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## Introduction

Exclusion and inclusion in the culturally, economically, and politically determined educational space are one aspect of social life and its many micro-, meso-, eco-, macro-, and chronosystems. This issue is often addressed from theoretical, cognitive, practical, and research angles, which is reflected in scholarly and popular-science publications as well as literary fiction. It is not bound to any particular time or place and it is relevant at all stages of a person's life, from conception to death. It can therefore be assumed that, to a greater or lesser extent, it governs the integral, holistic development of a human being, and, by the same token, the development of civilization. Moreover, one could argue that as the biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual (religious) exclusion of the human being is more and more mitigated by his/her participation in creating a living environment in the local, regional, national, and international spaces, we can observe an increasingly higher quality of the functioning of education systems. This is particularly a challenge for schools, which perform the basic functions—educational and preventative, didactic and protective—as defined by the educational law in Poland. The implementation of these functions should be part of the school's educational activities, and thus its humanistic mission and its identity, which is built on the foundation of moral values. The school's humanistic mission is to expose the role and importance of inclusive education for children and young people, especially those with special educational needs, the range of which is constantly expanding. This includes providing not only equal educational opportunities for children and young people, but also assistance and support for gifted students

and personalized actualization of the potential of students with average abilities and skills. A diagnosis of these developmental needs and aptitudes implies the need to improve the teachers' skills and tools, and to achieve educational goals in a subjective and reflective manner. It is no wonder that, taking into account the pattern and extent of contemporary social and cultural exclusion, special care should be put into educating teachers in this regard. Among the competences that educators should acquire and develop, it is worth highlighting creativity, which aids in resolving a range of emergent educational problems, which currently includes those associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers—as well as parents and other legal guardians of children at pre-school and early school age—struggle with educational challenges, including those related to distance learning. Therefore, this topic, as well as a number of others, will be discussed in this issue of *Elementary Education in Theory and Practice*, which we invite you to read. We trust that you will find valuable information that relates to your area of interest, and that you will reflect on the theme of “from exclusion to inclusion” in education. We also encourage you to expand the spectrum of empirical research in this area by publishing the results of your studies in the pages of our journal.