

## Background paper series

# Education as a driver for the social inclusion of migrant children and their families

Children with migrant background tend to have worse educational outcomes than other children. In 2020, the early school leaving rate in the EU-27 was significantly lower for the native-born early leavers (8.7%) than for those born outside the EU (23.2%).

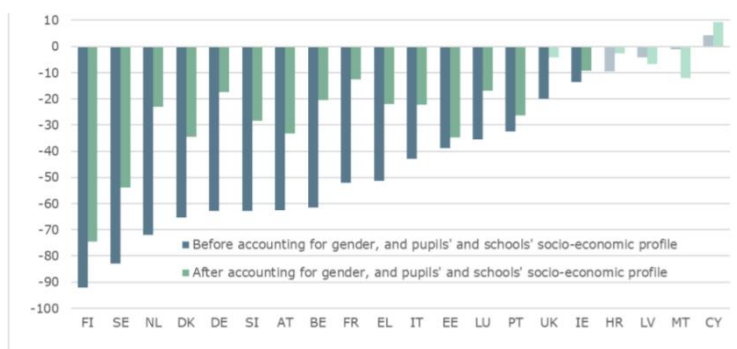
According to PISA 2018<sup>i</sup> results, pupils with migrant background lag behind their peers with a non-migrant background in many EU Member States. Underachievers in PISA are those pupils who fail to reach the minimum proficiency level necessary to participate successfully in society. The underachievement rate is usually higher for pupils born abroad (their underachievement rate exceeds 50% in Greece, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) than for native-born pupils with parents born abroad.

The PISA 2018 results can serve as point of reference on the situation before the outbreak of COVID-19, revealing considerable disparities across and within countries in the availability of home computers for schoolwork.

Later on, across OECD countries, only 69 % of students coming from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds reported to have access to a computer and a home environment that was suitable for distance learning, which has made it impossible for some pupils to access to education during COVID-19.

In addition, young people (18-24) with a migrant background were more likely than others to be 'neither in employment nor in education and training', as the NEET rate of non-EU born young people (aged 18-24) was 24.4% in 2020 compared to 13.5% among native-born.

Figure 1: Difference in reading performance between pupils with migrant and non-migrant background in the EU [score points]



Source: PISA 2018, OECD.  
Note: Darker bars denote statistically significant differences. Data not available for ES. Countries where less than 5% of the pupils have a migrant background are not included in the chart.

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## EU Policy Framework

Inclusiveness and social cohesion are among the key EU policy priorities ([European cooperation in education and training 2020 strategic framework](#)).

[The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion \(2021-2027\)](#) underlines that education is one of the most powerful tools for building more inclusive societies and schools can become hubs of integration and inclusion for migrant children and their families. Therefore, the Action Plan proposes measures to enable more children with a migrant background to participate in high quality early education and care, to better equip teachers to manage multicultural classrooms and involve schools, parents and supporting services in creating multi-stakeholder learning communities.

In 2021, the Council adopted the [European Child Guarantee](#) which provides guidance and tools for Member States to prevent and combat social exclusion among the EU's children, including those with a migrant background. As the first European Union instrument devoted to combating social exclusion in childhood, it aims to guarantee effective access to a number of services, which are key for child development.

## Schools as integration hubs: Promising practices

Schools offer opportunities to create an inclusive environment for migrant children and their parents. Schools can foster effective and long-term integration with comprehensive and all-inclusive education policies.

These include equipping teachers with training on multicultural education; monitoring and evaluation of the quality of what is taught at schools; introducing inclusive teaching methods to serve culturally and linguistically diverse children; creating multi-stakeholder learning communities with the involvement of schools, health and social services and parents; and providing guidance and counselling to pupils.

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**Integration activities for parents at the open preschool in Rågsved** (supported by Enskede-Årsta-Vantör in the City of Stockholm) as an ongoing project implemented in Stockholm. By offering a variety of activities, the open preschool in Rågsved has become an important setting for integration. In addition to usual children's activities, the preschool offers activities designed for foreign-born parents, including language courses, study and vocational guidance and recreational and cultural activities. The preschool pays special attention to the needs of foreign-born women, while also reaching out to fathers. It offers an attractive and flexible range of integration initiatives. It allows parents to continue participating even during the parental leave.

**Growing Together – Immigrant Empowerment as Local Citizens and Educators** (2016-2018 supported under the Erasmus+ programme; € 120,000) is a project implemented in Portugal, Spain and Italy aiming to contribute to the integration of adult immigrants and their children. They are actively involved in the educational process of their children. Also, the non-formal education training is offered to migrant adults. A series of 7 workshops were organised during the project, with the series implemented twice. Around 100 migrants participated in the workshops and around 1,000 citizens (migrant and non-migrant) participated in the various project activities overall.

The project '**Only (with) others are we**' (*Le z drugimi smo*) (2016-2021, funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and the European Social Fund; €1 million) offers free training seminars for education professionals on topics related to tolerance and diversity in the educational context in Slovenia. The aim of the project is to strengthen teachers and education professionals' social and civic competences with respect to integration, diversity, tolerance and other important elements of building an inclusive educational environment. The project has trained more than 6,200 expert workers and leaders in the field of education. The goal is to train up to 10,000 professionals in the education field by 2021. Participants have reported that they find the project to be very useful.

**Children, parents and teachers against hate speech and discrimination** (2014-2016) is a project implemented in Bulgaria and co-funded by the NGO Programme in Bulgaria (€ 58,000). A working group of primary school teachers and experts in Bulgaria developed a new method to teach topics from the official school curriculum while incorporating the principles of tolerance, acceptance of differences, non-violent communication and emotional intelligence. To accompany the teaching method, the project published a teachers' guidebook and students' workbook. They were disseminated on request to more than 150 schools in Bulgaria, distributing all 10,000 workbooks and 600 guidebooks that were printed. Since requests for the materials continued coming, the project made the materials free to download online.

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## Policy Network on Migrant Education

The [SIRIUS Network](#) on the education of children and young people with a migrant background has been organizing stakeholder meetings, conferences, peer reviews and site visits, which has contributed to a common vision on how education systems should change to provide all learners – including children with migrant background - with the skills and knowledge to perform to their potential in today's diverse societies.

The Network developed the **Sirius Clear Agenda**<sup>ii</sup> outlining the policy recommendations calling for among others promoting multilingualism among all learners; ensuring diversity in teacher training and professional capacity; eexpanding peer-to-peer mentoring for learners with a migrant background; and creating effective support for newly arrived migrant learners.

### Guiding Questions for the Workshop

- How can schools be used as effective hubs for the integration of children and their parents?
- How can EU funding help to promote inclusive education across Member States?
- What are the innovative and alternative approaches to foster integration of migrant children and families through education?

## References

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<sup>i</sup> European Commission (2019) PISA 2018 and the EU Striving for social fairness through education. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/pisa-2018-eu\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/pisa-2018-eu_1.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> SIRIUS Network (2014). A Clear Agenda for Migrant Education in Europe <https://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/news/a-clear-agenda-for-migrant-education-in-europe/>

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