EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Directorate A Policy Strategy and Evaluation
Unit A.1 Strategy and Investments

INFORMAL COMMISSION EXPERT GROUP 'WORKING GROUP ON EQUALITY AND VALUES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING'

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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1. BACKGROUND

The Commission's Communication of 30 September 2020 on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025[1] (hereafter 'EEA Communication') and the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)[2] (hereafter 'Council Resolution') call for maintaining the format of working groups as part of the "tried and tested working arrangements" in the context of the new cycle of European cooperation in education and training. In particular, the Council Resolution stresses that the mutual learning initiatives should have "clear mandates, time schedules and planned outputs to be proposed by the Commission in cooperation with Member States".

The overall **objective** of the new working groups shall be to **promote mutual learning on policy reform of national education systems** with a view to **effectively contributing to the achievement of the European Education Area by 2025**, and as relevant, the **Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) through tangible outputs**.

By continuing the work done under the previous strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), the new working groups shall be established as informal Commission expert groups, in compliance with the horizontal rules[3]. Through their respective roles and specific tasks, the expert groups will provide the Commission with advice and expertise in the policy areas that they cover, and they will be part of a governance structure that will coordinate the work and steer the development of the strategic framework, within the overarching objective of achieving and further developing the European Education Area (EEA).

As part of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), their overall work shall reflect the vision, milestones and specific initiatives set forth in the EEA Communication and the priority areas, issues and actions of the Council Resolution, with each working group addressing concrete policy issues and actions, in line with their specific objectives detailed in annexes to their Terms of Reference.

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[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1601687240311&uri=CELEX:52020DC0625
[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226(01)
[3] C(2016) 3301 final

One of these groups will be covering issues of equality and values in education and training.

This group shall focus on structural reform to promote equality in education and training and build on the EU values dimension which was covered during the previous Education and Training 2020 mandate (i.e. anti-radicalisation, citizenship education and training, European dimension in education, disinformation, inclusion of refugees and migrants in education and training). It will also **examine relevant areas related to equality,** bearing in mind the dual approach of inclusive education for all and targeting specific population groups, i.e. both group-focused approaches (such as gender equality, anti-racism, equality of Roma, people with migrant background, LGBTIQ persons and people living with disabilities) and cross-cutting issues with societal benefits and of high importance to all discriminated and disadvantaged groups, such as fighting segregation in education, **managing diversity and building a sense of belonging** in a **lifelong learning perspective**).

Furthermore, the group shall provide ideas and inspiration for policymakers and practitioners who strive to improve equality in education and training systems across the EU. Likewise, the work will contribute to developing **evidence-based procedures to assess policies** in the Member States and provide new measures and methods to improve the equality in education and training.

The group shall start its activities in September 2021 and end the first working cycle by the end of 2025.

2. SUBJECT MATTER

The group of experts on Equality and Values in Education and Training ('the group') is set up.

3. TASKS

The group's tasks shall be:

1. to assist Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) in the preparation of policy initiatives in the field of education and training in relation to equality and EU values.

2. to establish cooperation/coordination between the Commission and Member States or stakeholders on questions relating to the policies in the field of education and training in relation to equality and EU values.

3. to bring about an exchange of experience and good practice in the field of education and training in relation to equality and EU values.

Priority areas from the Council Resolution to be addressed: 1. Quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training, 2. Lifelong learning and mobility, 3. Teachers and Trainers, 4. Higher education, 5. Green and digital transitions.

The specific objectives are further detailed in the annex.

4. MEMBERSHIP

1. Members shall be organisations, Member States' authorities, other public entities including public entities from acceding and candidate countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein

and Norway, Union bodies, offices or agencies and international organisations (Type C, D and E Members).

2. Member States' authorities, organisations and other public entities shall nominate their representatives and shall be responsible for ensuring that their representatives provide a high level of expertise. DG EAC may refuse the nomination by an organisation of a representative if it considers this nomination inappropriate in the light of the requirements specified in the call for applications. In such case, the organisation concerned shall be asked to appoint another representative.

3. Organisations who are members who are no longer capable of contributing effectively to the expert group's deliberations, who, in the opinion of DG EAC do not comply with the conditions set out in Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union or who resign, shall no longer be invited to participate in any meetings of the group and may be replaced for the remainder of their term of office.

5. SELECTION PROCESS

1. The selection of organisations as group's members (Type C) shall be carried out via a public call for applications, to be published on the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups'). In addition, the call for applications may be published through other means, including on dedicated websites. The call for applications shall clearly outline the selection criteria, including the required expertise and the interests to be represented in relation to the work to be performed. The minimum deadline for applications shall be four weeks.

2. Registration in the Transparency Register is required in order for organisations to be appointed.

3. The members of the group shall be appointed by the the Director-General of DG EAC from applicants with competence in the areas referred to in point 3 and who have responded to the call for applications.

4. Members shall be appointed for until 31 December 2025. They shall remain in office until replaced/until the end of their term of office. Their term of office may be renewed.

5. DG EAC shall establish a reserve list of suitable candidates that may be used to appoint members' replacements. DG EAC shall ask applicants for their consent before including their names on the reserve list.

6. CHAIR

The group shall be chaired by a representative of DG EAC.

7. OPERATION

1. The group shall act at the request of DG EAC, in compliance with the horizontal rules[4].

2. Meetings of the group shall, in principle, be held on Commission premises or virtually, depending on the circumstances.

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[4]   C(2016) 3301, Article 13.1.

3. DG EAC shall provide secretarial services. Commission officials from other departments with an interest in the proceedings may attend meetings of the group and its sub-groups.

4. In agreement with DG EAC, the group may, by simple majority of its members, decide that deliberations shall be public.

5. Minutes on the discussion on each point on the agenda and on the opinions delivered by the group shall be meaningful and complete. Minutes shall be drafted by the secretariat under the responsibility of the Chair.

6. The group shall adopt its opinions, recommendations or reports by consensus.

8. SUB-GROUPS

1. DG EAC may set up sub-groups for the purpose of examining specific questions on the basis of terms of reference defined by DG EAC. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the horizontal rules and shall report to the group. They shall be dissolved as soon as their mandate is fulfilled.

2. The members of sub-groups that are not members of the group shall be selected via a public call for applications, in compliance with point 5 and the horizontal rules[5].

9. INVITED EXPERTS

DG EAC may invite experts with specific expertise with respect to a subject matter on the agenda to take part in the work of the group or sub-groups on an *ad hoc* basis.

10. OBSERVERS

1. Organisations and public entities other than Member States' authorities may be granted an observer status, in compliance with the horizontal rules, by direct invitation.

2. Organisations and public entities appointed as observers shall nominate their representatives.

3. Observers' representatives may be permitted by the Chair to take part in the discussions of the group and sub-groups and provide expertise. However, they shall not participate in the formulation of recommendations or advice of the group and sub-groups.

11. RULES OF PROCEDURE

On a proposal by and in agreement with DG EAC the group shall adopt its rules of procedure by simple majority of its members, on the basis of the standard rules of procedure for expert groups, in compliance with the horizontal rules[6]. Sub-groups shall operate in compliance with the group's rules of procedure.

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[5]   C(2016), Articles 10 and 14.2.
[6]   See Article 17 of the horizontal rules.

12. PROFESSIONAL SECRECY AND HANDLING OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

The members of the group and their representatives, as well as invited experts and observers, are subject to the obligation of professional secrecy, which by virtue of the Treaties and the rules implementing them applies to all members of the institutions and their staff, as well as to the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of Union classified information, laid down in Commission Decisions (EU, Euratom) 2015/443[7] and 2015/444[8]. Should they fail to respect these obligations, the Commission may take all appropriate measures.

13. TRANSPARENCY

1.   The group and its sub-groups shall be registered in the Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities ('the Register of expert groups').

2.   As regards the group and sub-groups composition, the following data shall be published on the Register of expert groups:

> (a) the name of Member States' authorities;
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> (b) the name of other public entities, including the name of third countries' authorities;
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> (c) the name of member organisations; the interest represented shall be disclosed;
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> (d) the name of observers.

3.   All relevant documents, including the agendas, the minutes and the participants' submissions, shall be made available on the Register of expert groups. In particular, DG EAC shall publish the agenda and other relevant background documents in due time ahead of the meeting, followed by timely publication of minutes. Exceptions to publication shall only be possible where it is deemed that disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) N° 1049/2001[9].

14. MEETING EXPENSES

1.   Participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall not be remunerated for the services they offer.

2.   Travel and subsistence expenses incurred by participants in the activities of the group and sub-groups shall be reimbursed by the Commission. Reimbursement shall be made in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission and within the limits of the available appropriations allocated to the Commission departments under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

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[7]   Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41).

[8]   Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

[9]   These exceptions are intended to protect public security, military affairs, international relations, financial, monetary or economic policy, privacy and integrity of the individual, commercial interests, court proceedings and legal advice, inspections/investigations/audits and the institution's decision-making process.

Achieving the European Education Area by 2025

Annex: Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training
2021-2025

Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)

European Education Area

Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training

Title	Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training
Duration of mandate	2021-2025[10]
Coordinating Unit(s)	EAC A1 – Strategy and investments
Chair (Head of Unit level)[11]	Gyula Cserey
Coordinating official(s)	Daria Arlavi, Hristina Petkova

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

The Working Group will focus on structural reform to promote equality in education and training and build on the EU values dimension which was covered during the previous ET 2020 mandate (i.e. anti-radicalisation, citizenship education and training, European dimension in education, disinformation, inclusion of refugees and migrants in education and training). It will also **examine relevant areas related to equality ,** bearing in mind the dual approach of inclusive education for all and targeting specific population groups, as set out in Priority Area 1,i.e. both group-focused approaches (such as gender equality, anti-racism, equality of Roma, people with migrant background, LGBTIQ persons and people living with disabilities) and cross-cutting issues with societal benefits and of high importance to all discriminated and disadvantaged groups, such as fighting segregation in education, **managing diversity and building a sense of belonging** in a **lifelong learning perspective)**.

Furthermore, the Working Group will provide ideas and inspiration for policymakers and practitioners who strive to improve equality in education and training systems across the EU. Likewise, the work will contribute to developing **evidence-based procedures to assess policies** in the Member States and provide new measures and methods to improve the equality in education and training.

Priority areas to be addressed:

☒ 1. Quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training
☒ 2. Lifelong learning and mobility
☒ 3. Teachers and Trainers
☒ 4. Higher education
☒ 5. Green and digital transitions

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[10] The Working Groups will run until 2025, throughout the first cycle of the strategic framework; their specific objectives can be reviewed and updated, if needed to reflect emerging policy needs, including during the stocktaking exercise foreseen in 2022 as part of the European Education Area Progress Report. Concrete outputs to support Member States in their national reforms and contribute to the achievement of the European Education Area will be further defined in the work plan of respective Working Groups.

[11] For some of the specific outputs and peer learning events identified below, Member State representatives may be invited to take the lead, if appropriate.

MAIN "CONCRETE ISSUE(S) and ACTION(S)" ADDRESSED (*as established in Annex III of the Resolution*):

Priority area 1 – Quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training

i) Promoting the mastering of key competences, including basic skills, which are a prerequisite to thrive in life, to find or create fulfilling jobs and to become engaged citizens.

iii) Bringing a European perspective in education and training, providing learners with an insight of what Europe at large, and the Union in particular, mean in their daily lives, including through widening and strengthening the Jean Monnet Actions.

iv) Maintaining education and training institutions as safe environments, free of violence, bullying, harmful speech, disinformation and all forms of discrimination, including through further implementation of Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching.

v) Stimulating a safe and supportive school environment as a necessary condition for concrete issues, such as tackling discrimination, racism, sexism, segregation, bullying (including cyber-bullying), violence and stereotypes, and for the individual well-being of all learners

vi) Helping all learners reach a baseline level of proficiency in basic skills, with a special focus on groups at risk of underachievement and early school leaving, including identifying effective policy reforms to support better achievement in basic skills, specifically concerning curriculum and/or assessment, as well as the capacity of institutions and staff to be innovative and develop their learning approaches and environments.

vii) Promoting educational success strategies at national level in order to foster the successful conclusion of education and training pathways by all learners and to reduce early leaving from education and training and low-achievement, by supporting a whole-school approach with an overall inclusive learner-centred vision of education.

viii) Addressing the increasing diversity of learners and enhancing access to quality and inclusive education and training for all learners, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as learners with specific learning needs, minorities, people with a migrant background and Roma, and with fewer opportunities because of their geographical location and/or their social-economically disadvantaged situation.

x) Addressing the issue of gender gaps in education and training, and unequal opportunities for girls and boys, women and men, by promoting more gender-balanced educational choices, challenging and dissolving gender stereotypes in education and educational careers, especially in STEAM fields of study, addressing issues such as boys' underachievement, bullying and sexual harassment, and developing a better gender sensitivity in education and training processes and institutions.

xi) Supporting data collection and innovation for inclusion and gender equality in education.

xii) Promoting civic, intercultural, and social competences, mutual understanding and respect, and ownership of democratic values and fundamental rights at all levels and types of education and training.

xiii) Fostering, valuing and recognising non-formal learning including volunteering, and enhancing the inclusiveness, quality and recognition of cross-border solidarity activities.

xiv) Developing ethical conduct and enhancing critical thinking, along with digital and media literacy.

xv) Fostering sustainable investment in quality and inclusive education and training.

Priority area 2 – Lifelong learning and mobility

ii) Making lifelong learning strategies more robust and inclusive in order to allow those who have left early to re-enter education in flexible forms through life, and those who need it to be able to access higher education and VET programmes to update or acquire skills (upskilling and reskilling) that the jobs of tomorrow require, at all stages of life.

Contribution to other "concrete issues and actions": 3.5., 3.8., 4.3., 5.1., 5.2. (see Annex)

Contribution to implementation and follow-up of other major EU policy initiatives:

- European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

- EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025

- Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030

- European Democracy Action Plan

- EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation

- Action plan on integration and inclusion (2021-2027)

- LGBTI Equality strategy 2020-2025

- Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

- Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027

Contribution to implementation of major EU funding initiatives

The Working Group will support the inclusive elements of education reforms financed under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the 2021-2027 EU Structural Funds and help implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Affiliations and joint activities with other bodies of governance (EEA and related areas):

Name of entity	Subject of cooperation/ Planned joint activities/ reporting
Governance structure, including, inter alia, the Council, the Education Committee and other relevant governance bodies, to be agreed by the end of 2021	Regular and timely reporting on the overall progress of the Working Groups and valorisation of results. Additionally, punctual reporting and dissemination is ensured for relevant outputs

Working Group on ECEC	Cooperation on issues related to the quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training.
Working Group on Schools	Cooperation on issues related to the quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training.
Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks	Identification of evidence and data gaps, development and maintenance of indicators and targets for measuring performance and progress. Supporting data collection and innovation for inclusion and gender equality in education

EXPECTED TANGIBLE OUTPUTS:

Common tools and approaches (e.g. toolkits, guidelines, frameworks)

- **Thematic fiches on promoting equality in education** (policy guidance on innovation for gender equal education and development of the European perspective in education, addressing underperformance of boys, ensuring inclusion of children with disabilities, ethnic and racial minorities, students with a migrant background, LGBTIQ students, fighting school segregation) **supporting the follow-up** on the respective equality strategies (Gender equality strategy, EU anti-racism action plan, EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, LGBTIQ equality strategy, Action plan on integration and inclusion, European democracy action plan) – fiches finalised in stages between end 2021 and end 2022.

- Guidance for the **use of disaggregated data** (e.g., by sex, gender, age, disability, racial, ethnic, migrant background, sexual orientation) for the purposes of (impact) assessment of policy reforms and good practices – by end 2022.

- Collection of good practices in the implementation of the **Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching**.

- Joint discussions with the **Council of Europe** on the first experiences with the **Observatory on History Teaching in Europe**.

Peer learning and exchange of good practice (e.g. reports, collections of good practice, fiches, etc.):

The Working Group will collect and add inspiring practices to the online Citizenship Compendium started during the ET2020 Working Group on Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education (2018-2020).

Contribution to implementation and follow-up of EEA actions:

- Implementation of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
- Platforms for mutual learning to support innovation for inclusive and gender equal education
- Supporting Member States in identifying effective policy reforms for better achievement in basic skills and providing opportunities for learners at all levels to develop transversal skills (learner

centred approaches with additional targeted support to discriminated /disadvantaged groups in mainstream settings)

– Stimulating peer learning on the development of a European perspective in education, including EU values and democracy.

RECURRENT ACTIVITIES:

Support to Member States facing issues identified in CSRs

Provide support to clusters of Member States in response to issues identified in European Semester Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) by making the practical experience and good practices of other Member States available to them.

Support to Member States implementing EU (RRF/Structural Funds) funded reforms in education and training

Provide support to clusters of Member States implementing inclusive education reforms form RRF or Structural Funds (including in response to issues identified in European Semester CSRs)

Support to Member States for Covid-19 recovery

Provide support to clusters of Member States implementing education reforms towards the recovery as identified in 2020 CSRs

Support to the incubation and follow-up of Erasmus+ KA3 policy experimentation

The Working Group may connect with the Commission programme managers of some of the Erasmus+ actions, discuss and proposed orientations for the forward looking and policy experimentations activities. The findings of the Working Group may inform the Commission when setting the annual priorities for the KA3 "social inclusion" call.

INDICATIVE ROADMAP (2021-2022):

On the basis of this roadmap, the Working Group will draw up a work plan for 2021-2022.

PHASE	MAIN THEMES/ACTIVITIES	DELIVERABLES
Phase 1: September – December 2021	Two online meetings on specific themes, involving invited experts in research and practice.	Presentation of the specific objectives and discussions of overarching issues and systemic approach. Planning of Peer Learning Activities during the mandate. Collecting of best practices for the Online Citizenship Compendium. Thematic fiche on the topic of the PLA including deliverable on the use of disaggregated data for the purposes of (impact) assessment.
Phase 2: January - June 2022	1 **physical meeting** taking place in Brussels and one **Peer learning activity** (taking place in a voluntary host country, to explore specific topics in a more in-depth and technical way.).	Collecting of best practices for the Online Citizenship Compendium. Thematic fiche on the topic of the PLA including deliverable on the use of disaggregated data for the purposes of (impact) assessment.
Phase 3: July - December 2022	1 **physical meeting** taking place in Brussels and one **Peer learning activity.**	Collecting of best practices for the Online Citizenship Compendium. Thematic fiche on the topic of the PLA including deliverable on the use of disaggregated data for the purposes of (impact) assessment.

EVIDENCE BASE

Relevant EU-level target(s):

- Participation in early childhood education and care (96% of children between the age of 3 and compulsory primary education should participate in ECEC)

- Low achieving 15-year-olds in basic skills (The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%, by 2030)

- Low-achieving eight-graders in digital skills (the share of low-achieving eight-graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%, by 2030)

- Early leavers from education and training, with accompanying indicator on upper secondary level attainment (the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9%, by 2030)

- Tertiary level attainment (the share of 25-34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 45%, by 2030)

- Participation of adults in learning (at least 47% of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2025)

Coherence with other EU indicator frameworks, dashboards and targets:

- Social Scoreboard of the European Pillar of Social Rights

- Future indicators linked to the Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030

- EU level targets and indicators linked to the EU Roma strategic framework

- Indicators on gender equality in education linked to the Gender Equality Strategy (monitoring framework)

- New approach on equality data collection and indicators developed in the context of national action plans linked to the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025

Relevant indicator frameworks, data collections or reports:

A study on **Gender Behaviour and its Impact on Education Outcomes** (results are expected for end of June 2021). The aim of this study is a) to provide insight into why boys and young men are increasingly falling behind in education and the consequences that this lack of educational success has on society, and b) to examine national strategies and initiatives focusing on girls as a target group, especially with a view to increasing the number of girls enrolled in STEM and in other traditionally male-dominated subjects and sectors. The study will provide an input into the working streams of the enabling framework of the European Education Area, where gender equality will be included in the specific objectives of the working groups, expert groups and DG meetings. The study will also provide information to strengthen the gender equality reporting in the Education and Training Monitor.

A study on **Enhancing Learning Through Digital Tools and Practices: How Digital Technology in Compulsory Education Can Help Promote Inclusion.**
The study is concerned with how digital technologies can promote the inclusion of all learners, but also specifically to identify their role with regard to learners with different learning needs, those living in remote areas, migrants, those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, and other learners

facing additional challenges. The study will provide data on the "digital divide": (1) primary access to digital technology and infrastructure; (2) digital and technological skills and competences, including online safety and citizenship; (3) the ability to translate online opportunities into real-life benefits; and (4) the ability to make connections and create online "environments conducive of the realisation of personal goals".

Important data gaps:

The Working Group activities could address gaps in data/information/practices in the following areas:

- Information on understanding of the concept of gender in primary school and ECEC, identifying specific challenges and good practices

- Role of gender stereotypes in school performance and career motivations

- Intersectionality, data on experiences and challenges of students and good practices (e.g. intersections of LGBTIQ and migrant background, ethnicity and gender, racial background and disability)

- Notion/definition of segregation in education (covering different grounds, such as ethnicity, special education need, migrant background), evidence on mutual benefits of inclusive school settings for minority and majority students, good practices

- Data and good practices on teacher education on teaching about diversity (LGBTIQ, gender, ethnicity, racial diversity, migration)

- Information on linkages between emotional and mental wellbeing of students, their minority status and discrimination experience.

- Links between informed parental school choice, diversity and desegregation.

- Links between consumption of digital technologies, media literacy, protection from cyberbullying and radicalisation and socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic or migrant background

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DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

- Thematic fiches on promoting equality in education produced within the specific objectives of the Working Group will be disseminated through the EEA platform. The results of the studies on Gender Behaviour and Digital Inclusion will be integrated into the thematic fiches.

- The Working Group will collect and add inspiring practices to the online Citizenship Compendium started during the ET2020 Working Group on Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education (2018-2020).