

Fighting school segregation in Europe through inclusive education

What is inclusive education?

A process that addresses and responds to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education (Unesco's Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education)

KEY PRINCIPLES

- » Public responsibility to avoid inequalities in education, including through solid regulation & monitoring
- » Realising the rights in education (availability, accessibility, acceptability & adaptability) alongside the right to education
- » Expanded vision of the right to education beyond formal & compulsory education
- » Regulating school choice (through school catchment zones; reserved seats for students with special needs; facilitated school access)
- » All children can learn (high learning expectations for all; identify & adjust to specific learning needs)

How to ensure inclusive education?

- » Adopt comprehensive legal prohibition of discrimination in education
- » Implement school desegregation strategies
- » Raise awareness of inclusive education
- » Ensure quality education in all schools
- » Plan educational supply with an inclusive lens
- » Regulate & monitor school admissions
- » Prohibit testing as a selection tool
- » Ensure early assessment of children's needs
- » Balance the distribution of students from vulnerable groups
- » Define socially balanced school districts
- » Allocate the best teachers to the most challenging schools
- » Promote parental participation in the school

What is the situation today?

School segregation is still a reality in Europe for many children, in particular Roma, migrants and refugees, children with disabilities and children living in poverty

CAUSES

- » Strong vested interests (decision-makers, schools, parents) & inappropriate financial arrangements
- » Inadequate regulation of school admission; wide margin of discretion by schools to select children, including based on discriminatory grounds
- » Prejudices & rejection towards certain groups of children
- » Vicious circle of school segregation & lower quality education
- » Lack of access to preschool education
- » Reduced funding for education

CONSEQUENCES

- » Violation of children's right to education
- » Reduced chances for all children of acquiring essential life skills in contact with others
- » Lack of recognised diploma
- » Lower job & salary prospects; risks of social exclusion in adult life
- » Reduced overall performance of the education system
- » Deeply negative impact on social cohesion & reconciliation in multi-ethnic societies struggling to come to terms with a violent past
- » Immediate & long-term economic costs for society as a whole