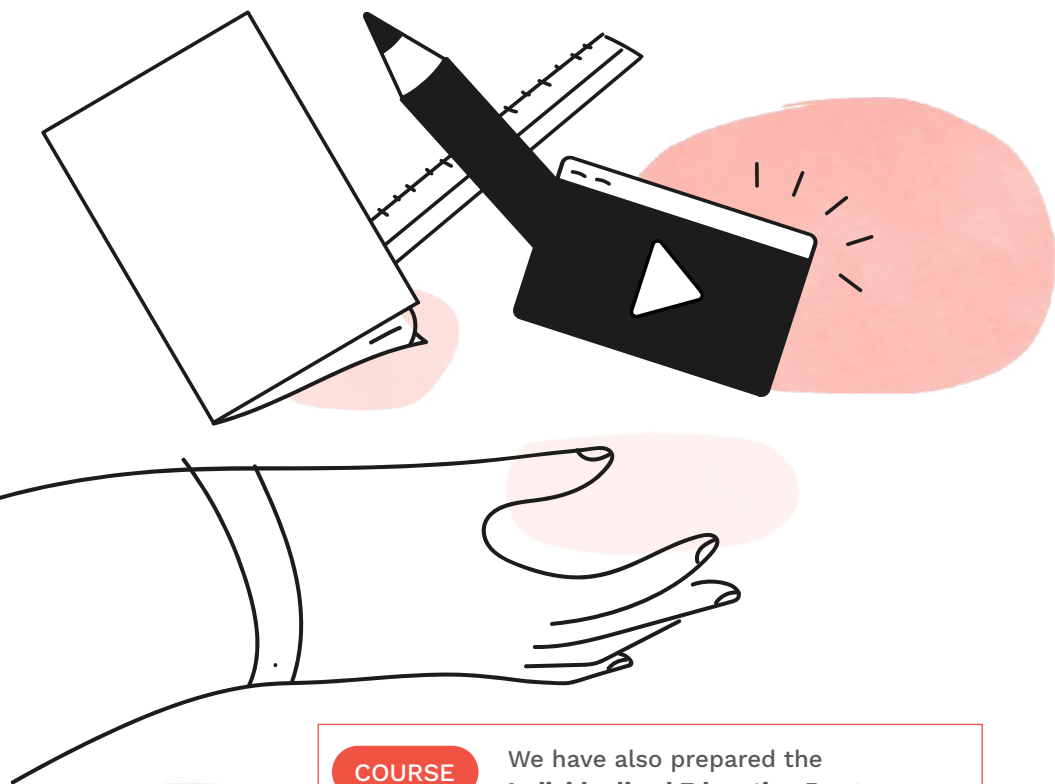
((assessment, improvement, worsening, new adjustments – date, brief description and signature), e.g.:

- 1st grade: the student needs a relaxation break under supervision after 15 minutes;
 - from 3rd grade – added re-education in the counselling centre once a week and intervention meetings with the school special educator once a week;
 - from midterm of the 4th grade – assigned to a smaller intervention group with the school psychologist once a week;
 - from the 6th grade – not assessed in German;
 - from the 7th grade – the student no longer requires specific individualized interventions with a special educator; the student continues to receive individual care at the school psychologist twice a month due to difficulties in behaviour;
 - end of the 8th grade – student praised for a significant improvement in grades and behaviour.
-

Offer of customized courses:

For counselling facilities or schools on legislation, writing reports, coordinating school support teams, etc. You can find more on:

inklucentrum.sk/sluzby-kurzy/sluzby-pre-poradne/



COURSE

We have also prepared the **Individualized Education Program** webinar for you. More at:

inklucentrum.sk/kurzy

Our Publications:

We create the bulletins in cooperation with a team of experts on inclusive education. Employ them as a useful guide in your work or for explaining the principles of inclusive education to the general public.

We also create useful videos for you on Inklucentrum's YouTube channel, some of which are available in English or German. For deeper understanding of the topics, we recommend signing up for the training courses we organize.



Our Publications:
inklucentrum.sk/publikacie

Our Courses:
youtube.com/c/inklucentrum

Webinars and Videos:
inklucentrum.sk/kurzy



We cover Inclusive education

Inklucentrum – The Centre for Inclusive Education is an advocacy, educational, consulting expert organization on a national level, working in the field of support to inclusive education. It is dedicated to supporting quality and humanistic education in the school environment for the benefit of development of potential for all children, families and the school staff. It provides support, consulting and education in accredited programs and workshops, especially for pedagogical and professional employees.

We are preparing a project of establishing a primary school with an inclusive center, which will be using humanistic and inclusive principles described in our bulletins.

INKLUCENTRUM – The Centre for Inclusive Education

Hálova 16, 851 01 Bratislava
www.inklucentrum.sk
facebook.com/inklucentrum

INFO: info@inklucentrum.sk
COURSES: vzdelavanie@inklucentrum.sk
COUNSELLING: poradenstvo@inklucentrum.sk

ONLINE: inklucentrum.sk/publikacie
inklucentrum.sk/kurzy



The 'On the Path of Inclusive Education' project is supported by the ACF-Slovakia program, which is financed by the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021. The administrator of the program is the Ekopolis Foundation in partnership with the Pen Society Foundation Bratislava and the Carpathian Foundation.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The support of the EU in publishing this material does not automatically approve of its content, which reflects only the opinions of its authors and the Commission does not take responsibility for the information used in this material.

Nadácia 

 **REALIZOVANÉ S FINANČNOU PODPOROU
MESTSKEJ ČASTI BRATISLAVA-PETRŽALKA**

©2021, 2022, 2023 Inklucentrum – The Centre for Inclusive Education

Authors of the publication:
PaedDr. Mgr. et Mgr. Viktor Križo, PhD.,
PaedDr. Vladimíra Ďurčová

The publication, nor any of its parts, cannot be a subject for dissemination without the consent of its author and the Inklucentrum.