EDUCATION & SKILLS

Education for Inclusive Societies

Immigrant and refugee students in education: an overview

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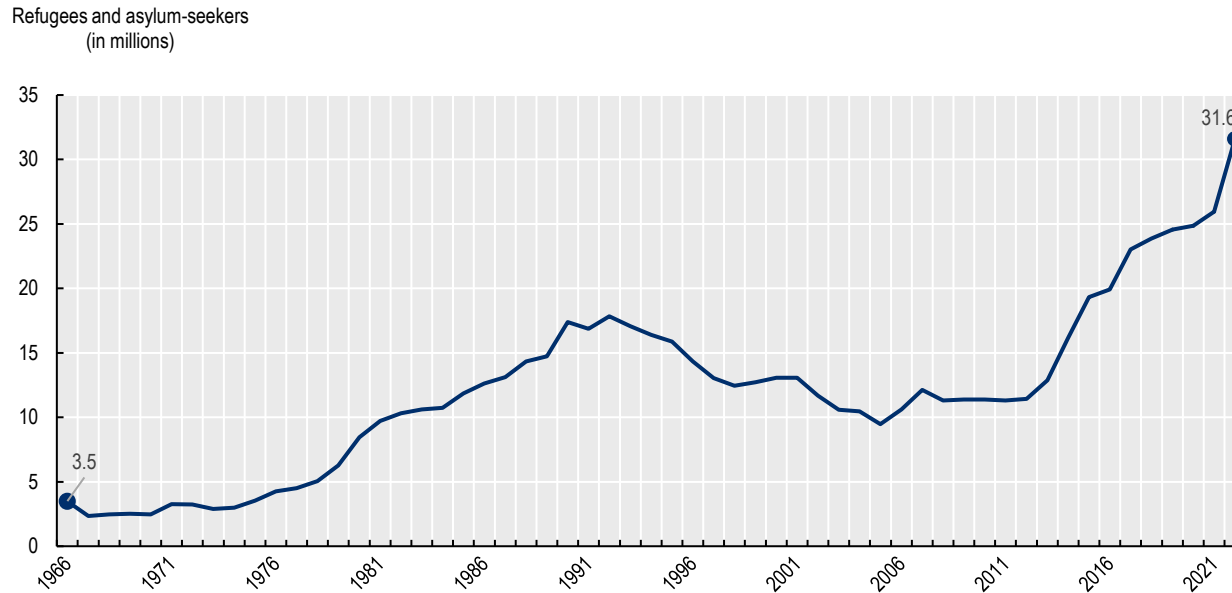Directorate for Education and Skills

29 March 2023

OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

Increasing migration and refugee crises

As of mid-2022, there were 31.6 million refugees and asylum-seekers around the world, with approximately half being under the age of 18

Refugees and asylum-seekers
(in millions)

Many refugees from Ukraine are school-aged children and women

Many host country schools are facing challenges to increase **capacity** and address the **needs** of the new refugee students

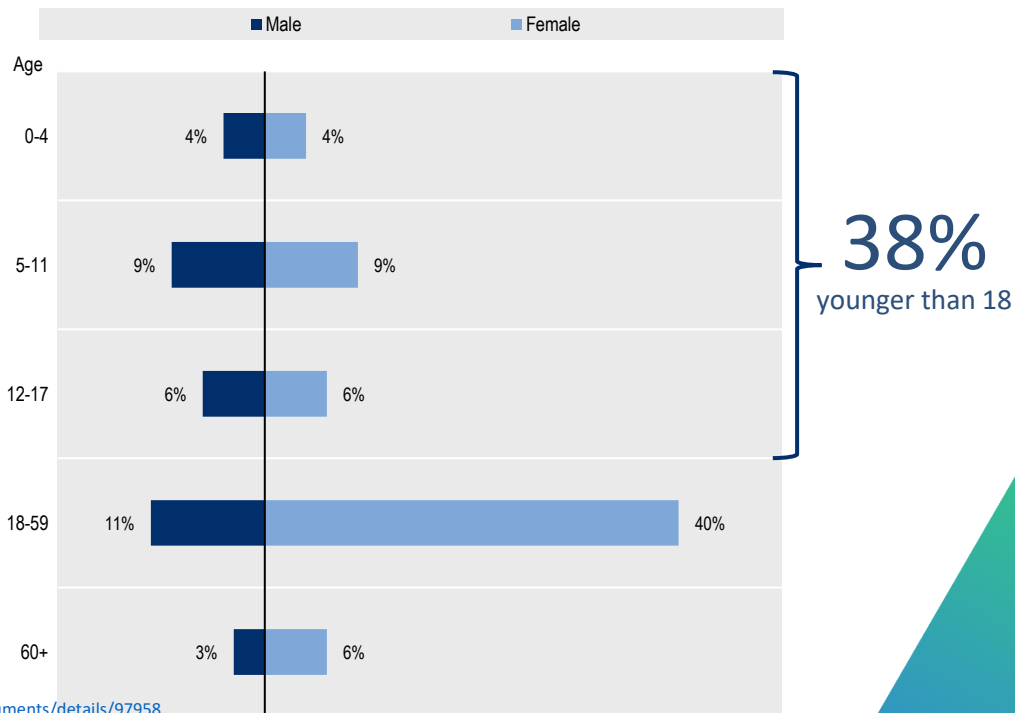**8.1 mil.** refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe

4.9 mil. refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection* in Europe

13-15% persons with disabilities

66% women and girls

| Age	Male	Female
0-4	4%	4%
5-11	9%	9%
12-17	6%	6%
18-59	11%	40%
60+	3%	6%

38% younger than 18

Outcomes of students with an immigrant background

- On average across OECD countries, **differences persist**:
    - Between immigrant and native students and between different immigrant groups
    - Between early and late arrivals.

- Students with an immigrant background are at **increased risk** of:
    - Academic **underperformance**;
    - **Weak sense of belonging** to school community;
    - **Low life satisfaction**.

- Yet, many show high levels of **motivation to achieve**.

How did students with an immigrant background perform in OECD countries in 2018?

Percentage of students attaining baseline academic proficiency
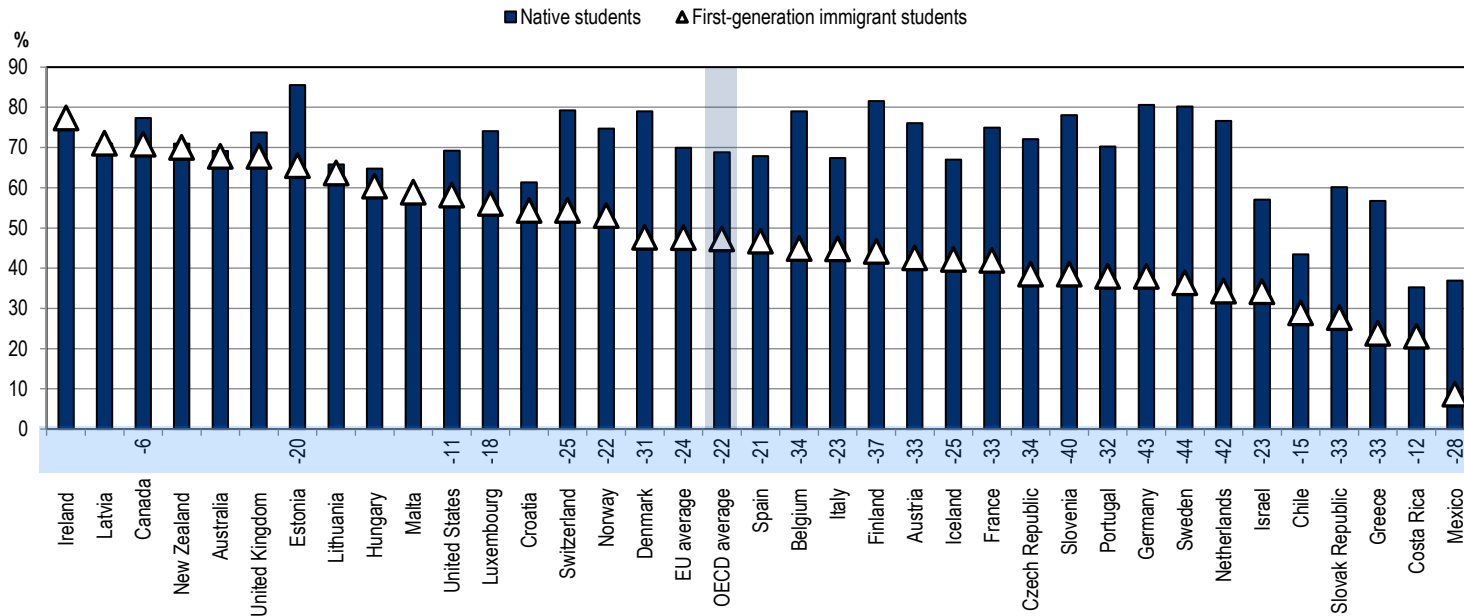
■ Native students   △ First-generation immigrant students

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of first-generation immigrant students attaining baseline academic proficiency.
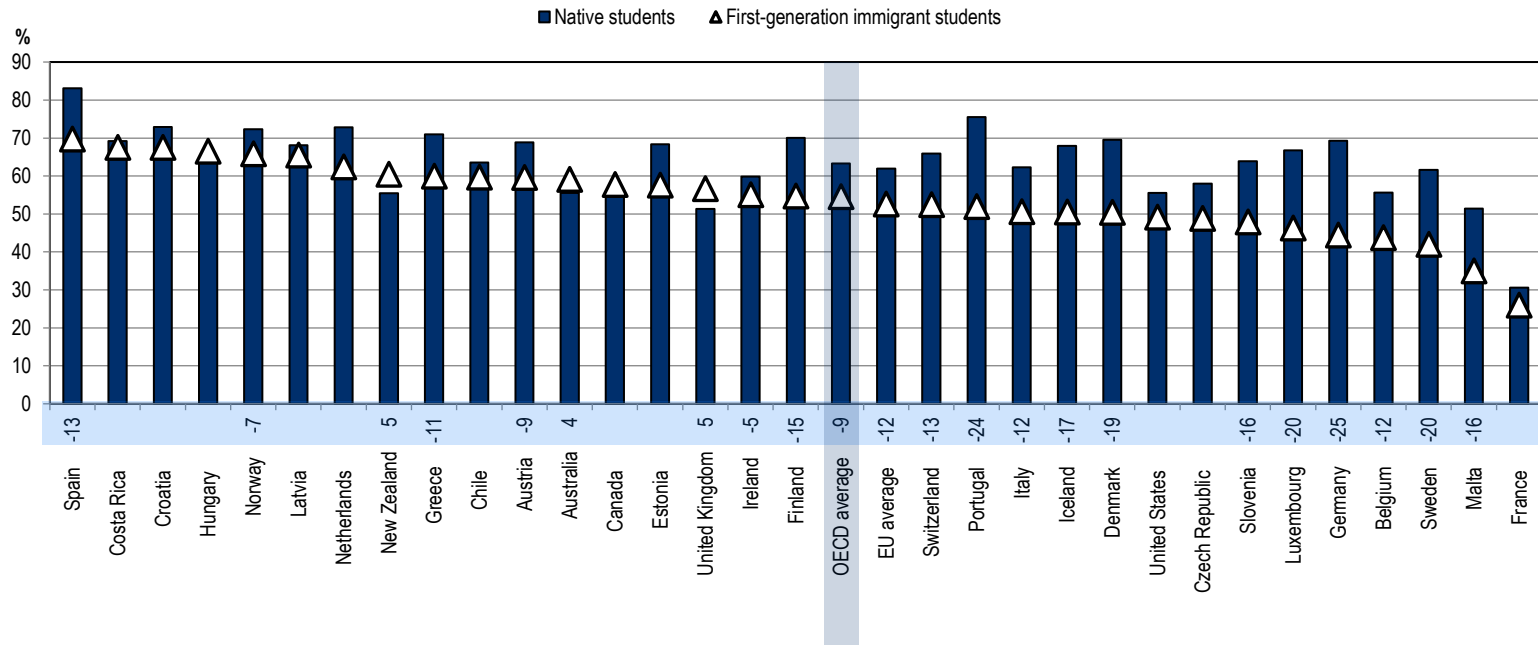Note: Statistically significant differences between first-generation immigrant and native students are shown next to country name. Students who attain baseline academic proficiency are students who reach at least PISA proficiency level two in all three PISA core subjects.
Source: Cerna, Brussino and Mezzanotte (2021), The resilience of students with an immigrant background: An update with PISA 2018, Figure 1.6.

Sense of belonging at school

Percentage of students who reported a sense of belonging at school

■ Native students   △ First-generation immigrant students

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of first-generation immigrant students who reported a sense of belonging at school.
Note: Statistically significant differences between first-generation immigrant and native students are shown next to country name.
Source: Cerna, Brussino and Mezzanotte (2021), The resilience of students with an immigrant background: An update with PISA 2018, Figure 2.2.

Disparities in outcomes at school often persist into adulthood

Unemployment rates, by immigration status and gender (2019)

■ Men Foreign-born   ■ Women Foreign-born   ◆ Men Native-born   ◆ Women Native-born
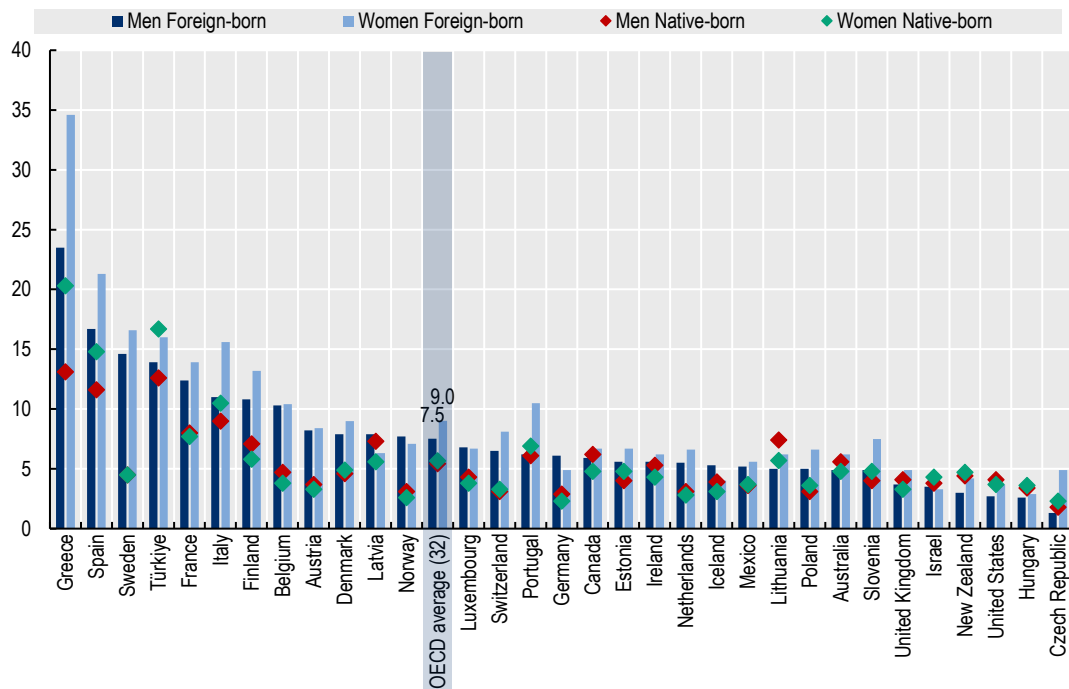
Academic outcomes: low participation in ECEC, below minimum reading proficiency (PISA), isolation in specific schools, but higher motivation and expectations

Social outcomes: lack of social inclusion, experience of discrimination and threats, worse mental health and sense of belonging

Economic outcomes: lower labour market activity rates, income levels, skills mismatch, higher unemployment risk and dependence on social welfare
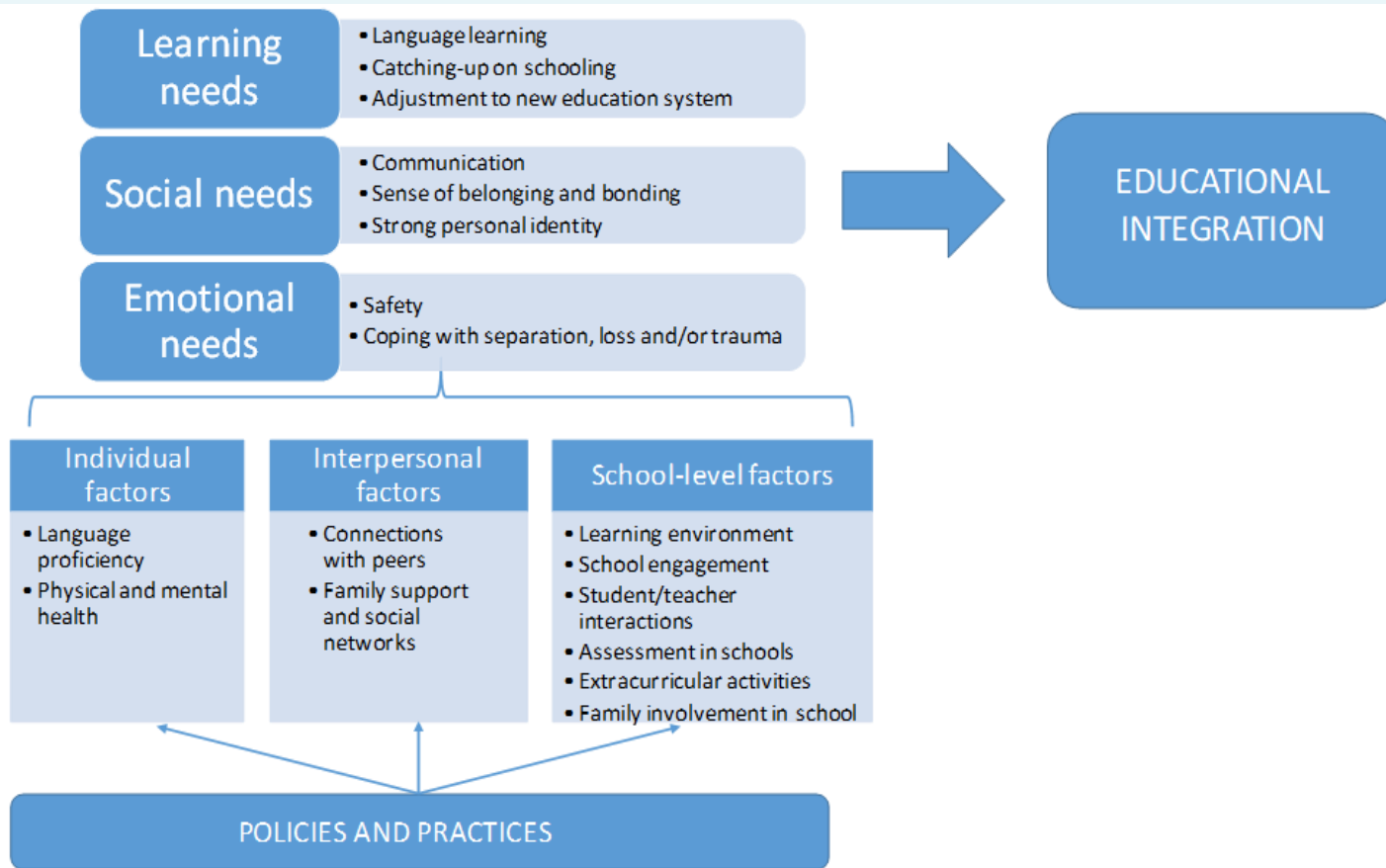
Societal outcomes: loss in productivity, lower innovation and economic growth, lower potential fiscal contributions

Holistic model for the educational integration of refugee students

Learning needs
- Language learning
- Catching-up on schooling
- Adjustment to new education system

Social needs
- Communication
- Sense of belonging and bonding
- Strong personal identity

Emotional needs
- Safety
- Coping with separation, loss and/or trauma

EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION

Individual factors
- Language proficiency
- Physical and mental health

Interpersonal factors
- Connections with peers
- Family support and social networks

School-level factors
- Learning environment
- School engagement
- Student/teacher interactions
- Assessment in schools
- Extracurricular activities
- Family involvement in school

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Source: Cerna (2019), Refugee education: Integration models and practices in OECD countries, Figure 3.1.

Refugee and immigrant students have particular needs that require appropriate policy responses

- **Learning** needs
  - Learn host country language and develop mother tongue
  - Overcome interrupted schooling or limited education
  - Adjust to a new education system

- **Social** needs
  - Communicate with others
  - Bond with others and feel a sense of belonging
  - Develop a strong personal identity

- **Emotional** needs
  - Feel safe
  - Cope with separation, loss and/or trauma

Supporting the needs of refugee students

Examples of practices

| Learning needs	Social and emotional needs	Whole-school approaches	Extra-curricular activities
> In In **Finland**, within the first year, an **individual curriculum** is designed for each student tailored to his/her needs. > In **Sweden**, all new arrivals are assessed in the **students' mother tongues**. Using the results, the principal and/or head teacher determine the best **educational trajectory**.	> Teachers in the **SchlaU-Schule** (Smart School) in **Germany** respond to emerging situations, particularly related to **trauma** and the **living context** of refugee students. > **Pharos programme** in the **Netherlands** fosters **teacher support** and strengthens **peer support systems** and **resilience** among refugee children.	> In **New South Wales (Australia)**, **guidelines** on how to implement a **whole-school response** to welcome and integrate refugee students are published. > In the **United Kingdom**, the **Refugee Welcome Schools** recognises schools that made a **commitment** to **welcome** refugees in their **community**.	> In **Germany**, the **Willkommen im Fussball** (Welcome to Football) initiative provides training sessions involving refugees aged between 4 and 30. > In **Canada**, the Newcomers to Notes programme **teaches piano** to refugee students.

There is a need to better prepare and support teachers to respond to increasing diversity in the classroom

Percentage of 15-year-olds students attending a school where their teachers report a need for training on the following (on average across participating OECD countries)
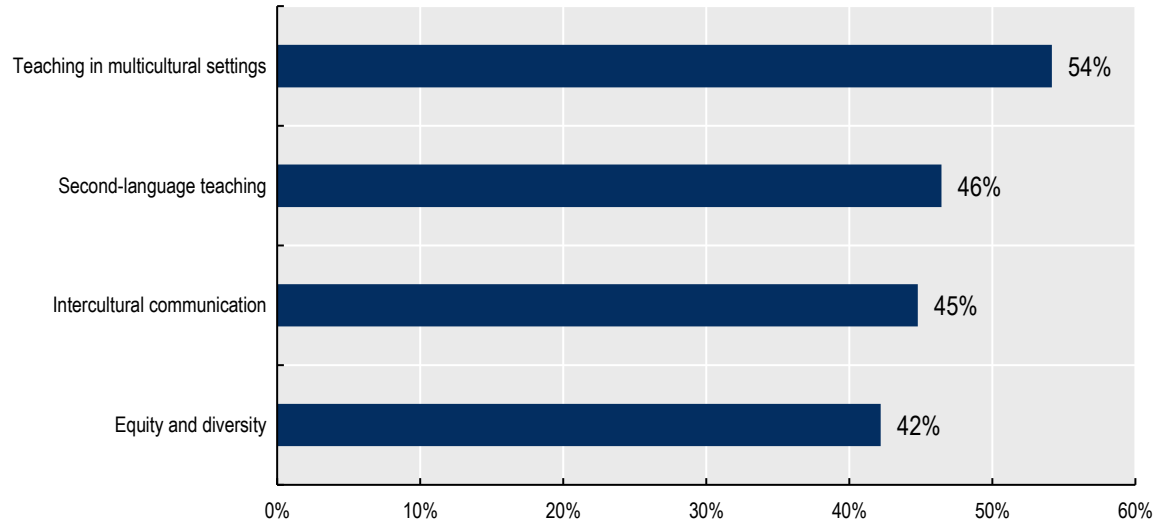
Supporting teachers' needs in light of refugee crises

- Teachers can feel **overwhelmed** as they try to welcome and teach students with a diverse range of needs

- Teachers can benefit from **teams of support** and **programming** that address the needs of their refugee students

- **Practical examples** following the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine:
  - The **French** Ministry of Education has created **web pages with specific guidance** to help teachers welcome students from Ukraine and talk about the war
  - The **Czech Republic's** Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has created a **handbook on how to talk with students about sensitive current events** and protect their mental health
  - **Erasmus** has created a **web page** with links to online resources in English and Ukrainian that includes information on **refugee education, mental health issues, professional development** and ways to interact with other teachers of refuges

Policy lessons for holistic education

- Provide **access to all levels** of education

- Introduce **early assessment** and **individualised learning plans**

- **Flexible** learning, pathways and transitions

- **Language support** for development of mother tongues and language of host country

- **Supportive learning environment** compatible with students' cultures and identity formation

- Promote social interactions, **whole-school** and **whole-community** approaches

- Build capacity for **inclusive teaching** and increase diversity in the teaching workforce (teachers with an immigrant background)
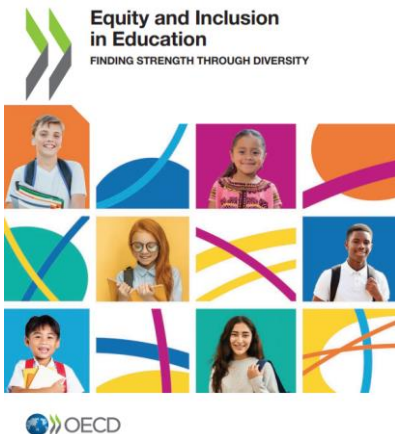
List of references of the work

- Working papers & reports:
    - Cerna, L. (2019), "Refugee education: Integration models and practices in OECD countries", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 203, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/a3251a00-en.
    - Cerna, L. et al. (2019), "Strength through diversity: Spotlight Report for Sweden", OECD Education Working Paper, No. 194, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/059ce467-en
    - Cerna, L., O. Brussino and C. Mezzanotte (2021), "The resilience of students with an immigrant background: An update with PISA 2018", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 261, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/e119e91a-en.
    - Guthrie, C., et al. (2019), "Strength through diversity: Country spotlight report for Chile", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 210, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/058bc849-en.
    - Koehler, C., N. Palaiologou and O. Brussino (2022), "Holistic refugee and newcomer education in Europe: Mapping, upscaling and institutionalising promising practices from Germany, Greece and the Netherlands", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 264, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9ea58c54-en.
    - McBrien, J. (2022), "Social and emotional learning (SEL) of newcomer and refugee students: Beliefs, practices and implications for policies across OECD countries", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 266, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/a4a0f635-en.
    - OECD (2018), The Resilience of Students with an Immigrant Background: Factors that Shape Well-being, OECD Reviews of Migrant Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264292093-en.
    - OECD (2019), The Road to Integration: Education and Migration, OECD Reviews of Migrant Education, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/d8ceec5d-en.
    - Siarova, H. and L. van der Graaf (2022), "Multi-stakeholder approach for better integration of refugee students: Stakeholder engagement in the practice-research-policy transfer in refugee education policy", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 265, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/82b390fb-en.

- Blogs & podcasts:
    - Supporting Ukrainian refugee students
    - Supporting immigrant and refugee students amid the coronavirus pandemic
    - For Ukraine's refugee students, school is urgent

- Briefs:
    - OECD (2022), "Supporting refugee students from Ukraine in host countries", OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/b02bcaa7-en.
    - OECD (2022), "Supporting the social and emotional well-being of refugee students from Ukraine in host countries", OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/af1ff0b0-en.
    - OECD (2022), "The Ukrainian Refugee Crisis: Support for teachers in host countries", OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/546ed0a7-en.

- Other resources are available at: https://www.oecd.org/education/strength-through-diversity/

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New OECD Report **"Equity and Inclusion in education: Finding strength through Diversity"** is available at
https://doi.org/10.1787/e9072e21-en .

For more information on the topic:
https://www.oecd.org/education/strength-through-diversity/