Strength through Diversity
6th Policy Forum, OECD, Paris, 6-7 June 2019

Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness Challenges for Education Systems

Proceedings of the Sixth Policy Forum

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The sixth policy forum of the OECD/EDU's **Strength through Diversity** project took place at the OECD in Paris on 6-7 June 2019. Over 50 participants from seventeen OECD countries, in addition to TUAC, the European Union, UNHCR, UNESCO, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, and a number of academic institutions attended the forum. Presentations and background papers from the meeting can be found at http://www.oecd.org/education/strength-through-diversity/.

OPENING SESSION

Mr. *Paulo Santiago*, Head of Division for Policy Advice and Implementation in the Directorate for Education and Skills at the OECD, opened the forum. He conveyed the importance of producing informed evidence-based knowledge necessary to shape more equitable and inclusive education systems in OECD countries. Mr. Santiago emphasised the rich evidence base produced in the first phase of the project that focused on migration-induced diversity, "The Integration of Immigrant and Refugee Students in Education and Training Systems", to support education systems in addressing large numbers of new arrivals, putting in place or scaling up integration policies and promoting social cohesion. In this respect, Mr. Santiago stressed the core role played by the representatives of OECD countries, European institutions and international organisations that collaborated at the policy fora and at producing country spotlights.

Against this background, Mr. Santiago advanced the need of exploring other dimensions of diversity in educational systems, namely diversity induced by visible minorities and ethnic groups, gender,

giftedness and special education needs as well as their intersectionality, to be addressed in the second phase of the project "Education for Inclusive Societies". To explore such dimensions, the objectives of the Sixth Policy Forum were outlined, namely launching the Synthesis report from the First Phase of the project titled "The Road to Integration: Education and Migration", examining promising practices and innovative approaches used by countries and facilitating peer learning between countries and organisations.

MAIN LESSONS

- Education and training systems can play a key role in ensuring that countries are able to effectively tackle the challenges associated with migration and unlock migration's benefits. They have often a unique role to play so new arrivals are able to develop and use their skills, participate in the labour markets of host countries, contribute to welfare arrangements, and feel a sense of belonging in their communities. In this respect, education and training systems not only enable immigrants to acquire skills necessary for entering the labour market, they also help immigrants understand the culture and traditions of the country of destination and can ensure that native populations have the cognitive and affective skills that are necessary to be open to diversity and change.

- Given the central role that education systems hold in societies, promoting inclusive education systems becomes a priority to foster the well-being of all in increasingly diverse and complex societies. Different dimensions of induced diversity within education systems can affect the academic and broader well-being of students and sustain broader cohesion. These do not only relate to migration-induced diversity, but also gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic minorities and visible minority groups, special education needs and giftedness. Exploring each dimension and how they intersect with one another becomes a priority to build more inclusive education systems.

- The second phase of the OECD's *Strength through Diversity* project will focus on these dimensions of diversity in education and their intersectionality. It will explore inclusiveness and the identity and sense of worth of individuals by promoting well-being and its various dimensions (academic, social, psychological, physical and material) as the targeted outcomes. The project will work on four policy levers: governance, resourcing, capacity building and promoting school level interventions. It will build on the work conducted on migration-induced diversity in the first phase of the project.

- Gender has long been a main source of diversity in education with gender gaps historically favouring men. The closing of gender gaps in attainment and achievement has not been accompanied by a closing of the gender gap in sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as an educational choice. In recent decades, the understanding of gender has started to incorporate broader conceptions than traditional binary and heteronormative ones. Attention towards gender identity and the role schools can have in responding to stigmatisation, marginalisation and issues related to mental health for students has grown, with a focus on how to ensure well-being and inclusion for all.

- Starting from the 1970s, there has been a growing attention towards creating equitable and inclusive education environments for students with special education needs (SEN), i.e. with learning disabilities, physical impairments and conditions related to mental health. Whereas such students had traditionally been enrolled in special schools, they have been increasingly included in more inclusive education settings. However, differences still exist among countries in the type of education provision provided to such students and the ways countries define and acknowledge SEN. For instance, some countries also include strong cultural and linguistic differences and gifted students in their understandings of SEN.

- Giftedness defines those students with high achievement capabilities above the norm for their age. Despite giftedness being more detected in the form of intellectual giftedness, it can also manifest itself in the shape of creative potential. A reason why creative giftedness is not as detected as intellectual potential is that many education systems reward intellect rather than creativity. Gifted students often face mental health and socio-emotional challenges. Gifted students assessed as gifted together with other special education needs are often defined as double-exceptional students. Across countries, there are different approaches to support gifted students. These options include specialised programmes or maintenance in mainstream schools. Acceleration programmes allow students to skip grades and provide them access to curriculum adjustments, while enrichment programmes involve an in-depth study of a topic or the discovery of additional topics.

- Ethnic groups and visible minorities represent another dimension of diversity that can often lead to marginalisation in education systems. An example are Roma people in Europe. More specifically, Roma students often appear to be over-identified as having special education needs. Making sure that integration and inclusion processes are in place for different ethnic groups becomes essential to promote the well-being of all student populations. Coordinated interventions across policy areas could be promoted. For instance, involving Roma in policy interventions can represent a strategy to facilitate dialogue and cooperation. Interventions at the school-level such as student-to-student mentoring can also support the inclusion of students with ethnic minority backgrounds.

LAUNCH OF "THE ROAD TO INTEGRATION: EDUCATION AND MIGRATION"

Ms. Francesca Borgonovi (OECD/EDU) launched the Synthesis Report of the first phase of the *Strength through Diversity* project entitled "The Road to Integration: Education and Migration". After presenting the materials published during Phase I and the policy fora convened, Ms. Borgonovi introduced the targets set and the framework deployed to carry out the report, and she presented the main policy pillars derived from the work.

Phase I aimed at identifying a new set of indicators to examine how societies have responded and are responding to challenges to social cohesion posed by large scale international migration. It targeted the creation of an improved data infrastructure to support the development of strong evidence and identify policy responses pursued by countries and their results. Phase I also aimed at collecting evidence on the conditions under which such policies achieve or do not achieve their objectives and at stimulating a discussion among key stakeholders to support peer learning and strengthen collaboration.

In terms of outputs produced, Ms. Borgonovi mentioned the different policy fora that took place to target knowledge management, the various analytical reports and papers produced to develop analyses and indicators and Country Spotlight Reports to provide policy advice to specific countries, namely Sweden and Chile.

First, Ms. Borgonovi presented the multilevel resilience framework on which the project is based. She highlighted how migrating from one country to the other becomes a challenge because of language, socio-economic conditions, weaker personal social networks and differences in educational systems. Building on this, the multilevel resilience framework moves from the individual student to the school, educational and societal levels. It acknowledges different risk and protective factors generating vulnerabilities and adversity and focuses on how these translate into the individual capacity to work in new contexts. The framework focuses on both academic and socio-emotional outcomes in view of long-term integration.

Second, Ms. Borgonovi underlined the key policy principles of the Synthesis Report: supporting the acquisition of skills and competences among migrant communities, promoting overall social and emotional well-being of immigrants, recognising differences in migration-related experiences and building skills necessary to cope with psychological and behavioural challenges induced by acculturation, both among migrants and natives. The outlined policy principles mirror a holistic policy approach to education and economic integration and social cohesion in times of greater international migration. The core elements of such approach include skill development among natives (namely openness to diversity, cultural understanding and labour-market skills to ensure no labour market displacement occurs) and immigrants (academic school-based skills for children and skill upgrading for adults, cultural understanding). Furthermore, the holistic approach envisions social and emotional support for immigrants to deal with the difficulties of uprooting.

Third, Ms. Borgonovi explained the policy pillars of the project. They concern taking into account the heterogeneity of immigrant population, developing approaches to promote the overall well-being of immigrants, and addressing the unique needs of refugee students. Also, they include making sure that motivation translates in a key asset for immigrant communities, organising resources to reduce the

influence of socio-economic status on the outcomes of immigrants and providing comprehensive language support. Additionally, the pillars recommend building teacher capacity to deal with diversity and breaking down barriers to social cohesion while ensuring effective service delivery.

Ms. Borgonovi then presented each policy pillar in detail. Being migrants rather heterogeneous groups, policymakers should consider the various dimensions of an individual's migration experience: space (mobility, legal restrictions and cultural distance), time (duration of movement and residence, age at time of migration and number of generations since displacement occurred), and reason (employment, education, family formation/reunification, displacement). Furthermore, they should deploy strength-based approaches to develop policy principles to promote the overall well-being of immigrants. They should be holistic (coherent, complementary and targeted policies) and multilevel (community involvement) approaches that take into account cumulative adversity (identification of vulnerable groups), adjustment as a dynamic process (immediate and continuous support), and relational development (identification of protective and risk factors).

Focusing on refugee students, Ms. Borgonovi underlined that there are considerable data gaps for refugee children leaving unclear understandings of the numbers of refugee children in OECD countries and of their academic and socio-emotional outcomes. The speaker marked that policy makers should ensure access to all levels of education for all refugee students, early assessment and individualised development and learning plans, as well as language supports. They should also encourage mother tongue development and supportive learning environments compatible with home culture and identity formation. Promoting opportunities for social interactions between refugees and other students and supporting refugees' well-being and mental health are other important policy pillars.

To ensure that motivation translates into a key asset for immigrant communities, skills support, education and career guidance and cooperation with families on realistic expectations and targets for immigrant students represent main policy lessons conveyed by the speaker. To reduce the influence of socio-economic status on the outcomes of immigrants and the concentration of disadvantage, Ms. Borgonovi suggested policies such as promoting the participation in high quality early childhood education for second-generation immigrant children or new arrivals, effective service delivery of quality resources and targeting the population in greatest need.

Ms. Borgonovi then outlined main trends on literacy gaps between native and migrants. The gap is considerably smaller when comparing the gap between migrants and natives who are both native language speakers of the language of the test (or, conversely who are both non-native speakers). In the vast majority of countries, the migrant gap is considerably smaller when controlling for individuals' mother tongue. In some countries, such as Greece and Finland, the gap is very small or not statistically significant. In others, the gap remains sizeable, albeit smaller, such as in Germany, Canada and Sweden. Against this background, Ms. Borgonovi stressed that considering the additional barrier determined by the specific languages migrants speak is crucial for determining their training needs in terms of both intensity and time that individuals may require. Suggested policy for this pillar include the promotion of plurilingualism, early assessment and monitoring, targeted language support, building teacher capacity to deal with linguistically diverse classes, supporting opportunities for informal language learning, promoting digital language learning tools and addressing barriers preventing adults from participating in language trainings.

To build teacher capacity to deal with migration-induced diversity, professionals with backgrounds reflecting the diversity of the student body should be hired. Second, the integration of diversity and inter-cultural topics in initial teacher education and continuous professional development as well as in diversity management and inclusive education trainings for the school's staff should be included. Additionally, the speaker suggested that specialised teaching and assistant staff should adequately support learning and teaching in mainstream classes.

The conclusive pillar presented by Ms. Borgonovi regarded breaking down barriers to social cohesion while ensuring effective service delivery by promoting high levels of skills in the population, training teachers to work in multicultural classrooms, and supporting teachers to involve foreign-born families.

Discussion

After the presentation, forum participants engaged in an in-depth discussion. A first question was raised by a representative of the Netherlands concerning whether the project also investigated the level of awareness necessary to properly support students. This representative stressed that often teachers show willingness to develop capacity to address diversity in the classroom but unawareness of their own prejudices. A representative from Austria focused on the growing tendency of producing policies not based on data and mentioning the increasing debate about post-factual society. She highlighted big data gaps and the issue of monitoring trajectories, namely life course perspectives when looking at children entering education until young adulthood and stressed on the possibility of producing policies not directly based on evidence.

A representative from Norway suggested including the intersectionality of gender, socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds in future works of the project. She mentioned how the three sources of induced diversity often produce a triple advantage, as mirrored in PISA and PIAAC data. A representative from the EU representative asked whether immigrant children tested in mother tongue fared differently or progressed differently compared to those assessed in the language of instruction.

Another point concerned whether education systems appropriately include teachers from minorities and immigrant backgrounds. On top of a shortage of teachers from minority and immigrant backgrounds, a representative from TUAC pointed out the increasing general shortage of teachers across OECD countries. Linking to this, Ms. Borgonovi recalled literature debates on whether salary incentives are associated with greater numbers of teachers. She mentioned that factors to take into account should be social status, working conditions, and non-traditional individuals such as males and minorities when analysing the composition of teaching bodies to make them more inclusive.

Key messages

Migration has been at the centre of policy debate across the OECD in recent years. Policy responses aimed at supporting and facilitating the integration of immigrants have been polarising in many countries. Policy makers, civil society organisations, schools and citizens in OECD countries all contribute to support newcomers.

Migration flows can create some challenges for host communities, but they also represent an opportunity for countries that face an ageing native-born population to overcome the associated threat of labour and skills shortages. Education and training systems can play a key role in ensuring that countries are able to effectively tackle the challenges associated with migration and unlock migration's benefits. They have a unique role to play if new arrivals are to be able to develop and use their skills, participate in the labour markets of host countries, contribute to welfare arrangements, and feel a sense of belonging in their communities.

However, a lack of coordination between different actors and a lack of knowledge on what strategies can reduce the effectiveness, reach and suitability of policies aimed at supporting immigrant and refugee students. Education and training systems not only enable immigrants to acquire skills necessary for entering the labour market, they also help immigrants understand the culture and traditions of the country of destination and can ensure that native populations have the cognitive and affective skills that are necessary to be open to diversity and change.

The Synthesis Report of Strength through Diversity, "The Road to Integration. Education and Migration" identifies eight policy pillars that can sustain and support the effectiveness of policy conception, design, and implementation in education.

They concern taking into account the heterogeneity of immigrant population, developing approaches to promote the overall well-being of immigrants, and addressing the unique needs of refugee students. Also, they include making sure that motivation translates in a key asset for immigrant communities, organising resources to reduce the influence of socio-economic status on the outcomes of immigrants and providing comprehensive language support. Additionally, the pillars recommend building teacher capacity to deal with diversity and breaking down barriers to social cohesion while ensuring effective service delivery.

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM

Ms. Ita Sheehy (UNHCR) presented on the Global Refugee Forum. The Global Compact on Refugees, affirmed by the UN in December 2018, has the interlinked objectives of easing pressures on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third-country solutions and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. Furthermore, its Programme of Action aims at strengthening comprehensive responses concerning global and situation-specific arrangements, tools for international burden- and responsibility-sharing and areas in need of support, e.g. reception, admission, education, livelihoods, host community needs. Ms. Sheehy delineated the key elements to put in place comprehensive responses: multi-stakeholder approach led by governments, providing benefits for both refugees and host communities, adaptability to specific countries and regional contexts, integration of existing plans, strategies and coordination mechanisms and links to address root causes of forced displacements and prevention.

Ms. Sheehy presented the key objectives of the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) that took place in Geneva in December 2018. It aimed at creating, developing and strengthening the architecture and arrangements to operationalise the Global compact in the longer run, translating principles of increased solidarity and more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing into concrete actions. Building on this, Ms. Sheehy presented the areas of focus of GRF 2019: increasing access to education, fostering conditions that facilitate jobs and livelihoods, providing access to clean energy and bolstering infrastructure, facilitating solutions and efforts to strengthen protection capacity through support for institutions, preparedness and contingency planning.

With respect to promoting inclusion in education systems, Ms. Sheehy emphasised the need of including refugee children and youth in national education systems to benefit from increased access to the full cycle of quality of primary and secondary education. This can be achieved by including refugees in national and provincial sector plans, budgets and programmes, by leveraging broader partnerships for technical and financial supports and enhancing engagement of the civil society and private sector. The speaker also presented key strategies such as targeting specific programmes for girls and young women and broadening access to flexible certified education programmes.

Ms. Sheehy emphasised UNHCR's commitment to increasing access to accredited tertiary education and skills training and eliminating systemic barrier policies. She presented the expansion of scholarship and loan schemes for university access, technical, vocational education, and training programmes, granting equitable admission for all, recognition of certification and qualifications and expanding certified blended learning programmes are strategies to achieve it. Furthermore, Ms. Sheehy advanced the need of providing timely and amplified education responses in emergencies that strengthen local education systems and support hosting communities to facilitate refugee inclusion.

To conclude, Ms. Sheehy asked how the OECD could see entry points to improve cooperation among diverse political, social, peace actors in the education domain. The speaker addressed the need for more systematic studies to fill the gaps of insufficient research and the importance of longitudinal studies and engagement with academic institutions.

Discussion

A participant from the Directorate for Development Cooperation (DCD) at the OECD added that DCD and the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (ELS) provided support to the Global Refugee Forum. The Development Assistance Committee and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility collected data on the financing of refugees as 5 out of 13 indicators contribute to the Global Compact of Refugees. Another work stream was a position paper on right financing of refugee support.

A participant from ELS highlighted that his Directorate worked closely with UNHCR and explored safe pathways not through the asylum route, but through labour migration, family reunification and student migration. They have developed a monitoring tool on how many student visas are being given to refugee population. In 2010 and 2017, more than 55 000 student permits in OECD countries were granted to four main origin countries of refugees.

Sessions

Five further sessions took place as part of the forum: (1) the launch of Phase II of the Strength through Diversity project: Education for Inclusive Societies; sessions on (2) gender, gender identity and sexual identity in education; (3) special education needs, 4) giftedness and 5) ethnic groups and visible minorities. The sessions were complemented with a workshop on the intersectionality of the different dimensions of induced-diversity covered in the project. Participants were divided into four groups and were led by table moderators from the OECD and the American Graduate School in Paris. Ms. *Lucie Cerna* (OECD/EDU) and Mr. *Paulo Santiago* (OECD/EDU) moderated the sessions.

SESSION 1: INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

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In Session 1, participants discussed the role of education to foster inclusion in society and the need to support inclusive education settings acknowledging different dimensions of induced diversity in education. Session 1 was divided into Part A and Part B.

In Part A, Ms. *Francesca Borgonovi* (OECD/EDU) presented the framework of Phase II of the Strength through Diversity project by restating the two key questions guiding the second phase and by providing definitions of key terms. The five dimensions of diversity that the Project would be focusing on (migration, ethnic groups and visible minorities, gender, special education needs, and giftedness) were also introduced. An emphasis was placed on the fact that the second phase was departing from more traditional OECD work on equity to instead focus on inclusiveness, and the identity and sense of worth of individuals. The key issues of analysis and the four policy levers include governance, resourcing, capacity building and promoting school level interventions.

Ms. Borgonovi outlined the role of education for inclusive societies, which is that of identifying how education systems can become more inclusive by supporting the learning and well-being outcomes of diverse populations, by exploring how education systems can support all individuals to engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies, and through analysis and policy advice geared towards helping governments and schools address equity and diversity to achieve more inclusive education systems.

The speaker outlined that equity and quality are two important dimensions of education systems. Educational equity can be defined in different ways but often refers to supporting all students to reach their learning potential without setting formal or informal barriers or lowering expectations based on the dimensions of diversity that apply to a particular student or group of students (OECD, 2012).

Ms. Borgonovi emphasised that instruments to gather data and define good outcomes are providing information about the distribution of abilities and learning potential of different groups. The speaker stressed that inclusive education aims to create systems that are affordable, accessible, acceptable and adaptable to learners' needs. Key to inclusive education are the twin concepts of self-respect and identity. By focusing on individuals' identity and sense of self-worth, the project aims to consider not only normative evaluations of how society's methods for allocating resources can reduce between-group differences in educational outcomes but also support the buy-in of broader community actors to promote long-term social cohesion.

The speaker defined inclusive education as "an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination" (UNESCO, 2009). An inclusive ecosystem considers different stakeholders, from the students to society and considers two faces of inclusiveness: educational goals and standards and participation. From this, the importance of creating systems that are integrative but also that allow individuals to share learning with others emerge.

Ms. Borgonovi presented the work plan of Phase II of *Strength through Diversity*: from literature reviews providing research-based evidence on inclusive education, policy mapping identifying

innovative and successful policy initiatives and practices promoting equity and inclusiveness in education, to peer learning to facilitate exchanges of lessons and experiences among countries and policy advice.

The speaker then proposed the framework deployed, which considers different factors at the school, school system and societal levels as well as different forms of induced diversity in education systems. The latter focus on migration-induced diversity, ethnic groups and visible minorities, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, special education needs and gifted students. Ms. Borgonovi specified that ethnicity concerns the self-perception of individuals, not the external perception. The plan of the project is to use visible minorities as an indication of ethnicity. Furthermore, the speaker underlined the importance of intersectionality, the cumulative or multiplicative effects of the different dimensions of diversity.

Additionally, Ms. Borgonovi remarked that the project evaluates policy impact not only in terms of academic outcomes but also in terms of psychological, physical, social and material well-being. She elaborated on the role of families' socio-economic and cultural capital as a lens through which opportunities and challenges come to experience and on the role of geography. In terms of external conditions and factors shaping outcomes, three main categories were identified: school-level, school system and societal factors.

Ms. Borgonovi presented the main policy levers for inclusion, equity and diversity in education systems: governing diversity, inclusion and equity in education; resourcing diversity, inclusion and equity in education; developing capacity for diversity, inclusion and equity in education; and promoting school-level interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education. Each policy levers can be investigated with respect to the different dimensions of diversity considered in the project.

Plenary discussion

Following the presentation by Ms. Borgonovi, a plenary discussion took place. A representative from TUAC stressed the fact that what is measured impacts on inclusiveness. He presented the example of giftedness in Ireland, which he considered as a dimension of special education needs often forgotten. For example, he noted serious questions of methodology and impact in the United Kingdom's Research Excellence and Teaching Excellence frameworks. Social policy goes beyond quantitative data.

Ms. Borgonovi responded that the project seeks to integrate both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data provides a glimpse of what is meant to measure. One example is to think about community-based input evaluating impact. Some groups will not catch up with existing power structures determining outcomes. But oral information exchange is also important.

A representative from the Netherlands commented that inclusion policy might not be developed with the idea of inclusion. Only focusing on policy might miss a lot. There is so much relevant information in small practices and those happening outside the system. Learning does not only happen within classroom. For example, for Indigenous groups, learning is happening outside the system. Ms. Borgonovi explained that the fourth policy lever considered school-level practices. In a decentralised

system, it is important to ensure a monitoring system. OECD works mostly with governments. However, it is also important to learn from local level initiatives.

Another participant from Ireland commented that there were many developments in diversity and inclusion. In the Irish teaching profession, there is no diversity among primary teachers (about 9 out of 10 are female). At the secondary level, about 8 out of 10 are female. This raises the importance of developing policies to promote greater diversity within the teaching profession. Ms. Borgonovi replied that the project tries to highlight inclusive ecosystems. Ensuring that teaching profession reflects general diversity accounted for at the student level is important. There are three key challenges of building a diverse teaching workforce: recruitment, retention and creating meaningful pathways.

Session 1B began with a presentation by *Ms. Anna D'Addio*, a Senior Policy Analyst leading the thematic part of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report team at UNESCO. Ms. D'Addio began with an overview of the GEM Report - a tool officially mandated to monitor the progress of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: *Quality of Education,* as well as the SDG 4 as found within the other goals. Since changing its name from the "Education for All Global Monitoring Report" to reflect a global

commitment to education, three reports have been published: "*People and Planet*" (2016), *Accountability* (2017) and *Migration and Displacement* (2019). The focus of the next report, to be published in 2020, is "inclusion", and it highlights the commitment of all the SDGs to "leave no one behind". In SDG 4, it relates specifically to ensuring "inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all".

Inclusion is a concept that has changed over time, and lacks a clear-cut meaning. Ms. D'Addio explained that for many people, inclusive education and inclusion do no hold the same meaning and that it is possible to talk about the two separately. Originally, yet still in certain cases, inclusive education was thought of exclusively in terms of disability and special education needs. The Warnock report of 1978, for example, suggested that children with disabilities, previously left outside of education, should be educated, in separate or specialised settings. However, the rise of the social model of disability, which maintains that it is not the individual that should adapt to the system, but rather the system that should adapt to the diverse needs of its learners, saw a shift in how the subject of inclusion was addressed. UNESCO affirmed this approach towards special needs education in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education 1994. Ms. D'Addio noted that this year marked the 25th year anniversary of the statement, and to commemorate its inception, what has been done since, and what was yet to be done, UNESCO would be organising a conference in Colombia.

Ms. D'Addio further expressed that the way inclusive education manifests itself varies and is interpreted differently across countries. A distinction was made between inclusion and integration. While the latter may involve putting a student into a classroom, it would not entail adapting the system to make it responsive to the needs of that particular individual. In marking this difference, Ms. D'Addio used the example of Italy: it was one of the first countries to have a fully and comprehensive

integrated policy for students with disability, yet, over time, this integration approach moved to one of inclusion. Moreover, she asserted that inclusion is interpreted differently to mean, on the one hand, the inclusion of only certain groups such as ethnic minorities, indigenous people, those living in remote and rural areas, and, on the other hand, the inclusion of all learners, and particularly those who are at most risk of being left behind.

The speaker highlighted the scope of the 2020 GEM report, including its focus on the common mechanisms of exclusion, and the areas, dimensions, degrees and elements of inclusion, as well as the essential building blocks. She mentioned that the report was developing country profiles for inclusive education, and had so far reviewed 72 countries, which were in the process of undergoing evaluation. Ms. D'Addio further highlighted that two regional reports would be published for the first time: Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eurasia.

The second presentation was given by *Ms. Adrienn Nyircsak*, a policy officer in the Strategy and Investments Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. She gave a presentation on the European Commission's work and the general EU policy landscape of social inclusion and inclusive education..

Ms. Nyircsak maintained that the Commission has a commitment to viewing diversity as an asset. While the European Union does not have the competence to legislate in the area of inclusive education, it supports member states' efforts in this area, for instance through mutual learning in working groups that work on different topics and subjects within that area.

She asserted that the key point of departure for their work on inclusive education was the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights, which has as its first key principle "education, training and life-long learning". This principle guides the Commission's work on inclusive education and includes important aspects like the acquisition of skills, participation in society and the ability of individuals to transition successfully to the labour market.

Ms. Nyircsak referred to the definition of inclusive education found in the "Elements of Policy Framework" developed by a working group on the promotion of citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. Significantly, this definition emphasised the importance of ensuring access to quality education in mainstream settings and in giving particular attention to those at risk of exclusion, underachievement or marginalisation. It further highlighted the use of a multidimensional approach targeted to individuals with a diversity of backgrounds that may interact.

The 2015 Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship, and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education also serves as another point of departure for the Commission's work. Ms. Nyircsak explained that following the Paris attacks of that same year, the idea that education could promote social cohesion and act as a tool against issues such as the radicalisation of young people began to grow. Moreover, it signalled that in actuality, education extends beyond the walls of schools and it is important to equip all learners in increasingly relevant areas such as critical thinking and media literacy.

Ms. Nyircsak then continued into a discussion of the policy context. In regards to the work done in sectorial policies, the focus extends across all levels and sectors of education and training, including early childhood education and care, school education, vocational training and tertiary education. The Commission does not exclusively address inclusive education but also engages with other elements such as the social responsibilities of higher education institutions and how they contribute to solving social problems. Horizontal policies include Council Recommendations, for instance on key competences for lifelong learning or a comprehensive approach for teaching and learning languages; while other related fields include the Commission's Action Plan for the integration of third-country nationals.

Another framework that guides the Commission's policies on inclusive education is the Council Recommendation on Promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching. Ms. Nyircsak gave an overview of common values, as defined in Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy and equality; as well as those found in the learning content such as citizenship and critical thinking, and values found in the learning environment such as the establishment of schools as spaces where controversial issues can be initiated and conducted. In supporting inclusive education, the Council Recommendation includes ensuring access to quality education; needs-based support for learners; facilitated transitions between educational pathways; initial education and continuing professional development for teachers and peer support and guidance for educators.

The Commission supports the promotion of inclusive education in three key ways. Firstly, it makes funding available for programmes such as Erasmus+, or the structural and investment funds. Secondly, it supports policy reforms in Member States through the exchange of good practices and mutual learning, for instance in the form of peer learning activities. Lastly, it facilitates research and cooperation by collaborating with expert networks and collaborating with organisations like the OECD. Furthermore, the Commission is working on several cross-cutting thematic policy areas relevant for inclusive education. These are for instance policies for the prevention of early school leaving, key competences for lifelong learning, or the-whole school approach, for instance, through the development of a framework for high-quality early childhood and care systems or promoting language awareness in schools. Further work relates to. critical thinking, active citizenship and media literacy (for example the issues of representation in mainstream media and its implications for a sense of belonging); the integration of third-country nationals (through establishing a policy network on migrant education); and digital education, including its use for disabled learners and the ways in which it can be used to enhance education and media literacy. In recognising other informal aspects of education that are often overlooked, the Commission has likewise developed actions for inclusion in youth, sports and culture.

Ms. Nyircsak concluded with the Commission's outlook for the future. She maintained that it is yet to be seen how the priorities of social inclusion and inclusive education will evolve based on the appointment of the new Commission. Nevertheless, in ensuring a more inclusive Erasmus programme, that the Commission proposes to increase funding for the future Erasmus programme, and plans to boost inclusion in different ways, for example by focusing on ensuring access to those unable to participate in traditional Erasmus mobility programmes.

Plenary discussion

A question directed towards the two presenters was what dimensions of diversity were included in their respective work on inclusion. Ms. D'Addio began by responding that the approach of the GEM report was to go beyond group categorisations to encompass all individuals. However, such an approach is constrained by data, which focuses on specifics such as ethnic groups, gender and LGBTQI communities. She maintained that the report would also be looking at disabilities and its different dimensions such as physical and mental. Additionally, the report would be commissioning work on internally displaced people, a group usually excluded from present discussions and on intersectionality, the accumulation of disadvantage and identity, and the role that poverty plays in the issue of access.

Ms. Nyircsak followed by stating that the Commission, in talking about inclusion, looks at vulnerable groups and those at the risk of marginalisation. Their task is to support policies where all the different groups can be included based on the priorities of different states. While some concrete reference groups are ethnic minorities and those with a migrant background, they are nevertheless trying to maintain a broad definition to inclusive education, encompassing a wide range of diversity dimensions. Additionally, she stated that the Commission supports upward socio-economic convergence across European regions, including access to quality educational opportunities. . Consequently, irrespective of where an individual goes in the EU, they should be able to receive the same level of quality of education.

Another question was raised on how local power structures would be presented between the different building blocks of the GEM report and country reviews. Ms. D'Addio responded that firstly, there will be a chapter on governance that will provide a vertical and horizontal overview of how central government works and that will also cover issues of accountability. This will also take into account the role of both donors and those at the local level. Secondly, local issues such as teacher and school autonomy will be mainstreamed in each chapter. For example, it is already clear that when teachers have more autonomy, they can successfully adapt curriculum to the specific learners in their classroom. Additionally, within the report, there will be a chapter on the role played by communities and NGOs.

In response to a question about how the Commission will ensure that funding will be used to create inclusive education for the target groups, Ms. Nyircsak responded that the Erasmus+ programme for example is a demand-driven programme, and while such programmes do not work directly with target groups, they focus on developing pedagogical practices that benefit them. Ms. D'Addio added that there was important yet overlooked evidence that funding giving ownership to countries, allowing them to respective their values, and introducing their own stakeholders is often the most effective. In saying that, when you fund a project for a particular group, you deviate from the goal of an inclusive education that caters to all.

Ms. Borgonovi commented on the commonalities between all three presentations on inclusive education and invited the presenters to reflect on the differences and uniqueness in their work. She noted that one difference lies in the issue of teachers. The *Strength through Diversity* team would like to look at teachers in two ways: first as actors in creating inclusive education for students, and

secondly through the acknowledgment that education systems provide major employment opportunities, and are thus spaces where discussions of inclusiveness, and in particular the employment of diverse teachers, can be held.

Ms. D'Addio asserted that as seen in the GEM's 2019 report on migrants and displacement, teachers are significant actors in education systems. The hope of their work was therefore to go beyond a focus on in-service training to also address issues such as the diversity of teachers. This would look not only at gender but also at teachers with disabilities and migrant backgrounds. She noted that one difference between the work conducted by the *Strength through Diversity* team and the GEM Report is UNESCO's use of a rights-based approach, which also works alongside a human-centred and whole system approach.

Ms. Nyircsak highlighted the EU's particular focus on mobility and the need to consider inclusion in and through mobility. Their approach may also differ in that they try to create synergies with other non-formal providers of education and adopt a community-based approach to their work. For example, she mentioned that a tool-kit had just been published on youth groups working with refugees and migrants to foster social inclusion.

A discussion ensued about the different ways in which countries attempt to address issues of inclusion and the struggles involved in doing so. In the Netherlands, the higher education department is intentional and vocal in making education inclusive. Inclusive education is not seen as a goal in itself however, but more of a solution to something seen as a problem. In Spain, the new government is developing policies on inclusion that cover issues of access and participation for all students, but in reality, putting these policies into practice and creating a flexible system and approach is proving difficult. Additionally, the participation of parents, the community and social and health services is seen as another issue that must be addressed. In the Nordic countries, the goals of equity and inclusion are very strong: there is a belief that classrooms should welcome all students and that everyone should be able to realise their full potential. In practice, it becomes very difficult for one teacher to meet the individual needs of all their students. Consequently, it is important that teachers are equipped with the appropriate tools to handle diverse and inclusive classrooms.

Other issues raised included the evolving nature of inclusion and the reality that, globally, diversity is decreasing. In line with this, it was cautioned that inclusive education should not become another buzzword that takes away intentionality. Moreover, a participant asserted that the notion of "willingness", which had yet to be raised, should be addressed in discussions on how to create effective policies and realise the goals of inclusive education. In Greece for example, the prejudices held by teachers, professionals and society can be great barriers in creating transformative societies.

Summary of Session 1: Inclusive societies

Session 1 introduced the concept of inclusion in education and its evolution. In today's complex and diverse societies, fostering inclusive education systems becomes a priority to ensure the well-being of all.

The Session introduced a holistic framework deployed by the *Strength through Diversity* project to analyse different forms of induced diversity in education (gender, migration, visible minorities and ethnic groups, special education needs, giftedness), how they intersect with one another and within the overarching parameters of socio-economic status and geographic location. Similar approaches have been developed by UNESCO and the European Commission to explore diversity in education and the intersectionality of different dimensions and to promote inclusive education systems.

Furthermore, Session 1 explored the evolution from integration to inclusion in education, the latter focusing on making the system responsive to the needs of individual students. It presented inclusion in education as a concept that has changed over time and lacks a clear-cut meaning. Originally, yet still in certain cases, inclusive education was thought exclusively in terms of disability and special education needs. Overall, inclusion in education can be interpreted, on the one hand, to mean the inclusion of certain groups such as ethnic minorities, indigenous people and those living in remote rural areas; on the other, it can imply the inclusion of all learners and particularly those who are at most risk of being left behind.

SESSION 2: GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

SESSION 2: GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In session 2, participants explored policies in the area of the equality and inclusiveness of gender and sexual orientation in education, and discussed some policy solutions.

Ms *Ersilia Vaudo*, Chief Diversity Officer at the European Space Agency, presented on the main challenges and opportunities for enhancing diversity at the Agency and beyond. The presenter highlighted that although most member countries of ESA have a Diversity Charter and diversity as a priority theme in their agendas, countries do not necessarily share the same approach to and even definition of the term. Ms. Vaudo emphasized that diversity in ESA comes in many forms such as gender, generation, geography and that diversity and inclusiveness (D&I) have been recently placed on the top of ESA's agenda. For that, the Agency counts with a special working group on D&I promoting, for example, gender and sexual diversity and equal opportunities, strongly supporting the involvement of women and LGBTI people in STEM.

In a second part of the presentation, Ms. Vaudo addressed the current main challenges within ESA, which include a retirement wave coming over in the next 10 years, a disproportion in terms of geographic representation of staff and the low percentage of women in post.

In conclusion, elements for reflection – that went beyond issues regarding ESA – were presented to the audience. Among them, the presenter highlighted the issue of non-democratic countries being increasingly high up in the gender gap index and questioned what this could represent. The speaker also introduced the gender equality paradox where countries with high gender equality rates have larger gender gaps in STEM occupations (a lower percentage of women among STEM graduates). She reflected on the future of work where competencies such as emotional skills will be more and more in higher demand. Referring back to this last topic, Ms. Vaudo suggested that if STEM fields "change" as they prepare for the new demanded skills of the future of work, there is a possibility of STEM becoming more inclusive.

Ms. *Marie-Anne Valfort* (OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, ELS) then presented research aiming at evaluating school-based interventions to fight LGBTI-phobia and bullying at schools. Ms. Valfort started her presentation by giving a short description of the context of OECD's work related to LGBTI population: in 2014, 12 countries signed a Call to Action for the OECD to initiate a work stream on the economic case for inclusive policies for LGBTI individuals. Findings under this project show that discrimination against LGBTI people continues to hamper countries' economic development and its population well-being around the world.

The speaker then introduced the discussion on the discrimination taking place within schools, which translated in the form of bullying against LGBTI students, hampers the educational achievement and mental health of these individuals. School interventions could then be very important when trying to

address the issue of bullying at schools, and the research being carried by ELS therefore aims to evaluate their impact in doing so. The speaker highlighted that France is one of the most advanced OECD countries in terms of LGBTI inclusive education policies, one of the reasons why the research is being based there. However, she emphasised that the results of the research could help improve the inclusion of LGBTI people also beyond France.

Ms. Valfort continued her presentation by giving more information about the research done in partnership with the French Ministry of Education and SOS Homophobie, an NGO in France who has been doing school-based interventions since 2004. She explained that the interventions being evaluated by the research and carried out by SOS Homophobie rely on standard prejudice-reducing techniques such as activating pupil's capacity for empathy, e.g. the ability to take the perspective of others. An important point she highlighted was that since these interventions are standardised, they could be replicated in other places.

Ms. Valfort also explained to the audience the research's experimental setup. Schools that contact SOS Homophobie to host their interventions and accept to take part in the experiment are randomly allocated to one of two possible groups. One is a control group where students answer a questionnaire before the intervention happens and the other one, a treatment group, where the questionnaire is answered after the intervention has taken place. The idea is then to compare both of these groups and be able to evaluate the impact of the school-based interventions. The presenter explained that more than 700 students answered the questionnaire between September 2018 and January 2019 and the students' participation rate in the questionnaire was nearly 100% since only very few parents singed the opt-out option when asked about their children participation in the research. With the post pilot phase of the research launched in January of 2019, Ms. Valfort explained that results are still being analysed. However, she mentioned that research shows bullying against LGBTI seems to be higher among male students, suggesting that the impact of the interventions may vary across gender.

Plenary discussion

Following the two presentations, different questions and remarks were made. A participant underlined that it should not be underestimated how the way of teaching mathematics is still not inclusive. The first step on the path of inclusiveness rely on the methods used to teach STEM subjects. A further remark concerned gender inequality and how that goes beyond the education level and reaches the labour market. For example, only 25% of women in the US with STEM diplomas use them in their professions. The participant asked how systems can ensure that equality goes beyond education. Another participant emphasised the need to change the culture of failure. Failure should be seen as a value, as it is fundamental in a student's learning process. As a last remark, a participant highlighted that there is still an important gap between institutional compromises (declarations, country commitments, etc.) and the actual achievement in addressing gender issues.

Small group discussions

After the presentations, small group discussions followed on the following questions:

- What policies and practices can ensure that all students, regardless of their gender and sexual orientation, can express themselves safely and securely?

- How can schools educate girls and boys on the safe use of social media so that they have a positive view of their self-worth and body image?

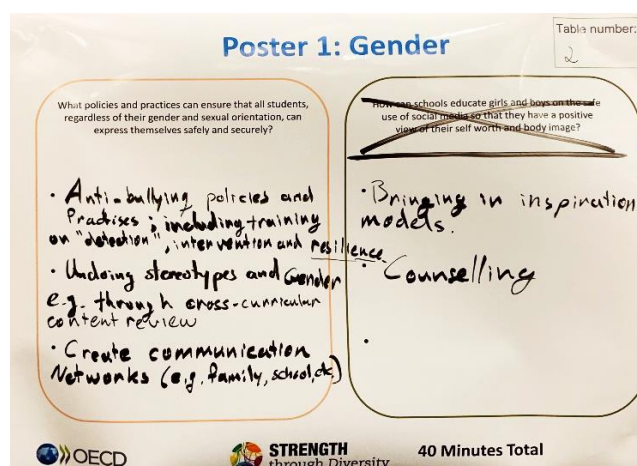### TABLE 1 *(Moderator: Ms. Francesca Borgonovi, OECD)*
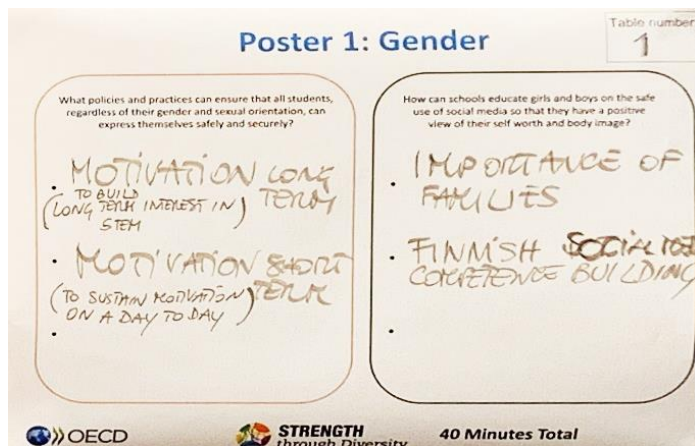
Participants at Table 1 discussed several policies and practices that can ensure that all students, regardless of their gender and sexual orientation, can express themselves safely and securely. Participants suggested that building a system focused on motivation can be beneficial both in the short- and long-term. In the short-term, school-level practices and interventions should support day-to-day motivation of the students. In the longer-run, the system should support a long-term interest in STEM.

To educate boys and girls on the safe use of social media, the group strengthened the core importance of families. In this respect, they presented the Finnish social media competence building as a best practice in the field.

TABLE 2 *(Moderator: Ms. Anna Vitoria Perico e Santos, OECD)*

Participants at Table 2 discussed a series of policies and in-school interventions that could be implemented in order to create a safer and more inclusive school environment for all students. The debate started with participants agreeing that discrimination was a key issue to be dealt with when discussing gender stereotypes and sexual orientation. With that in mind, the group considered that anti-bullying initiatives were essential and needed to be implemented when addressing discrimination based on gender identity and expression and sexual orientation at school. Moreover, it was mentioned that those initiatives should involve helping with creating student resilience.

Questions around curriculum were another important topic in the discussion. Participants suggested that gender and sexuality should be approached as cross-cutting issues across curricula, and therefore such themes would be discussed more frequently and naturally during classrooms. A participant from the Netherlands shared a personal experience from his time at school: he positively remembered

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being frequently exposed to topics such as sexuality and gender during "regular" classes, as these would be integrated into learning activities across different subjects.

The group recognised the importance of involving parents in the creation of more accepting and inclusive schools. Inviting parents to participate in school activities addressed to discuss issues around gender and sexuality were seen as fundamental for assisting families in navigating in sometimes-unknown territory. The training of teachers and other school staff was next in the list of important practices to be implemented in educational settings. The group agreed that making sure education professionals have enough knowledge and the necessary skills to discuss specific topics and guide students in their development is key for achieving an inclusive school.

Finally, participants suggested the invitation of role models to participate in school activities. This could allow students to identify similarities between themselves and the role models, which could lead to more self-acceptance and acceptance of others.

TABLE 3 *(Moderator: Ms. Emma Linsenmayer, American Graduate School in Paris)*
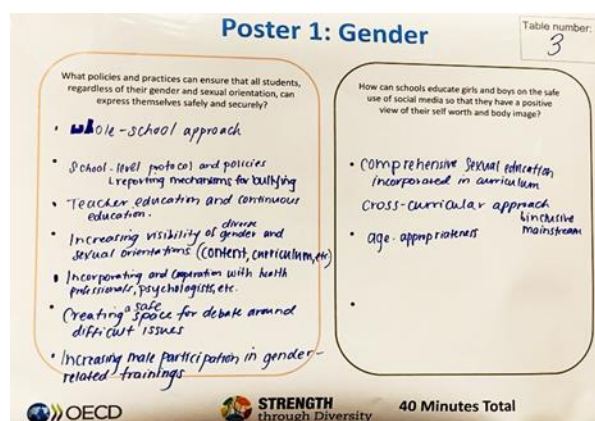
When asked to discuss possible policies and practices that can ensure that all students, regardless of gender and sexual orientation, can express themselves safely and securely in school, participants at Table 3 highlighted the importance of taking a whole-school approach. A whole-school approach should ensure that policies and practices support students by supporting and including their teachers, their schools, society and the media. One participant noted that students often confide in their teachers regarding issues they are not comfortable to talk about with their parents or peers. However, schools and teachers may not have the skills or feel comfortable enough to take this responsibility on. Society can play an important role here. One participant offered the example of her country's more open approach to sexual orientation. Historically, Spain is more accepting and was one of the first countries to legalise same sex marriage. Therefore, there are many gay parents in Spain and more children feel comfortable to discuss and be open about their sexual orientations in school. Media can also play an important role in shaping how people think about gender and sexual orientations.

The group discussed the importance of providing content and curriculum that incorporates an open approach to gender and sexual orientations so that children can welcome differences. One example is ensuring textbooks and examples used by teachers during class are more inclusive and reflect heterogeneous communities. Another example is changing the terminology around family that is often taught in early education. When describing parents, "mom and dad" should not be the only pairing used. "Mom and mom" and "dad and dad" are other combinations that can promote inclusiveness.

Table 3 agreed that teachers and school leaders should have an awareness of gender, which includes understanding the virtues of different genders and understanding how gender norms and assumptions can differ institutionally and structurally. Teacher training and ongoing professional

development are key so that teachers have the skills necessary to support students. One participant gave an example of teacher education programmes from Japan, and Asia more generally, that emphasise social and human rights so that teachers are better prepared and aware of gender and sexual orientation.

School policies and practices should also encourage male participation in gender-related trainings to ensure that men feel prepared and welcome at all levels of education. Another participant added that it is important for policies and educational laws to protect teachers who are making a social change within their classrooms and beyond. These could be policies that defend the teacher by providing pragmatic and philosophical support. Many schools are required or encouraged to develop procedures at the school-level for teachers and students to report any gender-related violence or issues. The school should create a safe space for students to feel comfortable to report any issues. Another participant added that teachers could also be victims of gender-related issues so practices and policies should support the entire school. In Canada, counselling on gender-related issues is offered to students as well as teachers. The schools provide psychological support to connect teachers and help support mental health related issues. There is a high propensity of teenagers to self-harm, or even commit suicide, which can be related to bullying about sexual orientation. Within the school protocol, Table 3 agreed that teachers, parents and other students should be informed on how to identify the signs of students who are being harassed or bullied.

Participants reflected on varying school providers (church vs. public) within countries, which could pose problems within the school and community more broadly. A participant gave an example from the United States where a teacher working at a Catholic school was suspended because she showed her class pictures of her vacation, which included pictures of her and her girlfriend. Several parents approached the School Board to express their discomfort with her revealing her sexual orientation.

Table 3 remained optimistic despite the difficulties in changing policies and common national curriculums thanks to new generations who can offer a more inclusive perspective that is more diversity-based. The participants also felt that education systems and schools could help advance progressive ideas that support minorities and provide fair opportunities to quality education. A constructive exercise mentioned by the group was the U.S. debate model that enables discussion and perspective-exchange to create a more open environment to dealing with issues that are dividing. These kinds of exercises can create a safe environment for students to learn how to consider and present other perspectives in a respectful manner.

In response to the question regarding how schools can educate girls and boys on the safe use of social media so that they have a positive view of their self-worth and body image, Table 3 discussed the importance of providing comprehensive sexual education that is incorporated into the curriculum. A cross-curricular approach would promote a more inclusive mainstream learning experience for children and allow students to learn how to process sex-related issues. The age-appropriateness of the sexual education is also important to consider and including all genders in the course content and learning process.

TABLE 4 *(Moderator: Ms. Nikita Quarshie, OECD)*

In approaching the first question, participants from Group 4 drew on their experiences from their respective countries. From the Dutch perspective, policies concerning the safe and secure expression of all students is already integrated into the system. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that effective
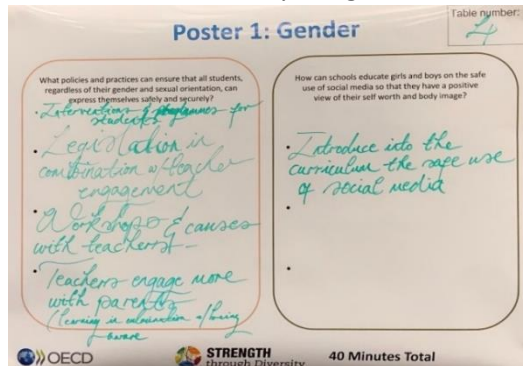
implementation remained a key challenge. In the Netherlands, the government has been working with students and providing funding for initiatives and interventions in institutions like the University of Leiden. Likewise, schools have introduced courses and outreach programmes on issues of diversity.

In the United States, there exists legislation and policy that can have a fundamental impact on ensuring the safety of students at school. Thus, it is important that schools are aware of them and that teachers understand such policies so that they can uphold them in their classes. In parallel to the Dutch example, it was noted that the challenge would always be putting into practice existing laws and policies.

Additionally, the necessity of "safe spaces" was a subject discussed by the group, and the importance of creating environments were students feel comfortable. However, the use of the term was also questioned. In particular, a question posed was whether it was becoming a buzzword and whether in actuality its meaning was being lost and used as a tool to suppress controversial opinions and forms of expression.

It was uniformly agreed that there should be more teacher understanding, and that teachers must have greater awareness of the issues that affect their student. Engagement was a key word used: while professional development is important, teachers have to engage with the issues that may negatively affect a student's ability to feel safe and express themselves securely in school. In other words, teachers need to be attuned to what is going with and between students. The importance of national and in-school campaigning was also highlighted, and an example was given of the online bullying led by United States' First Lady Melania Trump's "Be Best".

A further suggestion was that there should be greater collaboration between parents, schools and the wider community, as the issue of self-expression and the building of confidence goes beyond the classroom. A participant commented on the fact that in Italy for example, there seemed to be a feeling among parents that only teachers have the responsibility of educating their children, therefore diminishing their own role in the process.

The issues discussed for the first question were seen in many ways applicable to the second question on the safe use of social media. This particular question felt more difficult to answer because the use of social media is a relatively new topic, and the efficacy of methods to combat its negative aspects were as of yet unknown. Furthermore, it is a difficult subject to grab hold of, because though it is ubiquitous, it is difficult to control. For example, in recent years in the US, there have been higher rates of suicide among high school students, and social media has been discussed as one of the potential causes. The use of sanctions and the possibility of limiting access was a subject broached

within the group. For example, a school policy on the use of social media during school hours was suggested.

There was consensus that it was important to educate students by introducing the safe use of social media, and the ability to differentiate between reality and its virtual aspects into the curriculum. For example, this would include classes or trainings on how to detect inaccurate information, and build resilience among students on how to navigate information and present themselves on social media. To complement the curriculum, anti-bullying campaigns could also be initiated to promote greater awareness of these issues. A further suggestion was to normalise conversations surrounding gender and sexual orientation in the school setting and wider community, and along with this undo problematic and inaccurate concepts.

Summary of Session 2: Gender and sexual orientation

Session 2 explored policies in the area of the equality and inclusiveness of gender and sexual orientation in education. The understanding of gender has shifted from a binary and heteronormative conception to a more inclusive understanding focusing also on LGBTI.

Over the past century, countries have made significant progress in narrowing, and even closing, gender gaps in educational attainment, and today males have, on average, lower attainment and achievement than females in OECD countries. However, the closing of gender gaps has not been accompanied by the closing of gender gaps in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) educational choices.

Discrimination against LGBTI people continues to hamper countries' economic development and its population well-being around the world. Discrimination taking place within schools (such as bullying against LGBTI students) hampers the educational achievement and mental health of these individuals. School interventions can be important when trying to address the issue of bullying at schools.

A whole-school approach could ensure that policies and practices support inclusive environments where students can freely develop and express their identity by targeting students, teachers, school-level interventions, curricula, engagement with parents and the community and legislation. Among the different policies and practices, male participation in gender-related trainings could be encouraged to ensure that men feel prepared and welcome at all levels of education. Furthermore, gender and sexuality could be approached as cross-cutting issues across curricula, and therefore such themes could be discussed more frequently and naturally during classrooms, during regular classes and be integrated across classes.

To educate boys and girls on the safe use of social media so that they have a positive view of their self-worth and body image, it is important to provide comprehensive sexual education that is incorporated into the curriculum. A cross-curricular approach would promote a more inclusive mainstream learning experience for children and allow students to learn how to process sex-related issues. The age-appropriateness of the sexual education is also important to consider and should include all genders in the course content and learning process.

WORKSHOP: UNPACKING THE INTERSECTIONS OF DIVERSITY

WORKSHOP: UNPACKING THE INTERSECTIONS OF DIVERSITY

The workshop provided a practical exercise to delve deeper into different intersected dimensions of diversity and to think of innovative ways for how teachers and schools could be prepared to support such diverse students and create an equitable and inclusive education system.

Participants worked in small groups to discuss the challenges of a presented student persona (Daria, Michael, Martin or Lila) and proposed ways for teachers and schools to help this student feel supported in education.

Group discussions

Participants discussed the following questions in small groups:

- What dimensions of diversity can you identify?

- In what ways can teachers and schools support the learning and well-being outcomes of this student?

- What can we learn from this example to design a policy or professional development programme to aid teachers and/or school leaders in supporting diverse learners more generally?

TABLE 1 (Moderator: Ms. Francesca Borgonovi, OECD)

Box 1. Lila

Until now, Lila has been in and out of her school, and she is significantly behind her other classmates. She was previously in a "special school" with other Roma children until she was transferred. She was only recently diagnosed with dyscalculia and it is affecting her motivation and engagement with other subjects that are not maths related. Lila's favourite class is physical education, and she particularly enjoys football. Recently however, she has complained about being directed to more "appropriate" activities like dance by her teacher.

When investigating the intersectionality of different dimensions of induced diversity in education systems through the example of Lila, the group identified three main sources of diversity: dyscalculia (a specific learning impairment), her belonging to an ethnic minority and gender discrimination.

Building on this case study, the group identified different strategies and approaches for teachers and schools to

Poster 2: Intersectionality of diversity

support the learning well-being of Lila and students in similar positions. The participants suggested that country-level interventions should be put in place to avoid segregation and to create safe learning environments in mainstream schools. They also stressed on the importance of having well-designed early diagnosis systems in place and adequate systematic monitoring.

Collaboration with parents and guardians to support the student's expectations was another important intervention identified by the group together with ensuring monitoring and guidance support in school. The group also marked that approaches to break teachers and parents' stereotypes should be promoted and implemented to counter gender discrimination. Furthermore, support plans for teachers and students should be put in place and adequately resourced as well as solid evaluation frameworks should be carried out to monitor the treatment of specific learning difficulties (in the case of Lila being it dyscalculia) and the student's overall progress in school.

TABLE 2 *(Moderator: Ms. Caitlyn Guthrie, OECD)*

Box 1. Michael

Michael shows signs of frustration with school. Although he participates actively in class, these are usually interpreted as disruptions and lead to him being sent out. In some classes, he does not understand what he tries to read and is currently failing two subjects. Michael has never been an easily managed student behaviourally and he demonstrates a hyperactivity that gets him labelled as mischievous. Sometimes he rips up or refuses to complete assignments in the subjects he is failing. Music is one of the only classes that appears to calm him however, and he is considered a prodigy by his piano teacher.

Participants in Table 2 questioned the first part of the exercise, arguing that crudely identifying

dimensions of diversity reinforced stereotypes and pathologising by validating the use of a "normal" student as a benchmark for measuring various forms of difference. One delegate also explained that SEN labels could sometimes be used as a "get out of jail free card" for teachers, since it might make it easier for teachers to not accept responsibility for addressing individual learning needs.

A discussion on the disconnect between theory and practice in regards to labels led the delegate from Finland to explain: "We need to move beyond putting students in boxes (of labels) towards developing a language about what we can do with these boxes to better support learning". Participants agreed that boxes and labels can help arrange and manage diversity but these should not be limiting. As such, the focus should shift towards teachers, encouraging them to diagnose individual students by reflecting and becoming aware of their own attitudes, behaviour and prejudices towards students who do not fit into the system.

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Participants identified reducing class sizes, improving resources, infrastructure, and finding creative solutions as some of the ways in which teachers and schools can support students like Michael. However, there was a discussion on how specialised supports could be implemented without creating greater exclusion. For example, by taking students out of their mainstream class for remedial support. It was agreed that professional development programmes should be supported by educational tools or tool-kits that highlight good practices and offer psychosocial training to help teachers recognise attitudes and prejudices.

Participants further agreed that supporting students with SEN is not the sole responsibility of teachers and that the system and infrastructure for diagnosis and support needs to be in place. One delegate explained that sometimes students have to wait 18 months before they get the "stamp" of having an official SEN diagnosis that unlocks access to resources for additional support. The discussion recognised that Michael's outcomes were likely to be influenced by his socio-economic background. In particular, if his family is wealthy he will have a better chance of having his music talent recognised and development than if he comes from a poor family. This led the group to highlight that diversity is largely a political question and that there is a need for a whole system of adaptable support to fully include students like Michael in the education system.

TABLE 3 *(Moderator: Ms. Emma Linsenmayer, American Graduate School in Paris)*

Box 2. Martin

Martin comes from a mixed heritage household where he speaks a different language than the one he speaks at school. He generally engages eagerly in his classes and performs well at school. In particular, he enjoys design technology and drama, and usually comes at the top of his class. Increasingly, he is bullied by his classmates who mock him for being too "feminine" and sometimes refer to him as "gay". Martin's teachers have noticed that he has become more withdrawn during his classes and no longer expresses himself with the same vibrancy.

Reflecting on the intersected dimensions of diversity at play for the student persona of Martin, Table 3 agreed that Martin encompasses cultural diversity given his mixed heritage household and dual language speaking. The participants considered the possibility that Martin showed some form of giftedness, given his success in the arts. However, it was generally agreed upon that giftedness refers to extreme overachieving in a specific subject compared to the average student. More information would be needed to determine whether Martin shows giftedness. The participants also discussed Martin's sexual orientation. However, it was not clear if Martin is gay or not. Therefore, the Table

focused on the fact that Martin was being bullied surrounding his mannerisms and his sexuality, which demands support from the education system.

For teachers and school leaders to help Martin feel supported, Table 3 discussed ways to resolve the bullying, promote gender sensitivity, and celebrate his linguistic and cultural diversity. In terms of bullying, participants discussed the need for counselling and for schools to have a protocol in place for reporting and

dealing with bullying. Health professionals such as psychologists should be available to talk to the bullied and the bullies. The group also felt that prevention work should take place not only at the teacher-level, but also with school leaders and parents. Communication within the school, involving all personnel can ensure students are treated with respect. This communication should include students as well and guidance should be provided in the legislation. The attitude that the school and educators have towards students is also important and should be positive and constructive. Participants agreed that students should have a voice in the school system and should be aware of what bullying looks like and that it is not acceptable. Reporting mechanisms should be required in school protocol and this mechanism should be thoroughly explained to teachers and students. One participant suggested that anti-bullying campaigns could be created by students and presented throughout the school to raise awareness. Another suggestion was to support students that change schools by providing protocol or policy to ensure information-transfer so that teachers and school leaders at the next school can be prepared and more understanding of the needs of a student who has experienced bullying in the past.

To promote gender sensitivity, participants suggested ensuring that teachers know how to teach various subjects without projecting any gender norms or preconceived ideas of what subjects are considered feminine or masculine. This can be done through teacher training focused on diversity. Students should also be introduced to different sexual and gender identities. A participant gave an example from schools in Canada that have assemblies that are held in the gymnasium so the entire school can attend. At these assemblies, workshops on sexual and gender identities, among other topics, are offered for students and teachers to learn more and have open discussions about diversity. Furthermore, a cross-curricular approach can help teachers integrate more heterogeneous examples of gender identity and sexual orientation. A participant referenced an NGO in Greece that provides education to youth in refugee camps on gender, violence and sexual orientations. The NGO has created a safe place in a not-so-safe area for young people to learn and address important issues such as gender-based violence. The education providers working for the NGO receive training from professionals, which could be applied to mainstream school systems.

For linguistic support, the group felt that language should be presented as a positive aspect, which should be reflected in the school ethos. Schools should encourage the teaching of different languages and allow for students with different language skills and cultures to share their cultural differences

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with their peers. Literature and movies are great resources for teachers to use in class to promote cultural learning, especially if representative of the cultures present in the class.

When asked to create a professional development programme for teachers and/or school leaders to support diverse learners, participants at Table 3 underlined the importance of a whole-school approach. Participants felt that this should begin with school leaders and teachers getting to know the students through a teacher mentorship programme. This programme, along with other practices, can help ensure collective communication and the exchange of information regarding students on a regular basis. Table 3 also suggested democratically electing student delegates to represent the student body (depending on age). These student delegates would give students a voice within the school by receiving the proper training and support. Again, the group highlighted the need for full-time professional help from counsellors, psychologists and other relevant professionals. This support should be flexible from year to year depending on the student composition so that the entire school is supported while ensuring resources are being appropriately allocated. The group also felt that schools should be given the freedom to decide how best to implement and develop inclusion.

As for teacher training, Table 3 agreed that legislation for continuous professional development and in-service training should be required. Resources should be provided to classes and schools and informational exchange with colleagues encouraged. Teachers should also shape their attitudes around the teaching profession to accept that it requires ongoing teacher development. To improve the effectiveness of teacher training, guiding principles and/or toolkits should be made available by school systems. A list of guiding questions, self-assessment frameworks and concrete outputs could significantly improve the quality and benefits of teacher trainings.

Participants agreed that the professional development programme should also encourage exchanges with other schools, provide schools with productive tools and prioritise school-leader professional development. School leaders set the tone for the school, can help raise awareness among teachers and provide the competencies of the school. Table 3 agreed that school leaders should have access to and be aware of the data, assessment of particular groups and monitoring mechanisms of students. This could help leaders organize the school so that teachers and their skills are well matched with students to promote equity. The overall programme, according to the group, should also include parents and communities to ensure the efforts made at the classroom-level are successful beyond the school walls.

TABLE 4 *(Moderator: Ms. Nikita Quarshie, OECD)*

Box 3. Daria

Daria's family just migrated to a new country. Although she was identified as academically and artistically gifted in her last school, her teachers do not think she speaks the native language well enough to enter accelerated programmes. Her strong independent work skills have isolated her from her other schoolmates and she has showed signs of anxiety when directed to participate in group work. Her parents and her teachers are concerned about her social adjustment but hope that with time she will grow out of this phase. Daria prefers science to any other subject and already talks about pursuing a Ph.D. in Physics.

There was the feeling that with the exception of ethnicity, the group could identify all dimensions of diversity. It was discussed that though it was possible that she could be of a different ethnicity to the majority of her host country, it would be too much of a stereotype to assume so. While discussing identifiable dimensions of diversity, another stereotype the group challenged among themselves is the idea that because of her displays of giftedness, her parents must be wealthy or academics. Though existing data presents the view that this is usually the case, the group came to the conclusion that it would incorrect to assume that students who show signs of giftedness are from "good backgrounds". In fact, it was raised that this conclusion links to the data found in the *Strength through Diversity* recently published "Road to Migration" report that immigrant students are more likely to be more ambitious than native-born students.

It was highlighted that in Sweden norms and values form an important aspect of the curriculum and are incorporated into each subject, with a particular emphasis on biology and civic classes. Schools must also ensure that psychological support is incorporated into their school policies. Mother-tongue training is provided for immigrant students and is part of the School Act. Consequently, it was suggested that mother-tongue training would be an important way of supporting Daria in both her academic and emotional well-being. In Sweden, when newly arrived immigrant students enter the education system, within eight weeks, assessments are conducted in their mother tongue. It is believed that assessing their abilities in this way enables them to keep their self-esteem intact.

The importance of creating a safe space was highlighted: when children feel comfortable and listened to, it makes an immense difference to their sense of well-being and their confidence. In order to do this, teachers can encourage other students to welcome Daria and ensure that she is integrated into the classroom and school community. It was felt by the group that in reality, safe spaces are not difficult to create, and that safeguarding policies and workshops for teachers on areas such as "assertive listening" can be useful in creating them. Intergenerational activities between students and teachers were also suggested as a means of building trust.

There was a self-consciousness among countries on how to support gifted students. Sweden, for example, struggles with explicitly supporting its gifted students: it goes against the principle of equality to which the country adheres. One way of supporting Daria as a gifted student who struggles with the native language, would be to provide instruction and accelerated learning tasks in her mother tongue. Moreover, she could be engaged in contests in areas that interest her and subjects like maths, where in fact, knowledge of the native language is not crucial to success. The group acknowledged that because she may be bored in school if left unchallenged, it was important to set her extra exercises and accelerated programmes.

In answering the third question, the group discussed the possibility of incorporating a consciousness of norms and values in the curriculum and into teacher training programmes. In Sweden, every school, from pre-school upwards, needs to have a mandatory plan to prevent offensive treatment, and it is the duty of the school inspectorate to ensure that this exists. If schools do not meet the requirements, they must pay a fine and put in place appropriate measures. The group also discussed the creation of a network and dialogue between students, parents and teachers and psychologists. This could be separated into a two-part system: a school network, and a school network that works with parents.

Additionally, the group explored the idea of finding a way to integrate gifted students in a process that involved not just teachers, but engaged other students in accepting each other and celebrating their individual and collective differences. Moreover, when students are identified as gifted students, there should be mandatory trainings or workshops that include both teachers and parents. There was consensus within the group that giftedness is something that also displays itself at home, and parents may also be unable to cater to the particular needs of their gifted children. Finally, the group also emphasised the importance of diversifying and differentiating the curriculum, particularly in light of the fact that a student may show exceptionality in one area, though perhaps not in another.

Summary of Workshop: Unpacking the intersections of diversity

The organised workshop helped unpacking the intersectionality of the different forms of induced diversity in education studied in the project: gender, special education needs (SEN), migration, ethnic minorities and visible minority groups, and giftedness. These dimensions of diversity can intersect in various and complex ways thus further increasing the diversity of student populations in education systems, which should be appropriately equipped to address them and promote the well-being of all students.

Participants worked in small groups to discuss the challenges of a presented student persona and propose ways for teachers and schools to help the student feel supported in education. They suggested system-level legislation and regulations to promote and support approaches aimed at addressing diversity in schools and responding to diverse student needs. For instance, the development of curriculum policies could help promoting inclusion and consciousness of norms and values in the curriculum.

Groups identified the development of teacher and school personnel's capacity to address diversity in the classroom as a core area of intervention. Ensuring that teachers receive adequate trainings on how to address diversity in the classroom from initial teacher education to continuous professional development was considered essential for supporting inclusive education settings. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that teachers should become more aware of their own stereotypes and biases and strategies should be investigated to break them.

Another important area of intervention to address the diversity of needs includes school-level interventions aimed at promoting inclusive environments both inside and outside of the classroom. Examples of these interventions include providing non-instructional services in schools such as counselling and promoting close collaboration with parents and community-level services.

SESSION 3: DISABILITIES, LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS AND MENTAL HEALTH

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In session three, participants explored the challenges around promoting the educational equality and inclusion of students with learning disabilities, physical impairments and those struggling with mental health issues. Ms. Syrine El Abed and Ms. Montserrat Macuer (Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Sciences Po) were invited to share an overview of a literature review on how special education needs (SEN) are defined in different countries and what policies are used to promote the inclusion of children with special education needs. Ms. Verity Donnelly (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education) also presented the work her Organisation is doing to support European countries in developing policies to make education more inclusive.

Ms. Syrine El Abed and *Ms. Montserrat Macuer* (Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Sciences Po), highlighted that nearly one-fifth of students in OECD countries may develop a special education need at some point during their education. Then, they compared two commonly used models for addressing special needs generally: the medical model and the social model. The medical model views individuals with a special education need as having an intrinsic disability that should be treated by medical care and health reforms. On the other hand, the social model takes a rights based approach, viewing each individual as having particularities. In this model, the environment needs to change, not the individual, in order to accommodate differences. In education systems, countries take different approaches to address the needs of children with special needs. These approaches can be grouped into three categories:

- One-track approach: Only few specialised structures for students with SEN exist, the vast majority of structures are mainstream structures. School programmes and structures are adapted to each child regardless the background, capacity or needs. Examples of countries that use this approach include Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Italy, Spain Portugal, Australia, New Zealand, US.

- Two-track approach: There is a high share of specialised structures, with a percentage of enrolment in those structures higher than 2.5% of the total number of students. Enrolment of students with special needs can be quasi exclusively in specialised structures. Examples of countries that use this approach include Belgium, Germany (moving to a multi-track approach), the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Hungary.

- Multi-track approach: The system is a mixture of the two precedent approaches. Students with special education needs may enrol in specialised structures, classrooms or mainstream classrooms. France, England, Denmark, Poland, Ireland, Canada, Chile and Japan are examples of countries that use this approach.

The presenters then looked at two case studies, dyslexia and autism, to explore how countries respond to specific learning needs. In theory, mainstreaming policies prevent Swedish and New Zealand professionals from labelling students as having dyslexia but in practice, mainstream schools use this

term to provide individualised support to students. On the other hand, parents in Ireland are pushing for greater access to specialised services for dyslexic children, since there is a perception that special schools and can support the well-being and self-confidence of their child more effectively. For autism, the researchers compared France and the United States (US). In France, only 20% of kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) attend mainstream schools and this developmental disorder is primarily treated as a medical issue. On the other hand, the US treats ASD primarily as an educational issue and policies aim to provide students with the least restrictive environment by promoting mainstreaming. The findings from the two case studies suggest that despite the wide variations found across OECD countries in the identification of students with special education needs, there remain significant gaps in terms of their educational inclusion.

Ms. Verity Donnelly (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, hereby the Agency) discussed work to support international and European Union policy initiatives on education, equity, equal opportunities and rights for all learners. The Agency's position on inclusive education systems takes a whole system approach to exploring work to ensure that "that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers". The analysis undertaken by the Agency examines country responses to inclusive education around three policy approaches: prevention, intervention and compensation. Based on findings from an analysis of legislation, policies and operational structures and processes, the Agency provides information and tools to support governments in developing more inclusive education policies. In particular, the Agency's Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA), works to provide more information and to promote peer-learning through small group collaborations. Currently, the Agency is working to develop a range of tools and monitoring strategies to support the development of inclusive education systems.

Plenary discussion

A representative from the United States initiated the plenary discussion by explaining that the US has a long history of federal rules and laws establishing a set of rights for individuals with special education needs; however, there are many challenges around implementing these policies. This relates to the increase in diagnosis as, today, many more students are identified as having a SEN but states and municipalities face shortages of specialist teachers. As a result, some states have reduced the qualifications for SEN specialists and aids. The delegate asked if EU or other countries face similar issues and how these challenges could be addressed. Ms. Donnelly explained that much of the work on implementation focused on teachers. In particular, the Agency had a project that outlined areas of competence to develop a profile for inclusive teachers and a new project was starting that plans to explore how initial teacher education can better prepare teachers for diverse classrooms. The Agency is also working on learning support aids, which are called differently in different countries, and in many cases, countries end up with unqualified people working in these important roles. A delegate from Ireland shared this concern, explaining that the country was facing the challenge of an over-supply of poorly qualified SEN assistants. As the public perceives these assistants as supporting SEN students and having equivalent status to SEN teachers. The result is that it has been challenging to change the qualifications required to become SEN assistants and the government is struggling to recruit qualified SEN teachers. Teacher unions are trying to weave the course where they do not criticise the assistants but galvanise more support to recruit specialist SEN teachers. The delegate highlighted new research

from Ireland that suggests replacing two SEN assistants with one qualified SEN teacher shows positive results.

A delegate from Spain asked if there was an issue with over-diagnosis, explaining that in her country, schools can receive more money if they have students with SEN, so there are concerns about over diagnosis. Ms. Macuer noted that frameworks for identifying children with SEN have only been around for the past 30 years. As such, it is likely that many children were not properly diagnosed in the past. Moreover, since definitions of data change and vary across countries, this makes it very difficult to conduct comparisons about wrongly or over diagnosed children. Ms. Donnelly commented that the issue of linking SEN labels to resources was a challenge many countries face and that the Agency aims to help countries support SEN students without tying them too tightly to resources. Another participant questioned the narrow focus of inclusive education on the learner and asked if any work has been done to explore the role of diversity within the education workforce as part of an inclusive education system. In particular, the participant asked if the Agency collects data on diversity among teachers. The Agency responded that while this topic was mentioned as part of a project on teachers, it was not covered in depth and the Agency does not collect data on diversity in the workforce.

A delegate from the Netherlands asked if there has been any work on expectations for students with SEN. In particular, students labelled as having disabilities or SEN often express frustration that these labels define their abilities and potential and it is important to help teachers set high expectations for all of their students. Participants agreed that raising awareness of SEN is key to helping change the mentality of education systems towards the social model. For example, one delegate shared that the first time they saw a student with Down syndrome read a book was a fundamental experience that changed her practice because it was the first time she recognised her own bias and was able to see the potential of this student. Ms. Donnelly noted that the Agency has done work on the attitudes of teachers and included this in the profile of competencies. However, participants acknowledged that these issues are very political and relate to the culture within a country. In closing, the OECD (Ms. Lucie Cerna) noted that in addition to teacher expectations, the expectations of parents is another key factor for consideration. For example, parents in some countries many not want their children to have a label of SEN but in others, parents might intentionally try to have their child diagnosed so they can receive certain advantages like extra time on tests. The discussion closed with a general agreement that having common definitions of some SEN groups could support more international comparison work but care should be taken to account for local and cultural contexts.

Summary of Session 3: Disabilities, learning impairments and mental health

In Session 3, participants explored the challenges around promoting the educational equality and inclusion of students with special education needs, which includes learning disabilities, physical impairments and conditions related to mental health.

There are significant differences in definitions of special education needs across countries and in the responses in place to provide education to students with SEN. Across education systems, students can be included in mainstream school settings or enrolled in specialised schools or classrooms. International comparison of education provision to students with SEN are challenging. Countries collect national data on SEN based on their national definitions of SEN and this therefore hampers the possibilities of having relevant and comparable international statistics on SEN.

Having common definitions of some SEN groups could support more international comparison work but care should be taken to account for local and cultural contexts. Policies and practices that can promote inclusive education for students with SEN include raising awareness of SEN to help changing the mentality of education systems towards more inclusive education environments, developing teacher capacity to address students with SEN and settings high expectations for all students. This becomes important when acknowledging that students labelled with SEN often express frustration that these labels define their abilities and potential.

Expectations of parents is another key factor for consideration. For example, parents in some countries may not want their children to have a label of SEN but in others, parents might intentionally try to have their child diagnosed so they can receive certain advantages such as extra time on tests. Therefore, school collaboration with parents is key to promote a holistic approach to including students with SEN in education systems.

SESSION 4: GIFTED STUDENTS

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Session 4 gave participants opportunities to reflect on gifted students and on the approaches to include them in education systems. An overview of the field of gifted education was provided by *Mr. Todd Lubart*, Professor of Psychology at the Université de Paris. Professor Lubart began with a discussion of the language surrounding gifted students. In particular, giftedness is associated with several terms such as prodigy, precocity and talent. While giftedness has mostly been discussed in relation to children, more and more this language is similarly applied to adults. Naturally, these terms are nuanced and have different underlying meanings.

Typically, definitions highlight individuals with an endowment that sets them apart. This endowment may be used or developed into a talent, or may otherwise remain latent and unused. If a child shows exceptional talent at an early age and in a domain that is well developed like music, they may be referred to as a prodigy. Precocity means that a child possesses talents that allow them to do and accomplish things much earlier than others. Precocity therefore falls apart when talking about adults, who are expected to already have such skills. In the field, high potential is a term that is used more and more. In France for example, this is translated as "surdoué". The choice of the term has implications for the actions taken to support gifted students. For example, in using the language of "intellectual precocity", the French system supports its gifted students by allowing them to skip grades. One of the most ubiquitous terms in the literature is potential, which refers to the ability to develop, achieve or succeed a desired future state, a latent state of what may come to be. In this sense, gifts can turn into a talent, but do not necessarily always do so.

Professor Lubart then moved to a discussion of the different definitions of giftedness, the various ways in which it is tested and the prominent names and researchers found within the field. The speaker referred to the traditional use of the Stanford-Binet IQ to test for giftedness among students, and its used within Terman's longitudinal study of gifted students. However, IQ tests are not necessarily a marker of superior intelligence, exceptionality or giftedness, but may instead be an indication of a student's ability to answer those questions well. Consequently, Lubart highlighted attempts to expand conceptions of giftedness. Marland's definition of giftedness for example referenced those capable of high performance through demonstrated achievement or potential ability in intelligence, academic subjects, creativity and leadership. Crucially, Renzulli's Three Ring Model maintained that giftedness could be found at the intersection of cognitive, creativity and motivation.

Around the world, there are gifted education organisations: World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC), the European Council for High Ability (ECHA), The National Association for Gifted Students (NAGC), and the Asia-Pacific Federation on Giftedness (APCG). These draw on the knowledge of researchers, teachers and parents.

Professor Lubart further explained the different approaches taken to support gifted students. These options typically entail special programmes or maintenance in mainstream school setting. Acceleration programmes allow students to skip grades and provide them access to a compact curriculum, while enrichment programmes involve in-depth study of a topic or allow for the discovery of additional topics. While approaches often fall into these two binaries, there is debate about how they may be expressed or realised.

An overview of the French context within the gifted field was provided. While the Ministry of Education had previously referred to gifted students as those with "intellectual precocity", a recent committee formed to discuss the state of gifted education in France decided that, in line with changes in the field and the rest of the world, this label should now be changed to "high potential". This shift thus implies a change in how gifted students are catered for. Generally, within France, gifted students are considered to be special needs population in need of special attention treatment. While it is believed that they should be integrated into mainstream schools, there are a few schools in France that provide special classes for gifted students. However, these schools tend to be more expensive, meaning that parents have pay more to live near these schools.

Provisions for gifted students in public schools include Pedagogical Integration Units (UPI): rooms where students who have been identified as gifted have the opportunity to go and spend time together and get support and attention from school psychologists. Additionally, the "Centre National d'Aide aux Enfants et Adolescents à Haut Potential" is a national expertise and care centre in Rennes that provides care for gifted students who deal with depression and other mental health issues. The facility, which has seen more than a 1,000 cases, often finds it difficult to follow up with children as they do not necessarily live in Rennes. Consequently, those with different geographical locations are referred to local psychologists. In talking about mental health and the social-emotional challenges that gifted students face, Professor Lubart used the opportunity to highlight cases of "double-exceptionality": gifted kids with learning impairments or difficulties such as hyperactivity.

Finally, Professor Lubart made a distinction between high intellectual potential and high creative potential. The former focuses on the intelligence tests as modelled and used by Galton, Binet-Simon and Wechsler. Garner, for example, provides a more expansive definition of intelligence that encompass several areas such as music, social, scientific and linguistic. Yet all provide a version of intelligence and giftedness that draws on their particular context and ideals. To be identified as gifted on an IQ test, one would typically have to score an average of above 130. However, there are national differences. In a country like China where a score of 130 is average, gifted students would have to reach a score of above 140. On the other hand, high creative potential refers to the development of divergent thinking and alludes to the ability to imagine and create new ideas that are meaningful and complex. As creativity is unrelated to high IQ tests, new tools have been developed to test children and adults in creative potential. High creative potential therefore gives weight to the notion that giftedness is not just about intellect or academic achievement.

Plenary discussion

When asked about why gifted students are often excluded from extra provisions, Professor Lubart responded that the lack of provisions for an accurate system of detection made people weary of giving extra care for a particular group while not being able to test for all. An additional problem, he noted, is that there are not enough students expressing that the current system is inappropriate for their needs. Globally, therefore, people tend to believe that the system suffices. Even if education systems recognise their gifted students, they may maintain that they have other special needs groups who are more identifiable and in need of primary attention. On the other hand, other countries see them as a human resource and a talent pool that should be developed. Moreover, he highlighted the fact that

some students have families that can help them develop their gifts and high potential and provide them with access to the necessary provisions.

A question was raised about what led to the change in France in terms of referring to gifted students as those with high potential. Professor Lubart responded that the head of special needs education in France decided to zoom in on this particular population and assess its current state. In doing so, there was a realisation that France was one of the few countries that still emphasised intellectual precocity, an old-fashioned way of viewing giftedness. The field had been moving towards the use of "high-potential". This move now means that different associations are now developing to cater to this new shift.

In a discussion of "disharmonic intelligence profiles", whereby some students are talented in certain areas and not in others, it was established this was not an issue per se. In actuality, few students are homogenously strong in all subject areas. As such, this provides impetus for discussions that gifted students should be integrated into regular schools and given access to accelerated programmes based on the domains they are gifted in. However, doing so leads to a technical issue of how to cater for this at the school level.

A participant remarked that the present discussion paralleled those being held in Norway. In general, there is a lack of consensus over terminology as it is considered very sensitive. Nevertheless, in line with the shift in the field, the commission is now agreeing with the use of "high potential", even though there are also debates on the usage of other terms such as "high performing" or "high achieving". On one hand, representatives from the parent association wanted it to be classified as special needs so that they would be given extra resources. On the other hand, there are also arguments that they should be integrated into mainstream classes. Once placed in mainstream classrooms, however, there is a risk that they get bored and act out or remain demotivated. Mr. Lubart noted that while the main trend is to keep gifted students integrated in mainstream schools, there are still advocates for special schools. He made reference to the "Big Pond" effect that occurs when gifted students are placed in the same classes as each other and become insecure about their talent or potential.

Additionally, Professor Lubart maintained that, most importantly, teachers need training to handle the differentiated approached needed to accommodate gifted students in mainstream classrooms. There are teacher certificates that can be acquired through the European Centre for High Ability; Renzulli and his collaborators, who favour an enrichment approach, provide a special certificate; the National Association for Gifted Children provide several online resources, and in general, there exists a large resource bank of pedagogical material and activities on different topics online.

A participant showed interest in the transition from being gifted to being identified as a troubled child. They inquired as to whether, when looking at Renzulli's three-ring model, the lack of motivation is the key aspect that causes a gifted student to demonstrate behavioural problems. Mr. Lubart responded that according to the Renzulli approach, if a student does not have motivation, they can still have latent talent, but whatever it is may remain a hidden resource. Motivation can vary and develop according to one's particular environment and school system. The fact that you see more intellectual

giftedness than creative is because schools rewards intellect rather than creativity. The field's typical focus on intellect is therefore coherent with the school system.

In reference to the discussion on intersectionality held at the beginning of the day, a question was asked about how gender and migrant backgrounds may affect the development -or lack of- one's potential and the impact of social and cultural systems on intellectual development. Professor Lubart responded that there exist certain stereotypes, and that this means that teachers recognise and detect the gifted in certain categories where they believe it is more likely to be found, for example among boys. Moreover, there are stereotypes based on stereotypes of families and societies. There are more boys detected in France than there are girls. In France, a student is more likely to be detected because of signs of trouble and thus, since boys are more likely to act out than girls are, this may be the reason why more boys are detected.

Summary of Session 4: Giftedness

Session 4 provided participants with opportunities to investigate gifted students and approaches to include them in education systems. Giftedness is associated with several terms such as prodigy, precocity and talent. While giftedness has mostly been discussed in relation to children, more and more this language is similarly applied to adults. Naturally, these terms are nuanced and have different underlying meanings.

When talking about mental health and the social-emotional challenges that gifted students face, double-exceptionality is a rather common issue. It is a term used to connote those students that are assessed as gifted together with having special education needs, such as hyperactivity. When analysing giftedness, it is important to make a distinction between high intellectual potential and high creative potential to emphasise that giftedness is not just about intellect or academic achievement, but it can also relate to creativity. The fact that intellectual giftedness is more detected than creative potential is because many education systems rewards intellect rather than creativity.

Across countries, there are different approaches taken to support gifted students. These options typically entail special programmes or maintenance in mainstream school settings. Acceleration programmes allow students to skip grades and provide them access to a compact curriculum, that is an adjusted curriculum for students who are already mastering the topics to be learn, while enrichment programmes involve an in-depth study of a topic or allow for the discovery of additional topics.

SESSION 5: ETHNIC GROUPS AND VISIBLE MINORITIES

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In session 5, participants explored ongoing research in the area of ethnic groups and visible minorities in education and engaged with some of the main challenges and issues concerning it. Ms. *Marjolijn van der Klis* (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science), Ms. *Mary Tupan-Wenno* (ECHO Expertise Centre for Diversity Policy, Netherlands) and Mr. *Khaled Tamimy* (Diversity Talks and University of Amsterdam) were invited to share their insights on innovation in policy and practice through student-engaged and student-led initiatives to improve diversity, inclusion and equity in Dutch Higher Education. Mr. *Gabriel Machlica* (OECD/Economics Directorate) then shared findings from OECD's most recent economic survey of the Slovak Republic on enhancing the social integration of Roma populations.

Ms. Marjolin van der Klis (Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) introduced the Innovation in Policy programme for the Dutch tertiary-level education system. She explained that there are many different routes to higher education that students can follow in the Netherlands. Some groups of students have more complicated routes, which place them at a higher risk of dropping out when transitioning from one level to another. She presented data on graduation rates from 2002-2012 that show the Dutch education system is not doing enough to support students with a migrant background. The current Minister of Education, Mr. Van Engelshoven, wants to shift the focus of student success from educational outcomes at the institutional level to individual students' outcomes. Ms. van der Klis explained that this big change created policymaking friction because of the trilemma: figuring out how to balance wide accessibility, high quality of education and high completion rates. She offered several examples for how the Dutch Ministry is reconsidering certain policies. For example, the Binding Study Advise (BSA) aims to push students to work hard by allowing institutions the right to expel students that did not achieve high enough scores. The Ministry is rethinking this policy to avoid high dropout rates of underprivileged students. Another example is how best to deal with the selection process to ensure that the process is equitable for all students. The solution could involve financial support to students and placing inclusion higher on the agenda.

The Ministry of Education is also working on inclusion and equity as an employer of teachers and school leaders. Launched two years ago, an initiative within the Ministry aims to create awareness about the impact of implicit bias in the organisation, to create awareness on cultural diversity in the organisation and innovate recruitment processes. To support teachers, the Ministry also provides research grants to invest in teaching innovations.

As for supporting students, the innovations led by the Dutch Ministry of Education in partnership with ECHO to empower students within the education system include several programmes: Student Labs and Students-4-Students. Student Labs allow students to develop project proposals for improving the difficult transition to higher education. This allows students to hone their creative skills and build their professional profiles. Educational institutions then subsidize the projects to implement them in the institutions. The Students-4-Students programme (2018-2021) calls on students and institutions to develop a project to promote peer role modelling that can improve transition, retention and inclusion of students. The Ministry and ECHO support the projects financially.

Ms. Mary Tupan-Wenno (ECHO Expertise Center for Diversity Policy, Netherlands) discussed the importance of enhancing equity and inclusion in higher education because 13-16% of the Dutch population has a non-Western background. She highlighted the aim, process and benefits of the Students-4-Students programme. The student-led projects should aim to be innovative, enhance inclusion, and help close the achievement gap, create a sense of belonging and promote sustainability. In total, ECHO funds 4 million euros worth of projects, which include 16 institutional and 11 student projects. Institutions work with students and student networks to develop the project plan. The programme does not have specific criteria for funding, which students embraced more than institutions. To begin, groups respond to a questionnaire, creating a baseline analysis for each project. After one year, the projects repeat the questionnaire to monitor progress. An external expert committee then evaluates and decides the projects that should be funded. Reflecting on the two main actors in the projects, ECHO found that students were much more innovative and aware of how to embed the project and ideas into the institutional structure. In comparison, the institutions spent more time finding collaborators but there ideas were less innovative.

Ms. Tupan-Wenno explained that ECHO focuses on the intersection of social identities, such as ethnic groups, sexual orientation and socio-economic backgrounds, in order to support young people in their educational trajectory. Students, communities, government ministries, municipalities, companies and organisations all have a big role to play. ECHO supports these students through several initiatives including the ECHO Junior Academy, the Erasmus Pre-Academic Programme, the ECHO Award, Masterclass on Inclusive Excellence and so on. There was an overall shift in funding compared to five years ago in the European Union to support more projects related to well-being, sense of belongingness and the community.

Mr. *Khaled Tamimy* (Diversity Talks and University of Amsterdam) then introduced two projects through the Students-4-Students programme: StudieHub and Think Impact. StudieHub is conducted by students to prepare other students for the transition from secondary to higher education. The team provides flexible resources that respond to the needs of the students based on their constantly re-evaluated needs. Forums are set up to hear from different individuals (e.g. parents, students, and teachers) to pragmatically focus support. Examples include providing a stimulating place of study, career guidance and training workshops, study support, exam preparation, and cultural events (tours, speakers, etc.). The project aims to build a healthy community and provide networks with other students through peer role modelling.

The speaker then explained the aim of the second project, Think Impact, which serves as a mentor programme in the form of a think-tank. Through an intergenerational chain, a high school student is paired with a bachelor student, a master student, a junior professional and a senior professional to promote mentor/mentee learning and exchange. In order to increase funding, the project added a think-tank element to attract financial contributions from institutions that would welcome a report developed by the team based on a theme of interest to the institution. Over a period of ten months, the project encourages marginalised voices to identify problems and find solutions that can improve the social responsibility of the private/corporate sector. The project's think-tank element is sustainable because it creates capital and is flexible and adaptable. Mr. Tamimy reflected on the positive and unintended outcomes of the project, which included the personal and professional growth of himself and his colleagues and the growth of other participants and leaders involved. He

added that the team learned about project management, their own skills and the awareness of the roles they would like to assume in society.

Mr. *Gabriel Machlica* (OECD/Economics Directorate) then presented on enhancing the social integration of Roma students, drawing on the findings from the 2019 Economics Survey of Slovak Republic. The Roma population accounts for 9% of the total population in the Slovak Republic, one of the largest Roma populations in the European Union. They live in segregated settlements and face social exclusion in almost every aspect of everyday life. For example, the at-risk-poverty rate is 87% for the Roma population compared to 13% for the general population. Only a half of the Roma population has access to running water and the Roma population's life expectancy is six years lower than the non-Roma population. The dropout rate from education for the Roma population is 58% compared to 7% for the general population. These striking differences have large implications on education outcomes. Mr. Machlica referred to their situation as a vicious cycle, explaining that Roma can be trapped in a cycle of poverty for generations. The probability of ending up in poverty according to parents' economic and ethnic status is 70% for Roma from concentrated areas.

The importance of integrating the Roma population in the Slovak Republic is clear when comparing demographic trends. Data show that the Roma population is much younger compared to the non-Roma population. The share of Roma in the population will thus increase in the coming years. As of 2015, 20% of the Roma population represents students. However, there is a large gap in the academic outcomes (measured by PISA scores in mathematics and reading) of Roma students with the rest of the Slovak population. This gap represents almost 5 years of schooling. He urged education policies to begin interventions for these students earlier than 15 years old because the gap is already significant at this age.

Mr. Machlica then highlighted pre-school attendance, which is low generally in Slovakia but especially for Roma children. Only one-third of all Roma attend pre-school. He explained that this is partly due to a shortage of schools near Roma areas and the high cost of transportation and attending pre-schools that many Roma cannot afford. Cultural issues also play a role because Roma parents often do not want to send their children to pre-school in completely different socio-economic and cultural spaces. What is more, findings show that schools are not well equipped to teach poor students, which has increased the number of disadvantaged students who repeat grades. Slovakia has the highest share of pupils enrolled in special schools. Roughly 50% of the students in classes for children with disabilities are Roma, which is problematic because they do not have physical or learning disabilities. This must be changed in order to provide Roma students with a quality education and improve integration processes.

Another barrier that the Roma population faces to integration is language. Around 50% of Roma do not speak Slovak or do not consider it their native-tongue. Data show that pupils who speak a different language at home from the language of assessment are more likely to be low performing. There are few tools regarding language policies in Slovakia and there are almost no Roma teachers or language courses available for these students. These barriers are significant because the integration of the Roma population is important for not only education outcomes, but also for labour market outcomes, health outcomes and overall well-being for all.

In conclusion, Mr. Machlica highlighted several policy recommendations to promote the integration of Roma students. He discussed the importance of coordinated interventions across policy areas to ensure inclusion. Another recommendation was involving Roma themselves in policy interventions because it can help facilitate dialogue and cooperation between their communities and public institutions. He provided the example of a pilot project targeting health care assistance that aims to train Roma individuals to become healthcare assistants to act as social, economic and cultural translators for Roma in Slovak hospitals. Lastly, he stressed that policies should address the attitudes of the general public to ensure integration efforts are successful.

Plenary discussion

Comparing Roma populations in other countries, one participant noted that the percentage of Roma who do not speak the official language of the country varies significantly. For example, in Hungary 80% of Roma speak Hungarian. When asked what explains this difference, Mr. Machlica said that it is difficult to explain why language abilities differ from country to country. He agreed that in Hungary, the Roma population does not have as significant language issues as in the Slovak Republic. In fact, in some Roma communities in Slovakia, they speak Hungarian. In order to overcome language barriers, governments need to intervene to provide the necessary resources. In response to a second question on how to best overcome the issue of Roma segregation and segregated schools, Mr. Machlica explained that bus systems could help bridge the two segregated areas so that Roma students can access schools and participate in the integration process. However, for Roma populations located in remote regions this can be difficult. He suggested providing incentives for better teachers to move and teach in these remote areas to ensure Roma students receive quality education.

Another participant asked to what extent groups such as the Roma lose links to family, heritage, and culture when having to learn and use a different language than their native language(s). In the Czech Republic and Hungary, there are smaller populations of Roma compared to the Slovak Republic so parents may not decide to pass on their language, which could also mean losing cultural ties. Ms. Francesca Borgonovi (OECD) agreed that as diversity is increasing, we are witnessing a loss of cultural diversity because there is a push for global homogeneity. This trend is evident in the overall loss of spoken languages globally. Mr. Machlica emphasised that it is important to safeguard ties to culture and heritage. However, for students who enter into formal education without language ability and support from the education system, their academic learning and socio-emotional well-being can suffer so it is important to help them learn the country's language as well as celebrate their native language.

When asked how the student group came up with the ideas for the Students-4-Students projects, Mr. Tamimy replied that his group spoke with students about their specific needs which led them to create both Think Impact (the mentor programme) and Studie Hub. He discussed the group's plans to expand the geographic reach of the programmes from the Eastern part of Amsterdam to a nation-wide project. In response to the question of whether teachers are involved in the projects, he noted that teachers were sometimes involved in the think tank aspect of the Think Impact project, although the project tended to work more often with consultants. He added that teacher volunteers offer study support and tutoring on the Studie Hub project. Mr. Tamimy reflected on the lack of teachers of colour in the system and suggested that this could be an area of improvement for the project to consider.

Summary of Session 5: Ethnic groups and visible minorities

In Session 5, participants explored ongoing research in the area of ethnic groups and visible minorities in education and engaged with some of the main challenges and issues. Promoting inclusive education for minority groups becomes important when acknowledging the diversity of our current societies and the need to promote well-being for all.

Various policy approaches can support the inclusion and equity of students from minority backgrounds in education systems, with a particular focus on tertiary education. Evidence form the Netherlands suggests building awareness on cultural diversity within the teacher's body and innovate recruitment processes. Promoting projects in partnership with students represents another innovative approach to foster inclusive education environments for students with minority backgrounds. For example, StudieHub is a project conducted by students to prepare other students for the transition from secondary to higher education.

When considering minority groups that still lag behind in inclusive education provision, Roma students represent a main example across Europe. In the Slovak Republic, Roma people live in segregated settlements and face social exclusion in almost every aspect of everyday life. Roughly 50% of the students in classes for children with disabilities are Roma, which is problematic because they do not have physical or learning disabilities. It is crucial to provide Roma students with a quality education and improve integration processes. To achieve this, coordinated interventions across policy areas should be promoted. Involving Roma in policy interventions can represent another strategy to facilitate dialogue and cooperation. Policies should also aim at addressing attitudes of the general society to ensure social acceptance and integration.

CLOSING

Mr. *Paulo Santiago* (OECD/EDU) and Ms. *Francesca Borgonovi* (OECD/EDU) summarised lessons learnt throughout the forum. They thanked the participants for making the sixth forum such a success and wished them safe travels home.

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