

Thematic Policy Forum Series

Background

The OECD project “*Strength through Diversity: the Integration of immigrants and refugees in school and training systems*” seeks to:

- identify a new set of indicators to examine how societies have responded and are responding to the challenges to social cohesion posed large scale international migration;
- create improved data infrastructure that supports the development of strong evidence;
- identify policy responses that have been pursued by countries and their results;
- collect evidence on the conditions under which such policies achieve or do not achieve their objectives; and
- stimulate a discussion among key stakeholders to support peer learning and strengthen collaboration.

The project has two primary strands: (1) data collection, indicator development and data analysis, and (2) policy review and implementation.

The data collection, indicator development and data analysis strand aims to mobilise OECD’s expertise in exploiting in detail OECD-led data initiatives (such as PISA and PIAAC) and integrating them with other data sources to: develop key indicators of successful integration; and enhance current OECD large-scale data collection initiatives to ensure that they provide strong evidence on the outcomes of migrants and refugees and their potential to integrate effectively.

The policy review and implementation strand uses the results obtained in the data collection, indicator development and data analysis strand as the basis for convening a series of thematic policy fora of interested countries for the purposes of identifying country-specific challenges and policy responses and implementation strategies for ensuring that education systems effectively integrate migrants and refugees in schools and advance broader social integration and social cohesion goals. This identification will be based on input from international experts, OECD Secretariat analysts and stakeholders from other participating countries who have been involved in similar integration related decisions.

Objectives

The aim of the thematic policy fora is to:

- identify country-specific challenges,
- suggest promising practices and innovative approaches used by countries,
- identify policy levers that could re-think how schools and education systems can help countries respond to migration challenges, and
- facilitate peer-learning both within and between countries.

For each policy forum, a background paper will be developed in consultation with subject-matter external experts. Participation in the forum series will be sought from innovators at different levels of government and from different OECD countries.

The *first* policy forum (Paris, April 2017 – TBC) will convene international delegates, academics and OECD analysts to explore common challenges around integration in education systems, discuss policy practices to deal with such challenges, and facilitate in-depth discussion of priorities for future policy fora.

Future policy fora (six in total) could be on the following themes:

- **Teacher preparation:** explore in-depth what type of teacher training and professional development can prepare teachers for a multicultural or multilingual setting.
- **Teacher diversity:** while the student body has become increasingly diverse in OECD countries, teachers still tend to be a very homogeneous group. Do minority and disadvantaged students benefit from having teachers who come from similar backgrounds? If so, are there differences across countries in the representation of minority and socio-economically disadvantaged individuals in the teaching profession? What policies can promote greater teacher diversity?
- **Unaccompanied minors:** an increasing number of migrant children are coming without their parents which creates challenges not only for their academic but also their physical, social, psychological and material well-being. How can education systems respond to the particular needs of unaccompanied minors?
- **Language training and skill development of parents of migrant children:** discuss how schools can provide language training and skills development of migrant parents (in particular mothers) to develop their own skills, learn about cultural norms, support their children's development and improve school-parent communication and engagement.
- **Language support:** discuss in what ways language training can be effective in supporting immigrant children, and where and how it is most effectively delivered.
- **Concentration of migrants and class formation:** explore the impact of the high concentration of migrant children in specific schools has on their academic outcomes and integration efforts, in what ways this could be mitigated and how best classes within schools are formed.
- **Social and emotional well-being:** examine how education systems can improve the social and emotional well-being of migrant children, in particular their sense of belonging in schools and communities.
- **Stress support:** migration can create considerable stress for students. How can schools support the psychological well-being of migrants, and what structures can be most effective?
- **The role of arts and sports:** consider the role of the arts and sports in facilitating tolerance and promoting diversity in schools and communities.
- **Diversity management:** examine the role of schools and communities in managing diversity, and what strategies can be employed to do so.
- **Schools as core social centres:** explore in what ways schools can act as centres for engaging parents, teachers and students, and creating networks of exchange and learning for both migrant and non-migrant parents.

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