

Data Analysis and Indicator Development: Education for Social Cohesion – Promoting Positive Attitudes

The refugee crisis that has been unfolding in the recent months developed at a time when most European economies are still recovering from the economic and financial crisis of 2008. Policy makers are struggling to organise short term responses to provide food and shelter to the newcomers when welfare services and public finances are already stretched because of the economic crisis. Many are working to design and organise the delivery of medium-term responses involving language training and support to integrate the newcomers in the labour market. However, it is important to consider the long-term implications resulting from international migration and identify which factors can ensure that European societies are well-equipped to sustain large migration flows.

The timing of the refugee crisis and the number of people seeking support is in fact eroding the traditional building blocks that are at the basis of individuals' identity, their identification with their community, and their attitudes towards newcomers. At the same time, those who flee war and economic hardship encounter societies that differ, sometimes profoundly, in social, religious and economic terms from the societies they left. Building fair, cohesive societies that promote a new growth paradigm based social equity cannot ignore the importance attitudes, dispositions and perceptions have for the creation of social inclusion.

Thus, the very reasons that make the expression of openness, tolerance and inclusiveness so important, are also the reasons that threaten fulfilling their promise. Globalization, raising income and wealth inequality, geopolitical instability and international migration flows touch the lives of each and every one of us.

Education is often considered as an important element to foster openness to diversity and ensure that individuals are willing and able to develop positive attitudes towards immigrants in their countries. There is some evidence that individuals who attended school for longer and obtained more advanced qualifications are, on average, more open to diversity and more welcoming of people with a different nationality, language and religion. However, much less is known about the mechanisms that facilitate education's role in promoting tolerant attitudes and even less about the relationship between education and migrants' own attitudes towards newcomers and host societies. Moreover, the stocks and flows of migrants into different European countries have been changing both quantitatively and qualitatively. For example, levels of education in European countries and in many of the countries of origin of migrants into Europe have been expanding rapidly. These changes suggest that the knowledge base on education's role should be updated to take into account if and how education interacts with other factors in order to develop policy relevant indicators.

The aim of the ***Education for Resilient Societies*** work is to adapt the concept of resilience – originally developed to describe individuals' capacity to overcome adversity – to societies, to be able to examine how European societies have responded to the risk to social cohesion posed by international migration. In this framework attitudes and dispositions are considered as outcome measures and education is conceived as a possible protective factor. The ***Education for Resilient Societies*** work also borrows from the rich literature on resilience the notion that the specific effect protective factors can play is determined by their interaction with the environment and that context matters. Therefore simple categorizations of “*what works*” should be supplanted by discussions of “*what works in which circumstances*”.

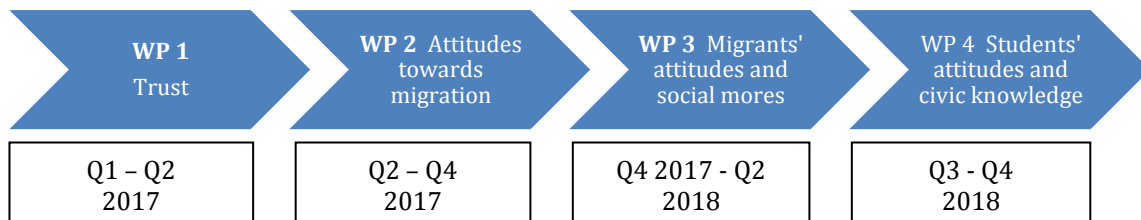
The Directorate for Education and Skills at the OECD and the Joint Research Centre B4 will collaborate to a joint work stream analysing the role education has in promoting resilient societies, by examining the role education and information processing skills play in shaping trust, tolerance and openness to diversity. Analyses will be based on data from the European Social Survey, the World Values Survey, the International Civic and Citizenship Study and the OECD’s Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC).

The Resilient Societies project will be articulated around 4 complementary work packages.

- **WP1)** An in-depth analysis of the relationship between education and self-reported interpersonal trust with a specific focus on the role of cognitive skills.
- **WP2)** An analysis of the relationship between education and attitudes towards migration, with an attempt to identify country, period, and cohort effects and whether education has specific influences on attitudes towards migration (or whether it simply reflects a broader relationship between education and attitudes towards equity more generally).
- **WP3)** An analysis of migrants’ attitudes towards migration and the extent to which education facilitates the adoption among migrant communities of social mores that are prevalent in the country of destination.
- **WP4)** An analysis of students’ civic knowledge and openness to diversity as a function of classroom environment (presence of migrants in the class, peer relations), educational practices, and social environment in the local community.

Work will be fully integrated with the broader work the Directorate for Education and Skills is conducting on the **Strength through Diversity** project. Work will be conducted sequentially to ensure a steady stream of outputs over the course of the project and to make the most of data availability. Figure 1 details the work stream over the course of 2017-2018.

Figure 1: Resilient Societies Programme of Work



Collaboration

Analysts from the OECD and The European Commission’s Joint Research Centre B4 will be co-investigators. The output of the collaboration will be a set of policy papers.

Insights from the **Resilient Societies** work will be integrated in the synthesis report of the **“Strength through Diversity: Integrating Migrants and Refugees through Education and Training Systems”** project.

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