



CEDEFOP

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of Vocational Training



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

The study visits programme Knowledge-sharing seminar for study visit organisers

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Promoting active inclusion Background paper

Policy context

Social inclusion is about making sure that everybody, including vulnerable groups (early school-leavers, learners with special educational needs, unemployed people, immigrants and ethnic minorities, low-skilled workers, etc.) can play a full part in work and society and that they have an equal opportunity to do so. Promoting social inclusion is vital to achieving the EU's goals of sustained economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

The Europe 2020 strategy ⁽¹⁾ considers social inclusion to be a key factor in ensuring *inclusive growth* by empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems. It sets five headline targets: on R&D investment, education, energy/climate change, employment and reducing poverty. For example, the proportion of early school-leavers should be under 10 %, and at least 40 % of young people should have a tertiary degree; 20 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty and 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed.

Education and training are important for ensuring that vulnerable groups will be better equipped to become integrated, successful and creative citizens. Developing skills and competences through education and training helps to fight poverty and exclusion and creates new possibilities for inclusion and employment. It is vital both for social inclusion and employability that young people and adults continue to learn and adapt to change. The provision of basic skills, upskilling, reskilling and further development of key competences (communication, social and civic or digital competences) are the essential prerequisites for access to employment and active participation in society. ⁽²⁾

Education and training should be integrated in comprehensive long-term strategies at national level to prevent social exclusion. In an attempt to do so, the strategic

⁽¹⁾ Communication from the Commission. EUROPE 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. COM(2010) 2020. Brussels, 3.3.2010.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%2020007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

⁽²⁾ Council of the European Union (2008) Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning. Official Journal of the European Union, 2008/C 140/09. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:140:0010:0013:EN:PDF>

framework for European cooperation in education and training (2009) ⁽³⁾ identifies as one of the strategic objectives in the years up to 2020, the promotion of equity and active citizenship through education and training systems. To address this challenge, the following priority themes should be pursued in 2009-11: early school-leaving, pre-primary education, migrants, and learners with special needs.

The European Union and the Member States made 2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion ⁽⁴⁾. Its key objectives are to increase public awareness of social exclusion and promote active inclusion by stimulating public debate, research and change, encouraging exchanges of good practice, and facilitating creation of partnerships between civil society and different stakeholders. One of the focuses of the European year is eradicating disadvantages in education and training by addressing the needs of disabled people, immigrants and ethnic minorities and groups or persons in vulnerable situations ⁽⁵⁾.

The knowledge-sharing seminar for study visit organisers will focus on important challenges that need to be addressed to promote social inclusion and ease the integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market. The theme of the seminar is of common interest at the European and national levels and represents the focus of more than a quarter (see data in Annex 1) of all study visits in 2010/11 on topics mostly related to social inclusion: ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups, early learning opportunities, measures to prevent early school-leaving, education for active citizenship, integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market, etc.

The seminar participants will discuss policies and practices that promote active inclusion and get ideas about how to approach the content of their visits. Three thematic workshops will be organised on the following issues:

- ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged students with the focus on: early childhood education, dropping out of education and training and inclusion in mainstream schools of students with special educational needs;
- education for active citizenship and social integration of migrants and minorities;
- integration of young people and adults at risk of social exclusion into the labour market.

1. Ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged students

Every child and young person has the right to quality education and training. Access to it should not depend on disability and socio-economic background. Developing and implementing measures to meet the needs of disadvantaged young people in our society is vital for achieving equality of educational opportunity and combating educational disadvantage. Education and training systems are challenged to

⁽³⁾ Council of the European Union (2009). Council conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), 9845/09, Brussels, 13.5.2009.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/09/st09/st09845.en09.pdf>

⁽⁴⁾ The 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=637>

⁽⁵⁾ European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion (2010). Strategic Framework Document. Priorities and guidelines for 2010 European Year activities. European Commission. Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG Social Protection and Integration. Inclusion, Social Policy Aspects of Migration, Streamlining of Social Policies, Brussels, 16/11/2008 D (2008).

develop strategies and measures to ensure access to and participation in early childhood education and successful inclusion of students with special education needs (SEN), early school-leavers and students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background.

Early childhood education

Research ⁽⁶⁾ shows that children from a disadvantaged background are those who benefit the most from good quality early childhood education. In reality, these children are often less likely to receive it. In most European countries children living in rural areas, those living in low-income households or from with migrant background have less access to good quality early learning.

A benchmark was set to the effect that at least 95 % of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education by 2020 ⁽⁷⁾.

Dropping out of education and training

Early school-leavers are challenged in their personal and social development and are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion. By leaving education early, young people do not reach the level of knowledge, skills and competence needed for full participation in the labour market.

Despite the efforts of Member States to meet the target set for 2010 to achieve a level of no more than 10 % early school-leavers in the EU, one in six young people leave school having completed - at most - only compulsory education. The target for 2020 remains to reduce the number of young people who leave school with no more than lower secondary education and who do not participate in any kind of further education or training ⁽⁸⁾.

The inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools

The concept of *special educational needs* (SEN) is broader than disability because it covers more types of educational need, for example social, emotional and behavioural difficulties ⁽⁹⁾. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) promoted a framework aiming to enlarge the concept of SEN and including three categories of students: those with physical disabilities, pupils with behavioural and learning difficulties; pupils from a disadvantaged socio-economic background ⁽¹⁰⁾. The inclusion of students with SENs in mainstream schools and, more broadly, inclusive education has been part of the EU agenda in education for several years.

Differences in inclusion policies may stem from the characteristics of regular schools and their curricula as well as the training possibilities for and attitudes of teachers. Different cultural and societal perceptions (such as whether parents and educators consider it more appropriate to place students in mainstream or special schools) may also influence national SEN policies.

⁽⁶⁾ EURYDICE. Early childhood education and care in Europe: tackling social and cultural inequalities. 2009

⁽⁷⁾ European Commission. Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training - indicators and benchmarks 2009. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1951_en.htm

⁽⁸⁾ idem

⁽⁹⁾ International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED.UNESCO, Paris, 1997.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The OECD conceptual framework is described in detail in the European Commission report 'Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training - Indicators and benchmarks 2008'. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/report08/report_en.pdf

A better coordination of the assessment of needs and subsequent responses results in better quality services and support. Therefore, there is need for multi-stakeholder partnerships, for example, partnerships between education, health and social care services can help to meet the educational, health and social needs of children and young people ⁽¹¹⁾, thus offering a far more holistic approach to their education.

2. Education for active citizenship and social integration of migrants and minorities

The Council of the European Union in its strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training stresses the importance of intercultural competences, democratic values and respect for fundamental rights and the environment. Education and training plays a key role in developing the above competences and values and helps individuals in a less favourable social or economic position to become actively involved in society. Active citizenship will be a central issue of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 that will encourage and support efforts at the European, national and local levels that promote volunteering and increase the visibility of voluntary activities in EU ⁽¹²⁾.

Education for active citizenship

Active citizenship education is defined as a process of acquiring knowledge and developing skills and attitudes based on community values ⁽¹³⁾. It implies the development of intercultural competences, democratic values and respect for fundamental rights and the environment and equips all young people to interact positively with their peers from diverse backgrounds.

It is important that students not only develop civic skills through 'classic' teaching, but that they should be provided with more opportunities to take initiatives and learn in schools which should be open to the worlds of work, voluntary action, sport and culture ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Active citizenship education is offered in schools as a separate subject (in half of the European countries in secondary education), integrated into conventional subjects (for example, history, geography) or as a cross-curricular theme. As stated in the Eurydice study report ⁽¹⁵⁾, citizenship education in schools is generally taught either by non-specialist teachers (in primary education) or by teachers specialised in the social sciences, philosophy or ethics (in secondary education).

⁽¹¹⁾ These results were confirmed by the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund. One of the key requirements for setting up a Children's Fund at local level was to set up partnerships between a range of services. <http://www.ne-cf.org/>

⁽¹²⁾ For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/focus/focus840_en.htm

⁽¹³⁾ Study on active citizenship education. DG Education and Culture. GHK. 2007.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Joint Progress Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme. Key competences for a changing world, 2010. <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st05/st05394.en10.pdf>

⁽¹⁵⁾ European Commission, Eurydice. 'Citizenship Education at school in Europe'. Brussels: Eurydice, 2005.

Social integration of migrants and minorities

Today, successful integration of young people and adults from a migrant background into education and training institutions and society is both an economic necessity and a pre-condition for democratic stability and social cohesion.

Young migrants are twice as likely as young nationals to leave education and training early (13.6 % compared with 26.8 %) ⁽¹⁶⁾. Many students from a migrant background experience educational disadvantage and unequal patterns in access to and achievements in education. Several factors explain this gap, including a poor socio-economic background, insufficient competence in the instruction language, the attitude of the students and their families towards education, limited access to childcare facilities, lack of support from the educational environment ⁽¹⁷⁾⁽¹⁸⁾.

Most first generation immigrants, including skilled workers, are adults who need language learning and cultural understanding. More attention should be paid to the lifelong learning and training needs of these adults to enable them to successfully integrate in their host countries ⁽¹⁹⁾.

One of the groups most vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty is the Roma. This group tends to face a range of disadvantages in accessing education, employment, housing and healthcare ⁽²⁰⁾. Countries with large numbers of Roma implement social policies and measures that improve their access to education and training and contribute to their successful integration into society.

3. Integration of young people and adults at risk of social exclusion into the labour market

Skills upgrading is important for Europe's future growth and for employment equity, given the vulnerability of those lacking skills. Member States should develop specific policies for young people and adults, for low-skilled workers and other disadvantaged groups to provide them with access to lifelong learning. In this way they will develop their knowledge, skills and competences to successfully integrate in the labour market.

Young people and adults, as well as low-skilled workers and other disadvantaged groups need access to lifelong learning so that they can upgrade and develop their knowledge, skills and competences at different stages of their lives and participate

⁽¹⁶⁾ European Commission. Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training - indicators and benchmarks 2009. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1951_en.htm

⁽¹⁷⁾ European Commission. The Green paper on Migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems (July 2008) and the accompanying staff working document which presents data and good practice example in the field of education for migrants and ethnic minorities http://ec.europa.eu/education/school21/com423_en.pdf

⁽¹⁸⁾ UNICEF-Innocenti report card. The child care transition. 2008. http://www.unicef.ca/portal/Secure/Community/502/WCM/HELP/take_action/Advocacy/rc8.pdf

⁽¹⁹⁾ Council of the European Union (2008) Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning. Official Journal of the European Union, 2008/C 140/09. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:140:0010:0013:EN:PDF>

⁽²⁰⁾ Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009 - Summary. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2009. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=637&langId=en&pubId=332&type=2&furtherPubs=yes>

in the labour market through implementation of specific policies to improve their skills and qualifications ⁽²¹⁾.

Those without adequate skills find it more difficult to enter the labour market and find a quality job. They are more likely to spend long periods out of work and, if they do work, are more likely to find themselves in low-paid jobs. This is particularly relevant to young and adults at risk of social exclusion (early school-leavers and low-skilled and ageing workers).

For example, data show that only 55 % of early leavers of education and training in the EU were employed in 2008 ⁽²²⁾. The rest were either unemployed or outside the labour market and were therefore at higher risk of social exclusion.

Guidance provisions for young people and adults at risk

The transition from education and training or from unemployment or inactivity, to the labour market should be facilitated by providing all groups of young people and adults at risk of social exclusion with better information about education and training opportunities and by developing employment strategies and measures for them. As highlighted in the conclusions of the Spanish Presidency ⁽²³⁾ young people, especially at risk groups, should be provided with quality information and guidance about labour market legislation and social protection or volunteering and internships.

Most Member States are using a combination of preventive and reintegration measures to address the problem of early school-leavers. Preventive approaches can address the problem through structural, school-based or person-centred strategies such as mentoring and tutoring; support at key transition points; counselling and career guidance; early warning systems; improvement of parental involvement. Reintegration approaches include, for example: tracking measures to identify, support and monitor young people at risk; short-term specialised support to facilitate reintegration; holistic interventions for young people with complex support needs; online learning and support platforms; traditional second-chance schools; and guidance and training measures to aid access to employment ⁽²⁴⁾.

Older workers are vulnerable to different types of skills obsolescence and they need to be provided with enough possibilities to update and renew their skills throughout their working lives. EU Member States have started providing guidance services that address the particular counselling and learning needs of groups such as the long-term unemployed, workers over 45, and workers in industries or companies undergoing restructuring, but efforts still need to be made to design and implement active ageing policies intended to discourage early retirement and encourage longer working lives.

⁽²¹⁾ Council of the European Union. Council conclusions on 'New Skills for New Jobs: the way forward'. 3019th Employment, Social policy, Health and Consumer affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 7 June 2010.
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/114962.pdf application/pdf (.pdf) Downloadable document (EN)

⁽²²⁾ European Commission. Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training - indicators and benchmarks 2009. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1951_en.htm

⁽²³⁾ Joint conclusions of the Spanish Presidency EU Youth Conference 'youth employment and social inclusion', Jerez, Spain 13-15 April 2010.
http://www.youthforum.org/en/system/files/yfj_public/media_corner/en/Conclusions_EUYouthConference_Jerez2010.pdf

⁽²⁴⁾ Cedefop. Guiding at-risk youth through learning to work: Lessons from across Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010.

Cooperation between stakeholders

The current economic crisis is increasing unemployment and is making it even more difficult for disadvantaged groups to remain in or enter a turbulent labour market. Developing cooperation between education and training institutions and partners in the labour market and community supports social inclusion and employability of youth and adults at risk.

Employers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may provide apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities for young people, especially those disengaged from education, training or society, to familiarise themselves with the world of work ⁽²⁵⁾ and allow them to start over and gain valuable working experience. In many Member States governments and social partners are working together to keep people in work by combining short-term work with training and using resources to expand existing training and other programmes for unskilled workers and unemployed people ⁽²⁶⁾.

⁽²⁵⁾ idem

⁽²⁶⁾ Cedefop. Briefing note - Taxing the mind.
27.11.2009.<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/5039.aspx>

Annex 1: Study visits 2010/11 on social inclusion -
distribution by theme, data of 7 June 2010

Themes	No of visits in the catalogue
Key competences for all, including creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship	
Strengthening intercultural education	3
Education for active citizenship and sustainable development	19
Improving access, equity, quality and efficiency in education and training	
Early learning opportunities	4
Personalised learning approaches	4
Measures to prevent early school leaving	5
Equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups	29
Education and training for employability	
Integration of disadvantaged groups into the labour market	6
Total	70

For more information, see:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/15186.aspx>