**Education**

**Promoting inclusion of children with disabilities into schools in Russia**

“We must create a system of education for children with disabilities to provide an opportunity for disabled and non-disabled children to learn together at mainstream schools. Both children and society will benefit.”

Dmitry Medvedev - Russian President

**Context**

In Russia today the majority of children with disabilities are still segregated in residential or special education institutions, educated in their homes, or receive no education at all. An additional 1.5 million children have special education needs and receive little or no support.

Discrimination in education is one of the greatest obstacles to the inclusion of children with disabilities into the community. Key barriers to inclusive education include attitudes of teachers and school administrators, lack of policies, and a lack of information and training for teachers on how to make their schools inclusive.

**Objectives**

- Establish multi-disciplinary teams to promote and support inclusive education.
- Raise awareness about inclusive education at national and local levels.
- Develop inclusive schools locally, share information and network.

**Impact**

- 109 children with disabilities, including intellectual and significant physical disabilities, were included into mainstream schools.
- Nearly 400 media spots were secured nationwide which helped to educate people by portraying positive, inspiring images.
- 5300 teachers, special educators, education professionals and officials learned about inclusive education.
- 22 schools across Russia became models of best practice in inclusive education.
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Olga Lobanova’s Story

September 1, 2009.

On the first day of the school year, President Dmitry Medvedev visited Moscow School 518, a partner of Perspektiva and one of the few schools in the country to provide education to children with and without disabilities. President Medvedev chatted with fourth-grader Olga Lobanova, a wheelchair user, and she presented the Russian leader with one of her poems.

Olya’s progress has been helped by the partnership between Perspektiva, the school and the local department of education. Olya Lobanova was just seven years old when she went to school for the first time and was one of five children with disabilities attending the school.

Perspektiva worked with this school to provide disability awareness training, literature and advice on accessibility and also organised training for teachers with experts from its EU partners Inclusion Europe and Disability Equality in Education.

Olya and her class were featured in a public education campaign “All Children Should Go to School Together”, comprising of public service announcements on national and local TV stations and on posters that appeared on billboards in Moscow and five other Russian cities.

President Medvedev’s visit to the school helped to validate the successful work the administrators, teachers, and staff are doing to make their school fully inclusive. While he was at the school President Medvedev praised the teachers on their excellent work and promised that he would work with the relevant government ministries to further develop the practice of inclusive education in the Russian education system. This show of official support is encouraging progress for the inclusive education movement in Russia.