



## European Education Area Strategic Framework

### Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training

Issue Paper: Tackling different forms of discrimination  
in and through education and training



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# **Issue Paper**

## **Tackling different forms of discrimination in and through education and training**

Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training  
(2021-2025)

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This document was compiled and edited by Barry van Driel, Vicki Donlevy, Selina Komers and Maria Melstveit Roseme (Ecorys) based on the work of the Working Group Equality and Values in Education and Training (2021-2025).

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# 1. Introduction

This Issue Paper on ‘Tackling different forms of discrimination in and through education and training’ has been produced within the framework of the European Commission’s Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training. The Working Group (WG) operates within the context of the [Commission’s Communication of 30 September 2020 on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025](#) and the [Council Resolution of 26 February 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#). Participants of the WG comprise of representatives from Member States and Candidate countries, as well as from relevant EU agencies, stakeholder associations, social partners and international organisations. The WG is coordinated by DG EAC of the European Commission, supported by consultants from Ecorys<sup>1</sup>.

The Issue Paper is a key output related to two WG meetings held on 9 June (online) and 22-23 September (in-person) 2022, and one Peer Learning Activity (PLA) held in Paris on 12-13 December 2022. The WG meetings focused on the EU non-discrimination policy instruments, tackling prejudice and discrimination in education and training relating to religion and beliefs, ethnic and racial origin, disability, sexual orientation, as well as addressing multiple discrimination and intersectionality. The PLA hosted by the French Ministry of National Education in Paris focused on social and territorial inequalities in and through education.

This Paper presents some of the major insights, findings, discussions, and inspirational practices that arose from the two WG meetings and the PLA. As an outcome of those discussions, the main aim of this Paper is to frame and give depth to the various presentations and discussions that took place during these events. The Paper addresses six main themes relating to tackling different forms of discrimination and disadvantage in and through education:

- Tackling discrimination based on ethnic or racial origin, including discrimination against Roma;
- Tackling discrimination relating to religion and beliefs;
- Tackling discrimination based on disability;
- Tackling discrimination relating to sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics;
- Tackling social and territorial inequalities;
- Tackling multiple discrimination: an intersectional approach.

## Target audience

The primary target audience of the Issue Paper is policymakers at all levels across the EU. Secondary target groups are education practitioners, as well as other stakeholders and individuals interested in preventing and combatting discrimination in and through education and training.

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<sup>1</sup> Barry van Driel, Vicki Donlevy, Maria Melstveit Roseme and Selina Komers.

## 2. Key definitions and concepts

With the aim of providing useful reference points for the reader, this Paper begins by setting out some key definitions and concepts in relation to tackling discrimination in and through education and training.

Key concepts	Definition
<b>Discrimination</b>	<p>The Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union recognise the right to equality and the right to non-discrimination as essential values of the Union<sup>2</sup>, and the Union has already adopted several Directives on the prohibition of discrimination<sup>3</sup>.</p> <p>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) refers to discrimination as including ‘any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education.’<sup>4</sup></p>
<b>Equality vs. Equity in education</b>	<p><b>Equality</b> can be interpreted in multiple ways. Most importantly, as a core value of the European Union, the concept of equality refers to a ‘shared concern for human dignity; the participation by all in economic, social and cultural life; a voice for all groups in decisions that impact on them; and a celebration of diversity.’ European equal treatment legislation was created to reflect this core value by ensuring the basic principle of equal treatment and supporting and protecting people who face discrimination<sup>5</sup>. However, equality in education, more narrowly defined, is sometimes built on an assumption that students should be treated the same, to ensure that ‘one size fits all’, so as not to discriminate.<sup>6</sup> Such a narrow approach is blind to differences and to different needs and ignores that apparently neutral selection mechanisms can have a segregationist and discriminatory impact. The OECD has pointed to the fact that, for instance early tracking, though perhaps seen as value neutral, has discriminatory consequences for immigrant students and those from lower economic strata and that the consequences include increased segregation.</p> <p><b>Equity</b> in education recognises that students have different needs and starting points, sometimes relating to (socio-) psychological, historical and structural barriers. Equity in education therefore relates to the extent to which learners can fully enjoy the right to education and training, in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes. Equitable systems ensure that the outcomes of education and training are independent of socio-economic background and other factors that lead to educational disadvantage and that treatment reflects individuals’ specific learning needs.<sup>7</sup></p>

<sup>2</sup> Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union (‘TEU’), Articles 8 and 10 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (‘TFEU’), and Articles 21, 23 and 26 of the Charter

<sup>3</sup> [Directive 79/7/EEC](#) prohibits discrimination based on sex, in matters of social security. [Directive 2000/43/EC](#) prohibits discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin. [Directive 2000/78/EC](#) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation as regards employment, occupation and vocational training. [Directive 2004/113/EC](#) prohibits discrimination based on sex in access to and supply of goods and services.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-against-discrimination-education>

<sup>5</sup> <https://equineteurope.org/equality-in-europe/#:~:text=Equality%20as%20a%20core%20value,and%20a%20celebration%20of%20diversity> .

<sup>6</sup> See e.g., <http://bitly.ws/CMQk>

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems, [COM \(2006\) 481 final](#)

<p><b>Intersectionality and Intersectional discrimination</b></p>	<p>Equinet has defined intersectionality as 'where different grounds [for discrimination] interact in a manner which makes them inseparable'.<sup>8</sup> In referring to the work of Sandra Fredman<sup>9</sup>, the Council of Europe defines intersectional discrimination as discrimination that 'happens when two or multiple grounds operate simultaneously and interact in an inseparable manner, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination.'<sup>10</sup> Further discussion on the concept of intersectionality is provided in section 8 of this paper.</p>
<p><b>Integration and Inclusion</b></p>	<p>The OECD<sup>11</sup>, borrowing on definitions from other sources, sets out a distinction between the concepts of integration and inclusion in the field of education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Integration</b> is achieved by placing students with diverse needs in mainstream education settings with some adaptations and resources, but on condition that they can fit into pre-existing structures, attitudes and an unaltered environment;</li> <li>• <b>Inclusion</b> is a process that helps overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of all learners. It is about changing the system to fit the student, not changing the student to fit the system, because the 'problem' of exclusion is firmly within the system, not the person or their characteristics.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Racism</b></p> <p><b>Anti-racism</b></p>	<p>The <a href="#">EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025</a> cites the definition of <b>racism</b> as: 'the belief that a ground such as 'race', colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons.' It recognises different forms of racism, for example anti-black racism, antigypsyism, antisemitism and anti-Asian racism, that link to religion or belief in cases such anti-Muslim hatred. All share the reality that the value of a person is undermined by stereotypes based on prejudice. In addition to religion or belief, racism can also be combined with discrimination and hatred on other grounds, including gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability or against migrants. This needs to be taken into account through an intersectional approach. As part of a comprehensive legal and policy framework aimed at tackling discrimination, racism and xenophobia, and at ensuring a high level of security through measures to prevent and combat crime, Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA defines a common criminal law approach to racist and xenophobic hate speech and hate crimes, which are among the most severe manifestations of racism and xenophobia.</p> <p>In view of the foregoing, <b>anti-racism</b> is generally understood as 'the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organisational structures, policies, practices and attitudes'<sup>12</sup>. It is structured around conscious efforts and deliberate actions which are intended to promote a level playing field on both an individual and a systemic level. In the context of education, anti-racism strategies might include racial sensitivity and diversity training for teaching staff and the examination of curriculum materials to proactively identify and address racial bias<sup>13</sup>.</p>
<p><b>Racial discrimination</b></p>	<p>The <a href="#">Race Equality Directive 2000/43/EC</a> prohibits discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin. It covers the fields of employment and occupation, vocational training, membership of employer and employee organisations, social protection, including social security and health care, education, access to goods and services which are available to the public, including housing. <a href="#">Article 2 of the Directive</a> defines four types of discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>direct discrimination</b> - where one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of racial or ethnic origin;</li> <li>• <b>indirect discrimination</b> - where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons of a racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary;</li> <li>• <b>harassment</b> - when an unwanted conduct related to racial or ethnic origin takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. In this context, the concept of harassment may be defined in accordance with the national laws and practice of the Member States.</li> <li>• <b>an instruction to discriminate</b> against persons on grounds of racial or ethnic origin.</li> </ul>



	<p>The United Nations (UN) defines <b>racial discrimination</b> as: ‘any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.’<sup>14</sup></p>
<b>Anti-Muslim hatred</b>	<p>The European Commission implements several initiatives to tackle anti-Muslim hatred. As noted by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA): ‘Muslims represent the second largest religious group in the European Union. They face discrimination in a broad range of settings – and particularly when looking for work, at work, and when trying to access public or private services.’ In its <a href="#">Revised General Policy Recommendations number 5</a>, the Council of Europe ECRI refers “to the phenomena as anti-Muslim racism and discrimination whilst also using “anti-Muslim hatred” and “anti-Muslim prejudice” in order to characterise the complex and diverse array of hate speech and violence as well as any act of discrimination directed at Muslims or those perceived to be Muslims”. The Organisation for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) refers to ‘intolerance against Muslims’ and notes that ‘many Muslims experience a range of discrimination, including verbal harassment, hate speech, violent attacks and religious profiling.’<sup>15</sup></p>
<b>Antigypsyism</b>	<p>Since 2005, the European Parliament has been using the term ‘antigypsyism’. Several international and civil society organisations have recognised the phenomenon, also known as anti-Roma racism, romaphobia and antiziganism. In its <a href="#">conclusions of 8 December 2016</a>, the Council acknowledged the need to ‘fight all forms of racism against Roma, sometimes referred to as anti-Gypsyism, as it is a root cause of their social exclusion and discrimination’. The <a href="#">2021 Council recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation</a> refers to antigypsyism as “an unusually prevalent form of racism, which has its origins in how mainstream society views and treats those considered as ‘gypsies’ in a process of historical ‘othering’, which builds on stereotypes and negative attitudes that may sometimes be unintentional or unconscious”. The same document acknowledges the 2020 International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) non-legally binding definition of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination as: ‘a manifestation of individual expressions and acts as well as institutional policies and practices of marginalization, exclusion, physical violence, devaluation of Roma cultures and lifestyles, and hate speech directed at Roma as well as other individuals and groups perceived, stigmatized, or persecuted during the Nazi era, and still today, as ‘Gypsies.’ This leads to the treatment of Roma as an alleged alien group and associates them with a series of pejorative stereotypes and distorted images that represent a specific form of racism.’</p>

<sup>8</sup> Equinet (2016), *Innovating at the Intersections. Equality Bodies tackling Intersectional Discrimination*, [https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/equinet\\_perspective\\_2016\\_-\\_intersectionality\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/equinet_perspective_2016_-_intersectionality_final_web.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Information of Sandra Fredman: <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/people/sandra-fredman-fba-qc-hon>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/north-south-centre/intersectionality>

<sup>11</sup> OECD (2021), OECD Education Working Paper No. 26, *Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework*. Working Papers, No. 260, OECD Publishing, Paris, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/94ab68c6-en>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/systemic-racism-discrimination/anti-racism-toolkit/anti-racism-lexicon.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.aclrc.com/antiracism>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.osce.org/odihr/countering-discrimination-against-muslims>

<p><b>Antisemitism</b></p>	<p>As stated the <a href="#">2021 EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life</a>, since 2017, the European Commission has been using the non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance(IHRA definition) as a practical guidance tool and a basis for its work to combat antisemitism<sup>16</sup>. The IHRA definition is the benchmark for promoting a rights-based and victim-centred approach<sup>17</sup>: ‘Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.’ In January 2021, the European Commission in cooperation with the IHRA published the <a href="#">Handbook for the practical use of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism</a></p>
<p><b>Persons with disabilities</b></p> <p><b>discrimination on the basis of disability</b></p>	<p>The <a href="#">UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)</a>, to which the EU and all Member States are signatory parties, states that persons with disabilities include those who have a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment. Disability is an evolving concept, which ‘results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’</p> <p>Further on Article 2 of the UNCRPD defines discrimination on the basis of disability as ‘any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation.’</p>
<p><b>Disablism or ableism</b></p>	<p>Disablism can be defined as discriminatory, oppressive, abusive behaviour arising from the belief that disabled people are inferior to others. Disablism refers to prejudice, stereotyping, or "institutional discrimination" against disabled people. The main problem about disablism (also known as abilism or ableism) is that it is not easy to identify. In many cases, people do not realise that it exists. Disablism is first and foremost about people's attitudes: it does not only refer to consciously discriminatory behaviour, but also to the way that people unconsciously relate to people with disabilities. The unconscious part of discriminatory attitudes is much harder to tackle than conscious acts of discrimination, but both need to be equally targeted in the struggle for human rights.<sup>18</sup></p>
<p><b>Reasonable accommodation</b></p>	<p>The UNCRPD defines reasonable accommodation as the “means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”.</p>
<p><b>Universal design</b></p>	<p>The UNCRPD defines universal design as “the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.”</p>

<sup>16</sup> The IHRA definition was endorsed by the [2018](#) and [2020](#) Council Declarations and the European Parliament [Resolution](#) of 1 June 2017. It is used for education, training and unmasking antisemitism and has no bearing on EU or national legal definitions determining to what extent a behaviour or speech would constitute illegal discrimination, hate speech, biased motivation for a hate crime or illegal manifestations of antisemitism.

<sup>17</sup> Other definitions of antisemitism have been developed recently, such as the Nexus Document (2020) and [the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism \(2021\)](#).

<sup>18</sup> Council of Europe: [Disability and Disabilism - Manual for Human Rights Education with Young people](#)

<b>Special Educational Needs (SEN)</b>	Regarding <b>special educational needs (SEN)</b> , the European Commission notes that 'there is no commonly agreed definition in use across the EU, but most definitions encompass a broad spectrum of conditions that include physical, mental, cognitive and educational impairments. These are children whose learning difficulties hinder their ability to benefit from the general education system without support or accommodation to their needs.' <sup>19</sup>
<b>LGBTIQ people</b>	The <a href="#">LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025</a> defines LGBTIQ people as people 'who are attracted to others of their own gender (lesbian, gay) or any gender (bisexual); whose gender identity and/or expression does not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth (trans, non-binary); who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definition of male or female (intersex); and whose identity does not fit into a binary classification of sexuality and/or gender (queer)'. <sup>20</sup>
<b>Gender identity or expression</b>	<p>Gender identity is understood to refer to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with sex assignment at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.</p> <p>Gender expression refers to the social expression of an individual's gender identity, including the use of name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behaviour, voice or body characteristics.<sup>21</sup></p>
<b>Intersex</b>	Persons born with biological sex characteristics that do not fit societal norms or medical definitions of what makes a person male or female. Sometimes a person's intersex status is detected at birth; sometimes it only becomes apparent later in life, notably during puberty. There are many forms of intersex; it is an umbrella spectrum or term, rather than a single category. <sup>22</sup>
<b>Homophobia</b>	FRA has defined homophobia as the 'irrational fear of, and aversion to, homosexuality and to lesbian, gay and bisexual people based on prejudice' <sup>23</sup> .
<b>Transphobia</b>	FRA has defined transphobia as the 'irrational fear of gender non-conformity or gender transgression, such as a fear of, or aversion to, masculine women, feminine men, cross-dressers, transgenderists, transsexuals, and others who do not fit into existing gender stereotypes about their birth gender'. <sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b2215e85-1ec6-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>20</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0698>

<sup>21</sup> source CoE glossary on SOGIESC

<sup>22</sup> source CoE glossary on SOGIESC

<sup>23</sup> FRA (2009). *Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the EU Member States: Part II – The Social Situation*. Available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/397-FRA\\_hdgso\\_report\\_part2\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/397-FRA_hdgso_report_part2_en.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<p><b>Positive action</b></p>	<p>Equinet defines positive action as 'proportionate measures undertaken with the purpose of achieving full and effective equality in practice for members of groups that are socially or economically disadvantaged, or otherwise face the consequences of past or present discrimination or disadvantage. It deliberately uses one or more of the protected grounds such as race or gender to remedy the past harms against people from disadvantaged groups, compensate for ongoing disadvantage, prevent that disadvantage from happening and to ensure full equality. In this sense, it is a fundamental tool to fight against structural discrimination.'<sup>25</sup> For example, Article 5 of the <a href="#">Racial equality directive</a> provides that "with a view to ensuring full equality in practice, the principle of equal treatment shall not prevent any Member State from maintaining or adopting specific measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to racial or ethnic origin".</p>
<p><b>Segregation and Desegregation</b></p>	<p>The European Commission defines <b>segregation</b> as being characterised by 'the physical and social separation of members of a marginalised group from members of non-marginalised groups and unequal access to mainstream, inclusive and high-quality services.'<sup>26</sup> The Commission further defines <b>desegregation</b> as: 'the action to eliminate segregation. Desegregation interventions should establish the conditions for equal access to high-quality services, including education, housing, labour market, health, and any other relevant field.'<sup>27</sup> The second part of this definition goes beyond limited notions of desegregation, which only refer to the process of ending the physical separation of members of marginalised group from members of non-marginalised groups, by emphasising the importance of convergence also of socio-economic space.</p>
<p><b>Social and Territorial inequality</b></p>	<p>While <b>social inequality</b> tends to refer to 'relational processes in society that have the effect of limiting or harming a group's social status, social class, and social circle'<sup>28</sup>, <b>territorial inequality</b>, according to the European Commission, refers to territorial divides (such as urban versus rural localities) regarding the availability of infrastructure and public transport, access to services and digital connectivity. It also connects to territorial disparities relating to economic advancement versus decline, population density, employment opportunities and education levels<sup>29</sup>.</p>

<sup>25</sup> <https://equineteurope.org/how-can-positive-action-fight-structural-discrimination-in-europe/>

<sup>26</sup> [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/pages/glossary/segregation\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/pages/glossary/segregation_en)

<sup>27</sup> European Commission (2015), *Guidance for Member States on the use of European Structural and Investment Funds in tackling educational and spatial segregation*, p.3,

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/wikiguide/egesif\\_15\\_0024\\_01\\_gn\\_segregation.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/wikiguide/egesif_15_0024_01_gn_segregation.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/social\\_inequality.htm](https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/social_inequality.htm)

<sup>29</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/importance-territorial-inequalities\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/importance-territorial-inequalities_en)

### 3. Tackling discrimination based on ethnic or racial origin, including discrimination against Roma

In this section, we look at tackling discrimination based on ethnic and racial origin, including discrimination against Roma, in and through education and training. We consider the EU legal and policy response, relevant international initiatives, main challenges and points for attention, and a series of inspiring practices which have emerged from the WG exchanges.

#### 3.1. EU legal, policy and funding response

The EU has only limited competence (supporting role) in the area of education policy. Nevertheless, the EU does have a range of legal, policy and funding tools to fight discrimination based on ethnic and racial origin, including in education.

A key EU legal instrument is the [Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin](#), known as the Racial Equality Directive (RED). This Directive covers different types of discrimination, ranging from direct and indirect discrimination to harassment. Within the enforcement of EU law, Member States have a primary role to transpose and enforce EU anti-discrimination legislation. The RED requires Member States to designate Equality Bodies (EBs) for the promotion of equal treatment of all persons without discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, which should provide independent assistance to victims of discrimination in pursuing their complaints, conduct independent surveys, publish independent reports and make recommendations. The European Commission has in 2022 adopted two legislative proposals (Directives)<sup>30</sup> which aim at ensuring a better application and enforcement of EU anti-discrimination rules. They lay down standards for equality bodies to ensure that people in all Member States enjoy a common minimum level of protection against discrimination. Moreover, under the RED, the Commission has initiated infringement procedures against three countries for school segregation of Roma children.

A key EU policy instrument in combatting discrimination, based on ethnic or racial origin, is the [EU Anti-racism Action Plan for 2020-2025](#). This Action Plan consists of a series of measures delivered through a holistic approach, reaching across different policy areas, addressing all levels of governance, and aiming at the recognition of structural racism as well as tackling racism in everyday life. A major component of the plan is to examine how EU anti-discrimination legislation is enforced and if there are any gaps, in particular in the aforementioned RED. The Anti-racism Action Plan states that 'there are different forms of racism, for example anti-black racism, antigypsyism, antisemitism and anti-Asian racism, that link to religion or belief in cases such [as] anti-Muslim hatred. All share the reality that the value of a person is undermined by stereotypes based on prejudice'.

Through the Action Plan, there is closer coordination with grassroots efforts, with an emphasis on the importance of intersectionality in tackling racism through actions in fields ranging from Artificial Intelligence (AI) to the Green Deal and migration policies. The EU Anti-racism Action Plan provides new structures to listen and learn by offering a permanent framework for exchange on this topic. It also paved the way for the new legislative proposals to strengthen equality bodies, adopted in December 2022<sup>31</sup>. The Plan also involves developing a strong partnership culture with civil society actors to promote social inclusion, fundamental rights and equality, a specific coordinator for anti-racism, and an Anti-racism Summit (which has so far taken place in 2021 and 2022). Since there is no 'one size fits all approach', under this

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<sup>30</sup> Currently discussed in the Council, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_7507](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7507)

<sup>31</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_7507](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7507)

Action Plan, Member States are encouraged to devise their own National Action Plans, a strategy for a targeted and effective response to racism and racial discrimination considering unique national contexts<sup>32</sup>. Beyond guiding the work to tackle racism in the national context, action plans will also be used as tools for sharing good practices between Member States.

Another key strategy to note is the [EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality Inclusion and Participation for 2021-2030](#), which was adopted by the European Commission in 2020. In this framework and in the [Council recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation](#), Member States politically committed to work more directly on tackling and solving the issue of segregation in education and the spatial segregation of Roma, and to prevent and combat antigypsyism and systemic discrimination against Roma people. The main aim in the field of education is to ‘increase effective equal access to quality inclusive mainstream education’, operationalised by three targets: (1) cutting the gap in participation in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) by at least half; (2) reducing the gap in upper secondary completion by at least one third and ensuring that by 2030 the majority of Roma youth complete at least upper secondary education; and (3) working towards eliminating segregation by cutting at least in half the proportion of Roma children attending segregated primary schools<sup>33</sup>.

It should also be noted that the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) conducts surveys on Roma populations, mapping the situation in terms of discrimination and their access to services, with a particular focus on education<sup>34</sup>. The FRA Roma 2021 survey findings show that in compulsory education, more than half of Roma children aged 6–15 (52 %) are in segregated schools where all or most schoolmates are Roma (44 % in 2016). One in five Roma children were also reported to have experienced hate-motivated bullying/harassment while in school (compared to 27 % in 2016)<sup>35</sup>. However, with surveys and data collection, it is important to note that there can be a reluctance towards reporting experiences of discrimination.

In their efforts to achieve the targets of the EU Roma Strategic Framework, guidance and assistance is provided to Member States, and they are expected to make full use of other EU policies, frameworks, and EU funding programmes (including the Recovery and Resilience Facility and EU Cohesion Policy funds, such as ESF+, ERDF) to work towards these targets. Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps Programmes, are both aiming to be fully inclusive. This inclusive approach is firmly anchored in their legal base for the period 2021-2027 and underpinned by the new Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Framework of inclusion measures. This framework aims to help address the barriers different target groups may face in accessing opportunities within the programmes.

### 3.2. Relevant international initiatives

The [Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (ECRI) emphasises the importance of education in addressing racism and intolerance in its recommendations to Member States. ECRI’s [General Policy Recommendation no.10](#) on combatting racism and racial discrimination in and through school education has been a key instrument to serve as a compass in the design of measures on this topic. One aspect that ECRI continues to monitor closely across Europe is human rights education. It recommends introducing an appropriate compulsory human rights/equality subject in curricula.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has ruled on several occasions on the protection from discrimination and the right to education since 2007 as regards Roma pupils, pupils with disabilities and immigrants. For example, the Court acknowledges that the Roma minority is a disadvantaged minority and that as a result requires special protection, extending

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<sup>32</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/common\\_guiding\\_principles\\_for\\_national\\_action\\_plans\\_against\\_racism\\_and\\_racial\\_discrimination.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/common_guiding_principles_for_national_action_plans_against_racism_and_racial_discrimination.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/eu\\_roma\\_strategic\\_framework\\_for\\_equality\\_inclusion\\_and\\_participation\\_for\\_2020\\_-\\_2030\\_0.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_for_2020_-_2030_0.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/roma-survey-findings>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

to the sphere of education. It also recognises this group as vulnerable. The issue of vulnerability is relevant because it entitles positive actions in addressing the topic of discrimination in education, such as assisting applications to schools and assistance in following the school curriculum, and avoiding the perpetuation of past discrimination or discriminative practices disguised in allegedly neutral tests. Moreover, in an important [case of \*X and others v. Albania\*](#), the European Court explicitly recognised the right to inclusive education. The ECtHR has clarified that racial segregation amounts to discrimination in breach of Article 14, and that school segregation may violate [Article 14](#) even in the absence of discriminatory intent (intent is not required)<sup>36</sup>.

In 2021, UNESCO, as part of its UNAI Digital Dialogue Series, organised a global webinar '[Countering Racism through Education](#)', which examined the crosscutting impacts of racism (social, economic, political, legal, etc.), how racial disparities have been highlighted and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of higher education in advancing measures to promote racial diversity and inclusion, with particular focus on education, student engagement and work at the community level to counter racism.' UNESCO also published two relevant reports: a '[Guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education](#)' and a report on '[Ensuring the right to equitable and inclusive quality education](#)'.

### 3.3. Highlights from Working Group discussions

The following challenges and points for attention were identified during WG exchanges.

#### 3.3.1. Challenges

- A key challenge is how to move beyond ad hoc, targeted, specific solutions to racism in education towards more sustainable, structural solutions. This will require intersectional approaches.
- A challenge in implementing change is that teachers and educators are often unaware of their own racial biases and their impact on students. Therefore, awareness raising is needed.
- Initiatives to adjust the curriculum to make it more inclusive as well as initiatives to address discrimination and racism in educational settings and initiatives to give more voice to minority communities often meet resistance. Such resistance can come from schools, parent organisations, the media, the community at large and government officials, etc. Policymakers can learn from successful practices and strategies in other EU countries (and beyond) regarding how to address resistance.
- Many children who are targets of racist behaviour in education, as well as their parents, do not report racist incidents for a variety of reasons. These include lack of faith in reporting procedures, a feeling that the racist events are not significant enough to report, a sense that reporting will not make a difference, fear of negative consequences for the targeted person him/herself if incidents are reported, and distrust in educational institutions and authorities. Underreporting can also stem from communities that have been subjected to racism in educational settings not perceiving certain actions as discriminatory or racist because these actions have been normalised/internalised.
- Students from racial, ethnic and religious minorities tend to be presented with a curriculum that pays little or no attention to their histories, culture, language, religion etc.

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<sup>36</sup> European Court of Human Rights, *Guide on Article 14 of the Convention (prohibition of discrimination) and on Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 (general prohibition of discrimination)*, Section F, p. 52, [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide\\_Art\\_14\\_Art\\_1\\_Protocol\\_12\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide_Art_14_Art_1_Protocol_12_ENG.pdf)

- The curriculum across the EU is often biased when it come for instance to history education. The histories of colonialism and slavery, the perspectives of indigenous and subjugated peoples, tend to be ignored or de-emphasised. The historical and psychological roots of racism also tend to be ignored.
- Data collection, especially disaggregated data, that would help expose racist patterns in educational settings is often challenging for a variety of reasons, also because existing laws and privacy concerns create a barrier.
- For the Roma, key aspects of discrimination in education relate to segregation in mainstream schools/classes or being sent to special schools, receiving lower quality education, having limited access to educational resources such as early childhood education, and lower educational expectations. Parental concerns are also taken less seriously by school and education officials.

### 3.3.2. Points for attention

- Racism in educational settings can be either intentional or non-intentional, overt or subtle, and sometimes a combination of these. A key question is whether these manifestations of racism require different strategies, approaches and policies.
- Addressing discrimination and racism in schools requires that students, teachers, parents/caregivers and the community understand the dynamics and consequences of racism (and the benefits of inclusion) and what kinds of solutions are available. Hence awareness-raising is needed about these issues at the personal and societal levels (both local and national); also regarding what resources are needed to create positive change. It is also important that these efforts include raising awareness about rights and solutions within the communities vulnerable to discrimination.
- Closely linked to the above, addressing discrimination and racism effectively requires being aware of one's own biases and critically reflecting on one's beliefs, as well as a willingness to make improvements, including a willingness to allocate more funding and other resources to solutions.
- Effectively addressing racism in educational settings requires a comprehensive whole school and community-based approach, with legal, policy and funding dimensions.
- It needs to be recognised that, when involving minority communities, they do not have one voice but that there is often a diversity of experiences and voices within such communities. It thus takes time and effort to allow all voices to be heard. But this inclusive process can improve what takes place in the curriculum and in schools.
- Racial, ethnic and religious minorities are often the target of disinformation in the media. Improving media literacy among students can help remove the deleterious effects of such disinformation. Involving media representatives in such efforts can also play a role.
- Students (and teachers) from racial and ethnic minorities are often the target of hate speech. Multi-level strategies are needed to address hate speech directed at racial and ethnic minorities. The latter could address the integration of global citizenship education, including human rights education, media/information literacy and digital citizenship education within national teaching and learning curricula to tackle the root causes of hate speech. It could also encompass providing resources and training for teachers as well as fostering cooperation with civil society organizations,



documentation and information centres and museums that promote education about violent pasts and the origins of violence and hate.<sup>37</sup>

- Strategies are needed to encourage more reporting of racist incidents since many remain off the radar. Equality bodies, hotlines and campaigns can play a role here. Teachers can also play an important role here but need support.
- NGOs, especially those directly associated with minority communities, should be involved in any efforts by policymakers to implement initiatives to address discrimination and racism in educational settings. Representatives of these communities also need to be involved. This improves community's acceptance of and willingness to actively support such initiatives.
- Some countries have made it easier to file reports about discrimination and racism by moving the process online. This can lead to an increase in reporting.
- 'Decolonisation' of the curriculum is needed, and marginalised communities need to be empowered to provide input into curriculum development.
- In line with the above point, involving cultural mediators from minority communities in school settings can help address the dynamics of discrimination. Working with positive role models from minority communities can also help challenge racism.
- Punitive school models disproportionately impact racialised youth. This can lead to them becoming even more marginalised and to early school leaving.
- Discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin is not a new phenomenon and has a long history. Teachers and educators need to be aware of these histories (e.g., history of Roma persecution across Europe) and how to teach about this in an inclusive manner.
- National policymakers can benefit from learning about existing best practices across the EU when it comes to recognising and incorporating the histories, cultures, languages etc. of minority communities in the curriculum.

### 3.4. Selection of inspiring practices

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) supports EU Member States in developing and adopting National Action Plans Against Racism (NAPARs)<sup>38</sup>. These Action Plans provide countries with a unique tool to develop a comprehensive framework which puts racialised communities at the centre of the social justice and equality agenda, with an intersectional anti-racist perspective, to tackle structural inequalities and discrimination. The NAPARs focus on: accessible and inclusive education (by removing discrimination practices and segregation, introducing more racialised & diverse representation in education, mental health resources); decolonising curricula (Europe's history of colonialism and the inclusion of contributions of racialised people in history); training educators (mandatory anti-discrimination training for all education staff, and better recognition and funding of non-formal education); and equality data collection and monitoring of racial discrimination in schools.

One of the key measures to address discrimination, intolerance and racism is to develop and implement a specific and straightforward framework against racism within the school environment. Within the Framework of the European Commission's recommendations on combatting Racism and Intolerance, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus has launched a [Code of Conduct against Racism and a Guide for Managing and Recording Racist](#)

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<sup>37</sup> For more, please see UNESCO's discussion paper "Addressing hate speech: educational responses" published in 2022, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382290>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.enar-eu.org/about/action-plans-against-racism/>

[Incidents](#). This provides step-by-step guidelines on developing mechanisms for reporting incidents, allocating responsibilities to different members of the educational community, and protecting child victims.

Spain's [Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion, Against Xenophobia and Racism \(2021-2027\)](#) is a policy that tackles discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and race. This Strategic Framework is aligned with the European Union's Anti-Racism Action Plan, the EU Cohesion Policy, and the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The framework addresses the entire population and proposes a comprehensive intersectional approach to inclusion, addressing the problem of structural racism, and aiming to inspire citizenship and inclusion policies against xenophobia and racism. Through a cross-cutting approach across several Ministries and local and regional policies, it introduces several policies around the reception and active inclusion of immigrants (in employment, education, health, sports, and housing). In order to prevent xenophobia, racism, and intolerance, there are policies geared around mechanisms for the detection of xenophobic attitudes, as well as training and awareness-raising actions. Some examples of actions include the creation of School Coexistence Observatories, and the new curriculum that is being developed with a focus on competences such as global citizenship and peace-making.

Spain's National Roma Strategic Framework is based on the [National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2021-2030](#), which seeks to work towards the social and educational inclusion of Roma people, particularly by using evidence-based methods with social impact. The Framework consists of recommendations such as increasing the schooling and participation of Roma in education, especially from ages 0 to 3, and reducing school segregation. It also consists of Successful Education Actions (SEA), such as *Schools As Learning Communities*, where there is no segregation, no reduction of the curriculum, a reorganisation of resources towards inclusion, and decisive, evaluative, and educational participation of the whole educational community. Another example of a SEA is the family education programme focused on the education of adults, and helping prepare them to go to university. In 2019, the Spanish Minister of Education decided to include Roma history in the curriculum. According to the Spanish Minister, the reason to do this was to: 'develop the curriculum once the future education law is approved because it is fundamental that Roma students feel included and welcomed in school as well as see that their community is recognised so we start overcoming negative stereotypes'<sup>39</sup>.

The Portuguese [National Plan to Combat Racism and Discrimination 2021-2025](#) reflects the Government's commitment with concrete actions in ten key areas of intervention, ranging from governance, education and culture, higher education, labour and employment, housing, health and social welfare, justice and security, participation and representation, sports, and digital communication. Portugal has also developed [an Equality and Non-Discrimination Strategy and a Strategy for Citizenship and anti-racism](#). In recognising the specific circumstances of Roma people and their experiences of discrimination, Portugal has also introduced an [Observatory of Roma Communities](#) as part of its [National Roma Communities Integration Strategy](#). The observatory promotes the production of studies related to Roma communities in Portugal, with the aim of supporting the design, monitoring and evaluation of Roma specific integration policies. A Guide for the Design of Local Plans for Roma Integration has also been issued to support the preparation and implementation of the strategy at local level. As promising examples in the education sphere specifically, we can look to the [Portuguese guides that promote the inclusion and educational success](#) of Roma children<sup>40</sup>.

In Germany, a [School Network against Racism](#) has been created. Some 3,500 schools have developed materials and thematic news journals on topics such as colonialism. The emphasis is on creating schools without racism and promoting moral courage among students to stand

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2019/09/16/history-of-the-roma-community-to-be-taught-in-spanish-schools>

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/ECidania/Educacao\\_Intercultural/documentos/quiao\\_comunidades\\_ciganas.pdf](https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/ECidania/Educacao_Intercultural/documentos/quiao_comunidades_ciganas.pdf)

up to various forms of racism. Key themes include racism, sexism antisemitism, ableism, antigypsyism, islamophobia, democratic school culture, refugees and asylum seekers, right wing extremism, colonialism and bullying.

Slovak authorities have adopted a [National Strategy for the equality, inclusion and participation of Roma until 2030 and an action plan to support its implementation](#). Two independent institutions have also been tasked with addressing racism and intolerance, as well as promoting equality, namely the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights and the Ombudsperson.

In France, teacher training prepares new teachers to respond to racist or discriminatory situations by providing real-life situations to practice the development of anti-racist competences<sup>41</sup>.

In Finland there is an [Action Plan Against Bullying](#), which is based on surveys about groups who are likely to experience bullying and a [Peace Education Institute \(Rauhankasvatusinstituutti\)](#) that provides anti-racism training projects for educational staff.

In Greece, there is the pilot of a new Roma inclusive approach funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) programme titled [Inclusive Schools 4 Roma](#). The project constitutes an attempt by the Greek educational system – represented by Ministry of Education – to undertake a whole school approach to the social inclusion of Roma. The project will work directly with Greek schools to support and address the educational needs of Roma students.

Slovenia has a strategy to integrate Roma populations, where they work with educational incubators (study assistance, educational and extracurricular activities) and incorporate Roma culture into formal education<sup>42</sup>. The European Commission has published its [assessment report of all national Roma strategic frameworks](#) (NRSF), including country fiches.

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.education.gouv.fr/la-semaine-d-education-et-d-actions-contre-le-racisme-et-l-antisemitisme-5204>;  
<https://eduscol.education.fr/526/seminaire-la-lutte-contre-le-racisme-et-l-antisemitisme>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/media/883/download>

## 4. Tackling discrimination based on religion or belief

In this section, we look at tackling discrimination based on religion and beliefs in and through education and training. We consider the EU policy response, relevant initiatives from international organisations, main challenges and points for attention, and set out a series of inspiring practices which have emerged in the course of the WG exchanges.

### 4.1. EU policy and legal response

The [EU Anti-racism Action Plan for 2020-2025](#) covers racism linked to religion and belief. Although current EU law only explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in employment and vocational training<sup>43</sup>, the Commission has committed to continue to seek progress with the Council in adopting the proposal made in 2008 for equal treatment (including relating to religion) in other spheres including education<sup>44</sup>. In addition, the EU has very clear rules, in particular the [2008 Council Framework Decision on combating certain forms of expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law](#), prohibiting public incitement to violence or hatred based on race, colour, ethnicity and religion. All EU Member States had to implement these rules into their national criminal laws. This means that those who preach hate or call for violence, based on prejudice on grounds of religion or beliefs, can be brought to justice by national authorities. Currently, the main specific focus in EU policy is on combatting antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred.

One of the EU's key policy documents on tackling discrimination against religious minorities is the [EU's strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life \(2021-2030\)](#). As the EU's first ever strategy on combating antisemitism, this Strategy focuses on three pillars: preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism; protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU; and education, research and Holocaust remembrance. Through 96 actions, of which 55 have already been put in motion, the EU aims to lead the global fight against antisemitism. Pillar 3 of this Strategy focuses directly on education and research, guided by the premise that, to shape Europe's future, people need to understand its past. Under this pillar, the Commission supports the training of educational professionals together with UNESCO, funding activities through Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, and supports Member States in stepping up their efforts to promote common values and inclusive education. The actions also boost initiatives such as [Networks Overcoming Antisemitism](#) (NOA project) and support the creation of a European research hub on contemporary antisemitism and Jewish life. Moreover, the Commission has set up an expert group under the Digital Education Action Plan tasked to prepare [guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation](#), published in October 2022. As noted in the Strategy, Member States have committed in a [Council Declaration of December 2020](#), to prevent and fight all forms of antisemitism through new national strategies, or measures under existing national strategies and/or action plans on preventing racism, xenophobia, radicalisation and violent extremism.

The Council, in March 2022, adopted [Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism](#), deploring the alarming rise in racist and antisemitic incidents in EU Member States<sup>45</sup>. It invites Member States to develop action plans and strategies by the end of 2022, implementing the 2020 EU Anti-racism action plan and the 2021 EU strategy on combating antisemitism.

The [FRA's overview of antisemitic incidents](#) recorded in the EU provides information on the most recent figures on antisemitic incidents, covering 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2021.

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<sup>43</sup> Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 *establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32000L0078&from=EN>

<sup>44</sup> Commission proposal for a *Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation*, 2008, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52008PC0426>

<sup>45</sup> Council of the EU, Press release '*Council adopts conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism*', 4 March 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/04/council-adopts-conclusions-on-combating-racism-and-antisemitism/>

It finds, for example, that an increasing number of EU Member States are endorsing and using the IHRA definition on antisemitism in education, training and awareness-raising.

FRA conducted large surveys on Jewish people's experiences with hate crime, discrimination and antisemitism in the European Union in 2012 and then 2018 – the biggest survey of Jewish people ever conducted worldwide<sup>46</sup>. Covering 12 EU Member States, the [2018 survey](#) found that, while the European Union (EU) and its Member States are required by law to combat antisemitism effectively and to safeguard the dignity of Jewish people, Jews across the EU continue to experience antisemitism in various forms. Overall, 11% of all respondents in the 2018 survey said they felt discriminated against for being Jewish in one or more of the five areas listed in the survey – employment (at work or when looking for work), education, health or housing; this level of perceived antisemitic discrimination had also not changed since the survey in 2012. Preliminary results of the [third round of the survey](#), covering 13 EU Member States, are expected to be available by the end of 2023.

The EU has also carried out work on [Combating anti-Muslim hatred](#). Since 2015, the Commission has appointed a Coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred, who works to ensure a robust and holistic response across the Commission services and acts as the main point of contact for organisations in the EU working against racism and anti-Muslim hatred. One example of the many workshops co-ordinated is the event in 2021<sup>47</sup>, which brought together civil society organisations and representatives of equality bodies from a variety of Member States and candidate countries, aimed at exploring concrete methods and avenues for cooperation on combating anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination.

Moreover, the [FRA's EU-MIDIS II survey on Muslims – Selected Findings](#) published in 2017, details research on the discrimination experienced by persons with a Muslim background in different areas of life (labour market, education, housing, health and other services), criminal victimisation (including hate crime), police stops, social inclusion and societal participation. The survey findings provide key data to support a wide range of measures in the areas of integration and non-discrimination. A particularly noteworthy finding from the 2017 survey vis-a-vis education relates to the causes behind under-reporting of discrimination. The two most common reasons for under-reporting cited by Muslim respondents when aggregating all domains of daily life asked about in the survey included that i) they did not think anything would happen or change if they reported it (e.g. housing: 41%; at administrative offices or public services: 40%), or because ii) they saw the incident as too trivial or not worth reporting (e.g. public transport: 42%; in a night club, bar or restaurant: 34%). This is similar to the findings of EU-MIDIS I<sup>48</sup>. However, these two most common reasons for not reporting were found to differ only in the context of children's schools: in this particular domain, respondents were found to be most concerned about i) negative consequences (42%) and, secondly, ii) that there is no proof of the incident (27%). These findings speak to the importance of creating a safe, trusting and transparent school-environment for victims of discrimination, their families and other 'whistle-blowers'.

Another source of EU research is the [2012-2020 Database on anti-Muslim hatred](#), which provides information on significant international, European and national case law and rulings, and findings by human rights and equality bodies relating to hate crime, hate speech and discrimination against Muslims. It also provides information on victims' support organisations

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<sup>46</sup> <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/experiences-and-perceptions-antisemitism-second-survey-discrimination-and-hate>

<sup>47</sup> Equinet and European Commission, *Tackling Discrimination & Intolerance against Muslims Online Workshop* (2021): <https://equineteurope.org/working-together-to-tackle-discrimination-and-intolerance-against-muslims/>

<sup>48</sup> The average rate reported in the 2009 EU-MIDIS Data in Focus Report 2: Muslims was 80 %. Although no direct and exact comparisons between the two numbers can be made (due to slightly different compositions of countries and target groups in the two analyses), this result shows that, on average, most Muslim respondents remain unaware that support organisations are available in case of discrimination in the countries in which they live. For Roma respondents, EU-MIDIS II results revealed that an average of 82 % were unaware of this – showing that, on average, Muslim respondents are slightly more aware of such organisations than Roma respondents.

in the EU Member States. In 2022 FRA collected comparable data in 15 EU Member States through its [survey on immigrants and descendants of immigrants](#). The survey includes, among others, questions on experiences of perceived discrimination in employment, education, housing and healthcare services. The first survey findings are due to be available later in 2023 and will help Member States and EU institutions to protect the fundamental rights of people who have immigrant and ethnic minority backgrounds. [The Fundamental Rights report - 2023](#) is another important source of information on developments in the fields of protection of fundamental rights in the EU.

## 4.2. Relevant international initiatives

The Council of Europe (CoE) has engaged in various initiatives relating to teaching about religions and non-religious convictions. These are closely related to CoE work on intercultural education, human rights education and education for democratic citizenship. The publication [Signposts](#) builds on [recommendation CM/Rec\(2008\)12](#), and focuses on issues related to the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and education. The document is intended to encourage 'discussions leading to the development of policy, as a tool for those working in schools, as an aid for training, whether initial training of teachers or the continuing professional development of teachers and others in schools, and as a stimulus to further classroom-based research.'

The [Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (ECRI) also plays an important role in combatting discrimination against religious minorities. This includes monitoring all manifestations of religious (or racial) intolerance, and producing specific policy recommendations. [ECRI's revised General Policy Recommendation No. 5](#) on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination was updated in 2021. It provides comprehensive guidance to governments on addressing anti-Muslim racism and discrimination in four specific areas: policies and institutional coordination, prevention, protection, prosecution, and law enforcement. This Recommendation also underlines the need for governments to proactively address anti-Muslim racism and discrimination through education, ensuring that education systems build pupils and students' resistance to anti-Muslim hatred and prejudice. ECRI believes that teaching about anti-Muslim racism and discrimination needs to be integrated into the school curricula as part of broader lessons on citizenship, human rights, tolerance and the fight against racism. Other relevant Policy Recommendations include the [General Policy Recommendation no.9 on Preventing and combating Antisemitism](#) and [General Policy Recommendation no.10 on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education](#).

[The Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs](#), developed by the Organisation for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), is a document that offers 'practical guidance for preparing curricula for teaching about religions and beliefs, preferred procedures for assuring fairness in the development of curricula, and standards for how they could be implemented'. The Guidelines make a clear distinction between 'teaching into religion' and 'teaching about religion'. They are 'based on two core principles: first, that there is positive value in teaching that emphasizes respect for everyone's right to freedom of religion and belief, and second, that teaching about religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes.' Further ODIHR resources in the field of education (challenges of antisemitism in the classroom, presenting 10 challenges and 10 teaching responses) are also worth mentioning. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also published [Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Addressing Islamophobia through Education](#).

Education is one of the main priorities of the International Alliance for Holocaust Remembrance (IHRA), which has been involved in multiple initiatives targeting educational institutions. [IHRA's Education Working Group](#) (EWG) 'encourages best practices around the commitments to

advance Holocaust education'. Its [publication on teaching and learning about the Holocaust](#) is widely used.

### 4.3. Highlights from Working Group discussions

The following challenges and points for attention were identified during WG exchanges.

#### 4.3.1. Challenges

- Religion, belief and worldview are core components of a person's identity and how young people interpret the world around them. As such, they cannot be ignored. However, how best to incorporate these core components of what it means to be human in educational settings is not an easy task.
- It remains unclear what policies at the national, local and school level best promote feelings of inclusion and acceptance among members of religious minority communities. Given the various religious traditions of EU Member States, the challenges in this area will vary considerably. In some EU countries, students follow religion classes, even if these classes are not about their own religion or if they are non-religious. This can lead to feelings of exclusion and non-belonging. Not all students and their parents are aware of their opt-out options. When students are separated from others due to opting out choices this can lead to feelings of exclusion (from the majority) and can turn such students into targets.
- There is a significant amount of underreporting among Jews and Muslims (and other religious and ethnic minorities) when they feel discriminated against in educational settings. They do not always feel comfortable reporting their experiences to teachers and school authorities, and also sometimes parents. Part of this is related to fears of further stigmatisation or the fear among students that teachers and the school will make things worse.
- Too often, current procedures to address discrimination of religious minorities are too lengthy and too bureaucratic. The challenge is how to improve this.
- Many EU Member States are becoming more secular. This poses special challenges when teaching about issues relating to religions and beliefs.
- Teachers need to be better equipped to deal with students who are bullied and/or discriminated against due to their religious (or non-religious) beliefs. Many schools and teachers indicate they do not know what to do when such bullying or discrimination takes place, so they ignore the problem or resort to ad hoc, superficial actions.
- The development of critical thinking competences is an important characteristic of education and especially citizenship education. A challenge is to what extent critical thinking and criticism relating to the religious (and non-religious) beliefs of others is to be avoided, especially if criticism is aimed at a minority religion. This brings up freedom of speech and expression issues. A related issue is how teachers can be trained to deal with such issues.
- When religion is discussed in schools (whether education about religion or into religion), it is important that minority religions are not ignored and interfaith dialogue is fostered.
- When teaching about religion takes place in schools it is crucial to take steps to ensure that this happens in an accurate and respectful way. This brings up issues relating to the direct involvement of religious communities in curriculum development about their own religion.

### 4.3.2. Points for attention

- Rarely there is a sufficient understanding of the psychological dimensions or historical roots of antisemitism or intolerance against Muslims in Europe. Comprehensive history education on such issues can be part of the solution. There should be a focus on histories of co-existence.
- Teaching about religion and beliefs can be controversial, especially in today's diverse classrooms. Teachers need more competences to teach about controversial issues in general and those related to religions and beliefs, in particular.
- Highlighting religious minority figures' historical and contemporary contributions and remaining mindful of the representation of religious minorities in teaching and learning materials (e.g. visual images, characters) is another important consideration for promoting tolerance and coexistence between interfaiths and religious-secular perspectives .
- The development of learning resources to teach about religion in schools should include consultations with representatives of the religious groups to ensure that learning transpires in an accurate and respectful way.
- Further thinking is required around the best ways to connect teaching about religion and beliefs to human rights education - especially freedom of religion. It further needs to connect to moral and ethics education.
- Similarly, how schools can best collaborate with NGOs, and also religious representatives, that are involved with work around discrimination against religious minorities warrants further consideration.

### 4.4. Selection of inspiring practices

Denmark's [Action Plan Against Antisemitism](#) aims to equip children and young people to speak out against antisemitism and all other forms of intolerance. This involves the introduction of compulsory classes about the Holocaust in primary and upper secondary education, with materials provided to support teachers for teaching. This emphasis has shifted from the preparation of materials to the development of student engaged teaching activities, such as Auschwitz Day. To ensure that the Action Plan is appropriately and sensitively implemented, the Danish Ministry is working with experts and an Advisory Board, comprising of teachers, the Jewish Society in Denmark, the Danish Institute for International Studies, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

On 21 January 2021, Austria presented its [National Strategy](#)<sup>49</sup> to prevent and combat all forms of antisemitism<sup>50</sup>, setting out a holistic approach and comprising 38 specific measures at a societal level and within the fields of education and research, security, law enforcement and integration. 10 of the measures are of the responsibility of Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research, which has been involved in the prevention of antisemitism for more than 20 years mainly through the [erinnern.at programme](#) for teaching and learning about National Socialism and the Holocaust. The programme offers professional support for teachers and further training and develops learning materials against antisemitism that have received international education awards. In January 2022, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD) have developed ["Recommendations for the implementation of the national strategy against antisemitism for the Austrian educational administration and teacher training"](#)

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<sup>49</sup> Adopted by the Federal government on 30 November 2022



[institutions](#)". The aim of the strategic paper is to permanently anchor the discussion and prevention of antisemitism in the education system of Austria. It outlines current manifestations of antisemitism, their functions and intersections with other ideologies of inequality, particularly racism. The proposed measures cover among others antisemitism-critical school development, the revision of curricula and textbooks, the professionalisation of the advisory skills of contact persons and offices for those affected by antisemitism, and the reporting and documentation of antisemitic incidents.

The [Counter-Islamophobia Kit](#) project, which was a two-year project funded under the EU Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, reviews anti-Muslim narratives and the use and efficacy of counternarratives to Islamophobia in eight EU Member States. The project identified the ten dominant counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred. The Counter-Islamophobia Kit also includes best practice guidelines.

B'nai B'rith International and the Institute of Strategic Dialogue, in partnership with UNESCO, developed a [toolkit for civil society on countering antisemitism online](#), with a particular focus on hate speech legislation in Europe and policy, educational and advocacy responses.

Holocaust denial and distortion is a specific form of antisemitism. The [study of Holocaust denial and distortion online](#), conducted by the Oxford Internet Institute, informs the development of educational materials including a **handbook for educators and a digital learning tool**. [#ProtectTheFacts](#) global campaign, supported by the European Commission, provides additional materials on recognising and countering Holocaust distortion.

## 5. Tackling discrimination based on disability

In this section, we look at tackling discrimination based on disability in and through education and training, including a consideration of special needs education. We consider the EU policy response, relevant international initiatives, main challenges and points for attention, and set out a series of inspiring practices which have emerged in the course of the WG exchanges.

### 5.1. EU policy response

The current main EU level strategy that tackles discrimination on the basis of disability is the [EU strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030](#). This strategy implements the obligations for the EU under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It also provides support to EU Member States in their national implementation of the UNCRPD. Maintaining an intersectional approach, the Strategy entails seven flagship initiatives such as the establishment of the Disability Platform (2021), the Disability Employment Package (2022), the resource centre AccessibleEU, Guidance on independent living (2023), the European Disability card (2023), a framework for social services of excellence for persons with disabilities (2024) and a New Commission HR strategy. It also seeks to promote inclusive and accessible mainstream education as well as the upskilling and reskilling of persons with disabilities through various EU initiatives such as the European Skills Agenda, the Youth guarantee, and the Digital Education Action Plan (assistive technologies).

The [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education \(EASNIE\)](#) is an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for the ministries of education in member countries, aiming to help member countries improve their inclusive education policy and practice for all learners. It is funded by its members and the European Commission. The objective of their work is not to compare countries but rather to help them learn from one another. With regards to inclusive education, while there are no legally binding documents at EU level concerning education, EU actions can complement and support national efforts through specific mechanisms for cooperation. EASNIE conducts data collection activities through the European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE), provides regular legislation updates, organises country experience exchange activities, and provides country overviews. In their [Multi-Annual Work Programme for 2021-2030](#), EASNIE states that all aspects of their work must consider everything and anything that can marginalise learners and increase their chances of exclusion; including, but not limited to, disability, gender, remoteness, wealth, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion and other beliefs and attitudes (citing UNESCO, 2020, p.4). EASNIE has also published a [glossary of terms on inclusive education](#), which includes many relevant definitions of concepts related to the education of people with special needs and disabilities.

Under the [European Education Area strategic framework for cooperation](#), four strategic actions are particularly relevant for children and young people with disabilities. The [Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success](#), adopted on 28 November 2022, addresses the need for initial teacher education and continuous professional development to better prepare teachers and other staff to recognise and address different types of learning difficulties, including special educational needs. The [Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU](#) was adopted on 5 April 2022. The text, which updates a [Council Recommendation from 2008](#), gained relevance for young people with disabilities by ensuring that access to transnational volunteering activities is a realistic opportunity for all young people.

In April 2023 the European Commission adopted a [proposal for a Council Recommendation on key enabling factors for successful digital education and training](#) focuses on human capital development, infrastructure and connectivity and promotes a whole government approach to digital education, as essential pre-conditions for an inclusive digital transformation in education

and training. It calls for ensuring inclusive education by safeguarding the accessibility of digital education content and technologies for learners and teachers with disabilities and providing specialised equipment and solutions for learners with special educational needs.

Further on, the [proposal for Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training](#) proposes that Member States develop or update a national strategy for digital education and skills with an emphasis on ‘priority or hard-to-reach groups’ (i.e. disadvantaged or marginalised groups, such as persons with disabilities, Roma or third-country nationals with a limited knowledge of their host country) and set up appropriate measures to facilitate their participation, taking into account accessibility, territorial and socio-economic gaps in digital skills. It also emphasises the importance of maintaining and, where needed, enhancing efforts towards digital inclusion ensuring that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged ones, can contribute to and benefit from the digital transformation.

Currently, there is a gap in EU law to ensure equal treatment of persons with disabilities outside the field of employment, such as social protection, healthcare, education and access to goods and services, including housing. Pending the adoption of a [Commission proposal for a Council Directive on Equal Treatment](#), persistent inequalities and discrimination underline the need for further progress in EU legislation.

## 5.2. Relevant international initiatives

The United Nations adopted the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#) in 2006, which includes a specific article ([Article 24](#)) on education. All Member States and the EU as parties to the Convention are bound by its obligations to the extent of their competences under the EU Treaties. Among others, Article 24 seeks to ensure that ‘Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.’ The UNCRPD Committee has adopted a [General comment number 4](#) on article 24 providing guidance to realise the right to education for persons with disabilities.

UNESCO notes that approximately one billion people have one or more physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health impairments whereas the SRPD refers to 87 million people in the EU having some form of disability<sup>51</sup>. UNESCO also notes that historically, persons with disabilities have been excluded from mainstream education. As part of its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO produced, in 2019, a thematic mapping on the implementation of the right to education for individuals with disabilities. Entitled ‘[The Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities](#)’, the document includes, among other things, a section with an analysis of measures that have been reported on by Member States and a section on factsheets and references to the right to education of persons with disabilities from Member States.

## 5.3. Highlights from Working Group discussions

The following challenges and points for attention were identified during WG exchanges.

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<sup>51</sup> Data: EU SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) and EU LFS (Labour Force Survey). 24.7% of EU population > 16 years are limited in their activities, 17.7% having moderate, 7% severe limitations; S. Grammenos/M. Priestley, 2020: Europe 2020 data and people with disabilities.

### 5.3.1. Challenges

- It remains a challenge across the EU to guarantee access to Early Childhood Education (ECEC) for students with disabilities. There is also insufficient capacity/preparedness of mainstream educational settings to enroll children with disabilities.
- A crucial challenge remains in many EU Member States the lack of quality and targeted support in mainstream settings as requested by the UNCRPD, negatively affecting the transition from parallel (segregated) systems for children with disabilities towards quality inclusive mainstream education settings for all.
- Parents of children with disabilities often face multiple challenges in receiving adequate support for their children in schools, especially mainstream ones, and have to engage with many different services and specialists.
- Policy reforms and implementation take time, typically spanning across more than one government mandate. In this sense, ensuring continuity and sustainability across differing government mandates is an important challenge.
- It is a challenge in many national contexts to collect the data needed to develop effective measures that benefit students with disabilities. Such data collection needs to be improved.
- Accessibility for students with disabilities is a greater challenge in older schools. This brings up the issue of whether it is better to retrofit old schools or have students with disabilities attend newer schools in their vicinity.
- Children with disabilities are more likely to be exposed to violence (including sexual violence) than children without disabilities. This is especially the case for girls, in particular those with intellectual disabilities who are more often subject to sexual abuse.
- It can be difficult to develop national policies around inclusive education, including to address disabilities, because there are differing opinions regarding what inclusive education means in national contexts. However, the General comment number 4 on article 24 of the UNCRPD offers excellent guidance to develop national policies on inclusive education for learners with disabilities.

### 5.3.2. Points for attention

- Special educational needs is a much broader category than disabilities and not all special needs have a disability dimension to them.
- Many children with disabilities lack access to the support services they need. It may be more effective to bring the service to the child rather than the child to the service. Accessibility of built environment and ICT must be sought to make services fully accessible, in order to ensure children's inclusion in the community and avoid segregated approaches. This does demand more resources, but children are entitled to accessibility and reasonable accommodation and schools and public services must be equipped accordingly.
- Working with students with disabilities requires specialised training. In many EU countries there is a shortage of sufficiently trained staff. This implies more training at both the pre-service and in-service levels.
- Too often, approaches for learners with disabilities are 'one size fits all'. This does not work well, also not with respect to individual students since their needs change across the years.

- A key aspect associated with the implementation of effective measures for the successful inclusion of learners with disabilities is the creation of a culture of inclusion, and sometimes changing attitudes for teachers to get out of their comfort zone.
- To implement inclusive education for students with disabilities a comprehensive approach is needed. Such approaches should be in line with the UNCRPD and cater for the needs of learners with disabilities in terms of for example acquisition and use of Braille and sign language. This implies legislative reforms, a sustained roadmap for implementation, data for monitoring and sufficient (financial) resources.
- When it comes to overcoming the legacy of parallel (segregated) systems with respect to children with disabilities in particular, a possible solution which merits further examination includes creating resource centres (transform special schools into resource centres or create regional resource centres) which can deploy specialised staff (psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, sign language teachers etc) in such facilities or dispatch them to mainstream schools. For a successful transition, it is crucial to ensure that the receiving schools are adequately prepared for ensuring a quality service.
- The financing system for compensatory measures for students with disabilities should not lead to segregation (specialised schools or classes) but instead to inclusion in mainstream settings<sup>52</sup>.
- More attention needs to be devoted to data collection and mapping in order to inform the implementation of policies related to students with disabilities and special educational needs.
- PISA assessment needs to be more accessible to children with disabilities. Due to various technical and methodological challenges, PISA has to date offered only limited accommodation for students with disabilities or other forms of special needs. Accordingly, challenges arise from how the assessment is implemented by countries as well as how the results are used (or not used). The Improving accessibility project launched in 2023 under the Research, Development and Innovation Programme of the OECD will define a roadmap for incorporating universal design into PISA assessments, and will produce a working paper on possibilities for enhancing accessibility in PISA through the use of assistive technologies.
- Evidence from Member States suggest that systematic stakeholder involvement can help ensure continuity across governments for key initiatives. For instance, in Ireland, a National Council on Curriculum & Assessment operates as an independent body that the Ministry of Education has to consult<sup>53</sup>.
- Reliable quantitative and qualitative assessment instruments are needed to monitor the participation levels of children with disabilities in (mainstream) education.

## 5.4. Selection of inspiring practices

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture is working to tackle discrimination in education. In line with the [Finnish Basic Education Act](#) (628/1998), besides the education that pupils receive within the framework of the curriculum, school children have the right to receive guidance counselling and sufficient support for learning and school attendance (throughout primary and lower secondary education). The three levels of support for learning and school

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<sup>52</sup> e.g. <https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/fpies-summary-en.pdf>; [https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/fpies\\_policy\\_guidance\\_framework.pdf](https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/fpies_policy_guidance_framework.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> For more, see the good practice evidence from Ireland in the successful PISA stories in the EU final report: <https://orbi.uliege.be/bitstream/2268/297493/1/NC0622160ENN.en.pdf>

attendance in Finland consists of general, intensified and special support. General support is the first measure adopted to respond to a pupil's need for support, involving individual pedagogical solutions as well as guidance and early intervention support measures in the context of daily school life. Pupils who need intensive and multi-professional special support for their learning are those who have serious mental health conditions, multiple or severe disabilities, intellectual disabilities or are on the autism spectrum. Students receiving intensified support study in their own neighbourhood schools learning group, in a special learning group, in special schools or in hospital learning groups. The pupils may have a personal assistant, a special needs assistant and possibly an interpreter, and their parents and guardians are encouraged to engage closely with schoolwork to support their children's growth and development.

[Ireland's National Access Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028](#) is designed to open up higher education to target groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education, and include targets and dedicated funding streams. The three specific priority groups for the Plan for the 2022-2028 period are students who are socio-economically disadvantaged; students who are members of Irish Traveller and Roma communities; and students with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities. Moreover, [the Irish Ministry has a Fund for Students with Disabilities \(FSD\)](#) that provides funding to higher and further education institutions. HEIs are invited to submit proposals for projects such as the creation of autism friendly rooms; the development of assistive technology; tactile wayfinding maps; loop systems for deaf and hard-of-hearing students; and the training & hiring of staff to support students with disabilities. There is also an initiative called '[PATH 4](#)' which is focused on Improving opportunities for Students with Intellectual Disabilities.

An Erasmus+ project that supports the access to university of young students with disabilities is the [EUni4All-Network](#) project, which has been running since 2019. The key aim of the project is to tackle the disparities in terms of access to higher education and the transnational mobility exchanges for students with disabilities. The project aims to create a guide of standards for university students with disabilities, leading to the development of a self-assessment questionnaire for universities to assess if they are meeting the recommended inclusion standards. They also develop a guide presenting the results of 63 universities from 24 different countries mapped using the self-assessment questionnaire, and a web-accessible platform with all the resources developed and searchable according to the needs of the student (to see if universities meet their needs), as well as a programme and training course for teachers.

[Logopsycom's](#) work on MOOCDys is based on the belief that with the right tools and approach, children who struggle with Specific Learning Disorders (SLD) are also able to succeed in school. Teachers are not always aware of the impact of SLD on school life or prepared to face them, and many families are unprepared or in need of support to cope with the specific needs and obstacles of their children with SLD. In MOOCDys, an Erasmus+ co-funded project, participants learn about the following learning disorders: dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, and dysphasia, with modules on issues such as how to explain learning disabilities to class peers, teachers, parents, and siblings. There are also similar Erasmus+ projects on disability inclusion such as TutoDYS, Digitall, ToFIE, calcula+e, SIMPL4ALL, and DYSPRAXIATHECA.

The Lifelong Learning Platform coordinates an Erasmus+ project called [LEAD](#): Specific Learning Disabilities No More (with good practices). The project aims to increase the social inclusion of students with Specific Learning Disorders (SLDs) by encouraging them to acquire new skills to improve their school performance. It is developing training modules on compensatory tools, and creating a platform to host training modules, a helpdesk and a community for families, schools and SLD pupils.

## 6. Tackling discrimination based on sexual orientation (gender identity or expression and sex characteristics)

In this section, we look at tackling discrimination based on sexual orientation, including gender identity or expression and sex characteristics, in and through education and training. We consider the EU policy response, relevant international initiatives, main challenges and points for attention, and set out a series of inspiring practices which have emerged in the course of the WG exchanges. The information below should serve to supplement and reinforce information contained in the earlier Working Group's Thematic Fiche created in 2021 entitled [Education and LGBTIQ diversity](#).

### 6.1. EU policy response

In terms of the EU's legislative work to fight discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics the priority of the Commission is to ensure that EU legislation and policy fully complies with the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in particular Article 21, which contains a general prohibition of discrimination, including on grounds of sexual orientation. When it comes to concrete actions, in 2015, the European Commission put forward its '[List of Actions to Advance LGBTI Equality](#)' with the aim of tackling discrimination against LGBTIQ persons in the EU. The actions outlined cover policy areas from education, employment, health, free movement, asylum, hate speech/hate crime, enlargement and foreign policy, aiming to mainstream LGBTIQ equality. Moreover, there was a special focus on raising awareness about the rights of LGBTIQ persons and bullying at school.

The Council of the EU adopted the first ever [conclusions on LGBTIQ equality](#) in June 2016, requiring the European Commission to annually report on the implementation of the list of actions. Soon after, the [first annual report on the implementation of the List of Actions](#) was published in February 2017.

Furthermore, the European Commission participates in the [IDAHOT Forum](#) (the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on May 17), as well as human rights events that are part of larger Pride initiatives.

In November 2020, the European Commission presented its [LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025](#). This is the first ever EU Strategy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) equality. It sets out a series of targeted actions around four main pillars, focused on: tackling discrimination; ensuring safety; building inclusive societies; and leading the call for LGBTIQ equality around the world. In terms of educational provisions, the strategy supports the fostering of best practice exchanges on ensuring safe and inclusive education for all children, young people and adults. For instance, there is a new expert group<sup>54</sup> working on strategies for creating supportive learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement, including LGBTIQ people, which will address gender stereotypes in education, bullying and sexual harassment.

In April 2023, the Commission presented the [Progress report on the implementation of the strategy](#) which highlights the actions taken by the EU in the period up to February 2023. The preparation of the report involved consultations with Member States participating in the LGBTIQ Equality Subgroup under the High-Level Group on Non-discrimination, Equality and Diversity and exchanges with civil society organisations (CSOs).

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<sup>54</sup> Commission Expert Group on well-being in schools (E03873) : <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&groupID=3873>

The report has made it possible to identify projects and good practices that help realise the full potential of LGBTIQ people, including the launch of more than 100 projects focused on promoting LGBTIQ equality under the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

Further to the implementation of the 2020-2025 strategy, DG JUST has commissioned an EU-wide study on the position and experiences of intersex people in education, employment and other areas of life<sup>55</sup>. As pertains to education, the study examines the position of people with variations of sex characteristics in education, including their educational attainment and openness (or lack thereof) about being intersex in educational settings. It further presents experiences of discrimination faced by intersex people, including bullying from peers, discrimination from staff members and the level of awareness and understanding of intersex people. It also maps support services available to intersex people in education. A final report presenting the study's key findings is forthcoming.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has also published multiple reports focusing on LGBTIQ issues in the last decade. In 2019, the FRA conducted the second round of the [LGBTI Survey](#), which shows how LGBTI people experience their human and fundamental rights in daily life across Europe. The survey found that young people (aged 15-24) experience some of the highest levels of discrimination across all age groups included in this research, as well as higher rates of hate-motivated violence. The survey results notably show that this violence includes attacks and harassment, happens either in schools or is perpetrated by school peers, and has especially alarming rates for trans and intersex children and young people. In 2023, FRA will launch its [3rd LGBTIQ survey](#). It will collect the experiences of discrimination and hate crime, as well as the views and challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer people in 30 countries (the EU27, Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia). The survey results and findings will be published in 2024.

## 6.2. Relevant international initiatives

UNESCO convened the first ever UN international consultation on homophobic bullying in educational institutions in 2011. Their work on preventing and addressing homophobic and transphobic violence in educational settings is part of UNESCO's mandate to ensure that learning environments are safe, inclusive and supportive for all, and are part of UNESCO's contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2019 publication entitled '[Bringing it Out in the Open: Monitoring school violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in national and international surveys](#)' presents the results of a study with an analysis of the most recent data on the nature, scope and impact of violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and of current action. UNESCO emphasises in this 2019 publication that the education sector has an important responsibility to provide safe and inclusive learning environments for all students, including LGBTIQ students. UNESCO notes that addressing homophobic and transphobic violence in schools is critical to promote effective learning and to meet human rights commitments. UNESCO also notes that effective education sector responses to homophobic and transphobic violence require a comprehensive approach, which includes all of the following: 'effective policies, relevant curricula and training materials, training and support for staff, support for students and families, information and strategic partnerships and monitoring and evaluation. It also includes both preventing and responding to violence, involves all relevant stakeholders and is implemented at national and sub-national levels' (p.15).

In 2010, a [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2010\) from the Committee of Ministers to Member States](#) relating to measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity called on Member States to 'take appropriate legislative and other measures, addressed to educational staff and pupils, to ensure that the right to education can be

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<sup>55</sup> European Commission (forthcoming). Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Study on Intersex People in the EU: Final Report.



effectively enjoyed without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity'. Furthermore, the Council of Europe has a special [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit](#) that provides technical support and expertise to their member states through cooperation activities aiming at improving the legal and institutional frameworks, building capacity of administration staff and law enforcement, but also promoting the sharing of good practices. Their work around LGBTIQ addresses several issues, ranging from legal gender recognition to homophobic and transphobic hate crime, homophobic and transphobic bullying, and multiple discrimination.

The [Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)](#) also works to tackle discrimination based on sexual orientation in education. For example, in numerous reports, ECRI recommends that school curricula be adapted in order to include LGBTI issues from the angle of the intolerance and discrimination that LGBTI persons may suffer from; that teachers receive training on how to address this topic; and that appropriate teaching material be produced. In this respect, they stress the monitoring of racist and LGBTI-phobic incidents at schools, and this is also dealt upon by ECRI in the context of their monitoring work.

### 6.3. Highlights from Working Group discussions

The following challenges and points for attention were identified during WG exchanges.

#### 6.3.1. Challenges

- There are many promising initiatives across the EU to address intolerance against the LGBTIQ communities, but authorities often lack knowledge of the effectiveness of these and how they are being implemented in practice. While good data and monitoring frameworks is key, this is often lacking.
- Many stereotypes and misconceptions exist regarding LGBTIQ individuals and also the LGBTIQ community in general. The question is how the school curriculum can best address such stereotypes and misconceptions and in what subject areas.
- Many anti-bullying school policies do not mention LGBTIQ because of opposition from parents and governments. A key challenge thus relates to how schools can best connect with parents and the community in order to strengthen anti-bullying policies.
- Many LGBTIQ individuals do not feel safe to be open about their identity, also in school. Many also feel unsafe in general in their schools due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics. A central question is how schools can best create safe spaces for young LGBTIQ individuals and what kinds of policies best respond to this.
- Identifying what kinds of readings and other educational resources, both in print and online, that are best suited in educational settings to address intolerance against LGBTIQ individuals, as well as determining the age-appropriateness of these resources, is a challenging endeavour that requires intersectional expertise (understanding of children's development, pedagogy, LGBTIQ issues).

#### 6.3.2. Points for attention

- Less than half (21) of Council of Europe member states have national or regional action plans to explicitly prevent and address school-based bullying based on sexual

orientation and gender identity and expression. In a similar vein, only 6 EU Member States provided most of the measures of a comprehensive school approach.<sup>56</sup>

- Policies and practices should reflect the appropriate balance between wider policies/practices that address different grounds of discrimination holistically (“diversity policies/practices”) and policies/practices that tackle individual grounds to remain responsive to commonalities/specificities and ensure that all grounds for discrimination, such as discrimination against the LGBTIQ community, are adequately addressed.
- When it comes to tackling discrimination and intolerance against LGBTIQ individuals, examining how educational practices and policies that already exist can be most effectively shared within and across national boundaries is an important consideration.
- There is great diversity among those who identify as LGBTIQ and this has to be taken into account when implementing policies.
- The introduction of age-appropriate LGBTIQ-positive reading materials and other learning resources can help counteract intolerant attitudes.
- More inclusive language in teaching across subjects can make a school more inclusive, for instance by avoiding the use of generic binary language.
- Educational practices and policy approaches to LGBTIQ+ issues can adopt ‘anti-homophobic’ (focus on discrimination) and ‘counter-heteronormative’ (emphasis on disrupting the privileged status of heterosexuality) approaches.
- The most effective initiatives for inclusion of LGBTIQ students are those that involve a whole school approach and take place in cooperation with school students themselves.
- History education can highlight the important role that LGBTIQ individuals have played in history, as well as educate young people about the long history of persecution of this community.
- Recent historical gains, in terms of LGBTIQ rights, have been hard fought and spearheaded by for instance policy changes, as well as LGBTIQ-related social movements and activism. Discussions in classrooms about these gains and their importance for society should be highlighted in teaching, for instance in history and citizenship education.
- Effective education sector responses to school-based violence, according to the research, needs to be rights-based, learner-centred and inclusive, participatory, gender-responsive, evidence-based, age-appropriate and specific, as well as context-specific and culturally sensitive.
- NGOs across Europe are active in the area of promoting respect for LGBTIQ individuals, but how ministries of education and other educational authorities can best cooperate with them warrants further consideration.

## 6.4. Selection of inspiring practices

[Malta’s LGBTIQ Equality Strategy & Action Plan for 2018-2022](#) includes an entire section on education, and entails a Teacher Code of Ethics, whereby teachers need to respect diversity and contribute to a fair and inclusive environment. Moreover, Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students are incorporated into School Policy, and the importance of working with parents is emphasised. Despite a school system where 35% of all students attend Catholic

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<sup>56</sup> At the time the WG meeting took place in September 2022.

church schools, this LGBTIQ Strategy is disseminated and followed in all schools, including the church schools.

[France's National Action Plan to Promote Equal Rights and Combat Anti-LGBT+ Hatred and Discrimination](#) includes four pillars on recognising the rights of LGBT+ people; enabling access to rights for LGBT+ people; combating anti-LGBT+ discrimination, violence and hatred; and improving the daily lives of LGBT+ people. With more than 150 measures, the Action Plan aims at providing a positive perspective on creating inclusion by understanding the needs of discriminated groups, rather than by negatively focusing on the ways in which they are discriminated against. In September 2021, the French Ministry also published a Circular for a better understanding and consideration of gender identity issues in schools. The actions and measures were developed by inviting organisations representing trans people to Working Groups, and writing guidelines with their inputs. Moreover in France, there is a training programme on the Ministry's website on [Preventing Homophobia and Transphobia at School](#).

In Sweden, at the national level, discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression has been banned since 2009. In recent years, the policy and practice of school-based sex education have adopted an inclusion approach, with a focus on social justice and rights for individuals and group, as well as anti-discrimination. LGBTIQ issues have been extensively integrated into the curriculum at a young age. Also to note is the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor)'s multilingual website [Youmo](#). The website takes a sexual rights based approach and is aimed at young persons of school age, from 13 to 20 years of age, and provides information on body, sex and health.

Denmark has made significant strides in furthering sex education in high schools. Starting from the 2023/2024 school year, sex education, including education on gender norms, sexuality, consent and gender will be part of the curriculum in high schools. In addition, as part of the Danish LGBT+ action plan for 2022-2025, sex education has been strengthened as a subject in the training of elementary school teachers.

The [LGBTplusME](#) project in Poland involves the annual ranking of LGBTIQ+ friendly schools, based on assessments by school students themselves. It is a citizens-driven initiative in Poland, established in 2018, that helps young people assess their schools in terms of school environment and share these assessments. The aim of the initiative is to prevent homo-, bi- and transphobia in schools and help schools gain a better idea of how positive or negative the LGBTIQ+ environment is in the school. Schools that score poorly are not 'exposed' in public but LGBTplusME staff do communicate with these schools about their low ranking and ways of improving it. The project is supported by various municipalities and by many schools. Starting in 2022, LGBTplusME will extend to cities in Belgium and the Netherlands and there are advanced plans to include Hungary and several other countries soon.

The [School's Out project](#), co-financed by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC), aims to create a better school environment for LGBTI students by increasing the knowledge of teachers on including LGBTI topics in classes and how to address the issue of school bullying. It deals with the challenges LGBTI and gender non-conforming students face in schools, by training teachers and guiding schools on how to implement LGBTI and gender inclusive policies.

The Universities towards Diversity ([University project](#)), co-financed by the REC programme, aims to promote diversity in the academic environment, ensuring equality of LGBTI+ individuals in universities in the participating in LT, IT and EL, by tackling homophobia and transphobia in the university environment and discrimination based on SOGISC (sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics), through identification of harmful narratives, stereotypes and behaviors, awareness raising about their existence, promotion of counter-narratives, training of academic staff in the use of inclusive language and behaviour, and advocacy meetings aiming at influencing policy change.

The [All Incl!](#) project, co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme, involves 16 partners (teacher training institutions partnering with schools) from 8 countries : BE, DE, EL, HU, PL, NL, ES, UK working towards a common vision of LGBTI+ Inclusive schools and exchanging best practices including via [e-Twinning](#).

## 7. Tackling social and territorial inequalities

In this section, we look at tackling social and territorial inequalities in education and training. We set out the EU policy response, relevant international initiatives, main challenges and points for attention, as well as a selection of inspiring practices.

### 7.1. EU policy response

A strategic priority under the European Education Area is to improve quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education. Several EU-level actions aim to support Member States reforms and promote European cooperation toward this objective. These include the [Council recommendation on Pathways to School Success: A New Framework for Success](#), adopted by the Council of the EU in November 2022<sup>57</sup>, as a response to the need for improved education systems that promote inclusive and fair societies. It presents schools and authorities with a policy framework to improve the education systems for all learners. A starting point is the observation that socio-economic and cultural background are still the strongest determinants of pupils' educational outcomes. The initiative seeks to contribute to two EU-level targets related to the reduction of the share of low-achievers in basic skills and that of early leavers from education and training (ELET). The initiative further aims to promote the well-being of learners and educators at school. The recommendation emphasises the importance of prevention and early intervention, besides compensation, and secondly it argues for a combination of universal, targeted and individualised measures to effectively ensure quality education for all. A new European Commission expert group on wellbeing and supporting learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement that will prepare EU guidelines in 2023-2024 to support well-being in schools.

A [Guidance Document](#) issued by the European Commission in 2015, entitled 'Guidance for Member States on the use of European Structural and Investment Funds in tackling educational and spatial segregation', explicitly connects spatial segregation to educational segregation, and points to the deleterious impact of segregation. The document builds on the [Racial Equality Directive](#) (2000/43/EC), [the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) and the [2011 EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#)<sup>58</sup>. According to the Commission: 'segregation in education is caused by several factors, including discriminatory actions, economic and demographic mechanisms. It is characterised by the physical and social separation of members of a marginalised group from members of non-marginalised groups and unequal access to mainstream, inclusive and high-quality services. In other words, facilities in segregated settings provide lower quality services'. Solutions proposed include for example (1) targeted (direct) and mainstream actions; (2) direct relocation of inhabitants of segregated settlements into the mainstream neighbourhoods or of pupils from segregated schools or classes into the mainstream classes; and (3) awareness of national and local authorities on the anti-discrimination and equal treatment legislation. The Guidance Document further refers to several steps that need to be considered when designing desegregation initiatives, including: (1) mapping of segregated educational facilities and neighbourhoods; (2) the specificities of the different forms of spatial segregation should be reflected in the call for proposals enabling adequate responses; (3) addressing the links between spatial and education segregation in the scope of integrated approach; (4) involving external mentors, trained in urban development, social inclusion, health, education, equal treatment legislation or in any other relevant field; (5) direct involvement of representatives of the communities in

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<sup>57</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/school-education/pathways-to-school-success#:~:text=A%20Council%20Recommendation%20on%20'Pathways,leaving%20from%20education%20and%20train>

<sup>58</sup> As noted in section 3 above, guidance and assistance is provided to Member States in their efforts to achieve the targets of the EU Roma Strategic Framework

all stages of the process; and (6) facilitation of public debate at local, regional or national level in order to involve all stakeholders.

The [Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027](#) is a call for greater cooperation at European level on digital education. The Action Plan recognises, among other things, the negative impact of Covid-19 on inequalities between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not (including individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds). It also recognises that students from disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately underachieve and that those living in rural areas often fall behind. The Action Plan addresses inequalities through several Actions.

A [Science for Policy Brief](#) reporting on JRC research looked at educational inequality in the EU. This European Commission Policy Brief highlights that factors that can improve educational inequality include: (1) striking an appropriate balance between school autonomy and centralisation; (2) policies in the area of content and teaching that focus on addressing inclusiveness of instruction in the learning environment; (3) expanding the coverage (and decreasing the age of starting) of high quality publicly funded pre-school childcare; as well as (4) increasing the compulsory school age.

## 7.2. Relevant international initiatives

A 2017 [Council of Europe Position Paper](#) entitled *Fighting School Segregation in Europe through inclusive Education* states that: 'substantial numbers of children across Europe are educated in schools with high concentrations of children who are disadvantaged on the basis of their socioeconomic, ethnic or cultural background, or because of a disability', highlighting intersectionality dynamics. The Position Paper notes that there are indications that segregation is increasing in the EU and that this is despite existing anti-discrimination legislation and policies. The CoE argues that school segregation is one of the worst forms of discrimination and a serious violation of the rights of the children concerned. It also points out that learning opportunities of disadvantaged children are seriously harmed by isolation and lack of inclusion. In terms of socioeconomic segregation, the Position Paper argues that residential segregation plays a key role and that 'while residential segregation is not the only factor causing school segregation, it has an undeniable impact on the concentration of children from vulnerable groups in specific schools (p.26). This situation is exacerbated by the fact, according to the CoE, that economically disadvantaged schools usually face high levels of teacher turnover. In terms of solutions, the document mentions i.e.: (1) implementing inclusive education; (2) shaping alternative school districts that mix neighbourhoods; (3) allocating the best teachers to the most challenging schools; and (4) promoting parental engagement in the school.

In 2019, the OECD published the Working paper entitled '[Learning in Rural Schools: Insights from Pisa, Talis and the Literature](#)'. Data from PISA 2015 and TALIS 2013 were analysed to examine differences in learning outcomes and education expectations between rural and urban students. The OECD concluded that there are clear rural-urban gaps in academic performance (generally in favour of urban environments) but that these gaps generally disappear after accounting for socio-economic status. The OECD also concludes that there are different educational expectations between rural and urban students. Rural students are less likely to expect completing a university degree than urban students. This gap in expectations persists even when rural students have a similar socio-economic status. A further conclusion is that school systems that have been successful in closing the rural-urban gap show both higher academic performance and levels of equity. Also, countries that have closed the rural-urban gap in infrastructure have been more successful in their economic development.

UNESCO's [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) regards equity as central to achieving sustainable development and calls for leaving 'no one behind'. In a reference to intersectionality, UNESCO argues that multiple inequities combine to produce a negative impact on the ability of marginalised children to learn. The result is that the gap between

advantaged and disadvantaged children widens over time. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses socio-economic inequality and stresses the need to combat all forms of exclusion and inequalities relating to access to education and learning processes<sup>59</sup>.

## 7.3. Highlights from Working Group discussions

Specific challenges and points for attention relating to social and territorial inequalities, identified during the Paris PLA, related to the following issues.

### 7.3.1. Challenges

- A shortage of teachers and educational resources available in many remote areas constitutes a central concern. Similarly, the lack of access to extracurricular activities, and avenues to civic participation for young people, represent key challenges.
- Another key issue concerns how to connect micro and macro level approaches to addressing discrimination in schools. In particular, how to address funding issues, tackle social stigma and raise awareness in a multi-level manner remains difficult.
- At the macro level, a challenge of harnessing political will to address educational segregation is also observed. This is linked to the wider challenge of convincing authorities and schools that social cohesion and well-being is as important as learning outcomes.
- Linked to the above, traditional and new media often form part of the problem with respect to addressing discrimination - also the media that the students themselves access. The media often does not raise awareness of causes and consequences of discrimination. In some cases, they also reinforce discriminatory tendencies (e.g. through implicit biases in representation).
- At the micro level, it was highlighted that there tends to be a lack of coordination within schools when it comes to tackling existing discrimination. It is often unclear who should lead in these efforts. Many schools also tend to reproduce inequalities and discriminate against certain students - whether implicitly or explicitly.
- In terms of school-level considerations, teachers often lack the skills to teach in diverse classrooms. Teachers' efficacy also greatly depends on their awareness of their own perspectives, assumptions and biases, and their ability to empathise with students from different backgrounds.
- Addressing parental resistance (and sometimes teacher resistance) is also a crucial hurdle to overcome in taking steps against educational segregation.
- A pertinent challenge can also be observed when it comes to data collection, in particular with respect to how the occurrence of discrimination can best be measured and assessed and what constitutes reliable instruments. An overreliance on quantitative data can also result in the neglect of important qualitative data.

### 7.3.2. Points for attention

- With regards to the observed shortage of teachers and educational resources available in many remote areas, there is potential for digital tools to provide students with access to high-quality instruction and course materials to 'level the playing field'.

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<sup>59</sup> Sustainable development goal (SDG) 10 is specifically dedicated to reducing inequality.

- In line with the above, hybrid or remote learning as well as online learning platforms and resource banks, could help ensure that students in remote areas are not limited to the resources available locally.
- At the same time, several factors need to be considered before digital learning can truly make an impact in remote areas including: i) reliable internet connections, ii) access to the necessary devices and resources as well as iii) digital skills (on the part of teachers, learners and also parents – particularly for younger learners). The evidence-base suggests that a mix of face-to-face and online instruction is more effective than online learning on its own<sup>60</sup>, pointing to the importance of maintaining an equilibrium between online and offline learning in leveraging this potential in remote settings.
- With respect to educational segregation, the need for whole-school and community-based approaches, to understand the holistic situation when it comes to discrimination, assess needs, priorities and identify/leverage existing local resources and expertise is crucial. Implementing such approaches, however, can be time and resource consuming.
- Consulting and cooperating with school stakeholders is essential, including students and, where possible, parents and social workers/psychologists, municipal workers, civil activists, researchers, local NGOs and other community based organisations and/or initiatives. Such approaches can also help to ensure stakeholder 'buy in' in the community.
- Awareness-raising about the problem of educational segregation at multiple levels involving all stakeholders in an active way, including the media, is crucial to inspire the necessary political will to enact measures and tackle parental resistance.
- Beyond raising awareness about the problem and detrimental effects of educational segregation, these strategic efforts could also seek to effectively communicate the proven benefits of desegregation. This could include disseminating existing research evidence regarding the positive impact of desegregation for both low socio-economic status (SES) learners (e.g. higher levels of motivation and professional ambition, increased well-being, and safety) and high-SES learners (e.g. benefits of diversity in school life such as cultural awareness and understanding).
- Teacher training can also play a crucial role in preparing teachers to teach in diverse classrooms (pre-service, in-service and training for teacher educators). This includes competences such as differentiated instruction and intercultural education to empower teachers with the competences to select and modify methods that will best meet the needs of diverse groups of students.
- Teachers further need to be empowered with the agency and competences to critically evaluate the representation of diversity in teaching materials; and to systematically reflect on the impact of their own practice.
- Relevant training for school leaders is also important to support the development and implementation of coherent school-level strategies.
- At practitioner level, promoting active school or teacher networks to tackle discrimination and share strategies is a viable approach.

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<sup>60</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Melstveit Roseme, M., Day, L., Fellows, T. et al., *Enhancing learning through digital tools and practices – How digital technology in compulsory education can help promote inclusion - final report*, October 2021, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b12644c4-315c-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1>



- Similarly, promoting cooperation among students, for instance through international projects, constitutes an approach to ensure student agency and participation in fostering more diverse and socially equitable learning environments.
- The importance of mentorship and role model initiatives in order to promote positive attitudes towards school and career ambitions is also particularly important for students that have access to fewer 'natural mentoring relationships' (e.g. low-SES learners, learners in rural areas).
- Increased funding and other resources are needed to make necessary changes, including to ensure that all schools have the professional expertise and the necessary means to implement inclusive education.
- At the same time, attempts to desegregate are often carried out via short-term funding allocations based on political will. This approach makes it difficult to ensure sustainable results and the institutionalisation of good practices. It is thus essential to ensure that the process is carried out in a sustainable manner with clear, long-term objectives.

## 7.4. Selection of inspiring practices

Two recent policy initiatives were introduced in Parisian schools aiming to strengthen social diversity, one of which was an experimentation of multi-school catchment areas from 2017 (targeting middle schools). The [multi-school catchment area initiative](#) aimed to tackle the high degree of segregation based on socio-economic status (SES) in Parisian middle schools, with low and high SES students concentrated strongly in schools in different areas of Paris. The initiative aimed to merge schools' catchment areas to rebalance their social intake; an approach which is feasible where middle schools are geographically close but have contrasting social profiles, as in Paris. Three two-school catchment areas were set up in the 18th and 19th *arrondissements*, involving about 1,000 students each year when they entered sixth grade (the first year of middle school). Two methods were used to assign students to the middle schools in the merged catchment areas: 'alternating entry'<sup>61</sup> (Berlioz-Coysevox catchment area) and 'regulated choice of school'<sup>62</sup> (Bergson-Pailleron and Curie-Philippe catchment areas). In the Berlioz-Coysevox and Bergson-Pailleron areas, social diversity increased significantly in the sixth grade and the rate of students opting for private schools decreased from 30% to 15% between 2016 and 2019. In the Curie-Philippe area, the scheme also led to a decrease of inscriptions in private schools between 2016 and 2019, but the effects on social diversity have been more modest.

There are a number of inspiring European initiatives to address socio-economic segregation among neighbourhoods, including the holistic initiative associated with the [Future City District in Berlin](#). This initiative, embedded in a wider national policy called the Social City Initiative, focuses on the physical and socio-economic regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods. Key actions include: (1) provision of education and schooling for disadvantaged inhabitants; (2) improvement of local public spaces; (3) participation of local actors in the renewal and revitalisation of neighbourhoods; (4) strengthening social cohesiveness; and (5) promoting social and ethnic integration. This initiative, as well as the other Social City Initiatives, focus on the empowerment of communities, based on the premise that neighbourhoods themselves can become the main actor behind their development.

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<sup>61</sup> Under the 'alternating entry' (*montée alternée*) approach, all pupils entering sixth grade one year are assigned to one school, and then all pupils entering sixth grade the following year are assigned to the other school in the catchment area.

<sup>62</sup> Under the 'regulated school choice' approach, parents are asked to rank the two available schools in order of preference. Students are placed into 4 social groups based on their parents' SES, and places in each school are allocated among the 4 groups to match the distribution observed in the catchment area. Students are then assigned to the places reserved for their group by an algorithm that takes into account the parents' preference and priority criteria (e.g. disability, siblings, etc.)

Similarly, [Territorial Inequalities in Education in the Meuse](#): the Meuse is a very rural French *département* (administrative district) located on the border of Luxembourg and Belgium. The educational authorities have established a collaborative strategy, supported by the national *Territoires éducatifs ruraux* (TER) (rural educational territories) programme. The strategy involves providing more resources for a lower teacher-pupil ratio, smaller classes (less than 20 students), mutualising the facilities and resources of three networked secondary schools and training teachers to support retention in the local schools. The priorities are learning, sport, culture, but also nutrition. It brings together a range of local stakeholders, including the health and welfare authorities. All children learn at least two foreign languages to facilitate mobility and access to further learning in and exchanges with neighbouring countries.

In the city of Toulouse, disadvantaged students had been found to be concentrated in public schools in particular districts. An action plan was implemented in 2017 which aimed to tackle this divide. The action plan included: reprofiling the schools into 10 secondary schools with a transport time of no more than 15-20 minutes for all, limiting the number of pupils (maximum class size of 25), training teachers, introducing special roles for 'social mixing' teachers to support the transition from primary to secondary school, providing educational support activities during the lunch break for pupils who needed extra support, and ensuring that lunch was available at all schools. An evaluation<sup>63</sup> of the outcomes of the programme has shown two important results: a narrowing of the differences in achievements between different schools and an overall improvement in educational outcomes.

[TEIP - Programme for Priority Intervention Educational Areas](#) is a Portuguese initiative that aims to promote educational inclusion in schools located in disadvantaged areas. Through the programme, specific improvement plans are developed to promote an improvement cycle in each cluster of schools, in order to reach students at risk of social exclusion. Through the [study '25 years of the TEIP Program in Portugal'](#), an interactive e-book presenting 10 case studies carried out in TEIP schools was made available in 2022. The book covers schools in various regions of the country illustrating the processes of innovation, inclusion and promotion of school success initiated through the programme.

[ECASS – European Cities Against School Segregation](#) is an international project aiming to create innovative solutions for local governments to tackle school segregation in European cities, specifically Barcelona, Milano and Oslo. It is designed as a knowledge exchange project between academic experts in the area of educational inclusion and school segregation studies and local policymakers to design, test and apply innovative solutions. It has produced a range of materials to support stakeholders in combatting school integration. These include: [training materials](#) to learn about school segregation, its causes and consequences, and what can be done; [European guidelines](#) to inspire policies to tackle school segregation; the analysis and proposals on [information policies](#) to reduce school segregation dynamics and some reflections on [challenges faced by segregated schools in relation to the Covid pandemic](#).

[RURAL3.0: Service Learning for Rural Development](#) (RURALS), which started in 2019, is an Erasmus + project that connects universities (hence a higher education project) to community organisations in rural areas. The project links 8 universities and 8 community organisations in 8 countries. It aims to establish a framework for an integrated transnational approach to teaching and academic learning that contributes to the development of rural areas, creating partnerships between communities and universities. Service Learning and the development of entrepreneurial skills are the key methodologies employed.

[Pioneered](#) is a three-year long EU Horizon 2020 project, initiated by Norwegian researchers, which investigates educational inequalities in nine different European

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<sup>63</sup> Ben Ayed, C., & Butzbach, E. *Urbanités #16 / À l'école de la ville*, 2022, [https://www.revue-urbanites.fr/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Urbanite%CC%81s-16-Ben-Ayed-et-Butzbach-2022.pdf?\\_x\\_tr\\_sch=http&\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=fr&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=sc](https://www.revue-urbanites.fr/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Urbanite%CC%81s-16-Ben-Ayed-et-Butzbach-2022.pdf?_x_tr_sch=http&_x_tr_sl=fr&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)

countries<sup>64</sup>. The research project aims at exploring and analysing the problem of educational inequality at various levels - from politics and institutions to individual practices of stakeholders like teacher union experts, educational practitioners, teacher educators, community-led neighbourhood groups and parents.

[Inschool](#) is an Erasmus+ KA3 Social inclusion through education project aiming to significantly increase the knowledge and skills of school leaders, teachers and student teachers to work inclusively with the increasing range of diverse learners in their schools. Key activities include national focus groups with school leaders, teachers and student teachers in relation to inclusive education and inclusive pedagogies, an international trainers' event to allow participants to familiarise with the materials of the project and tailor them for their contexts, face-to-face courses for school leaders and teachers focused on changing culture and school practices and the piloting of training courses for student/newly qualified teachers to collect feedback on the training courses developed.

[EU rural virtual classroom](#) is an Erasmus+ funded project coordinated by partners in four EU Member States (Spain, Italy, Ireland and Lithuania) which aims to become a collaborative virtual educational space in real time where rural schools can support each other to overcome scarcities around available teachers, content and activities. The project aims to offer a platform for collaborative educational projects, a teaching area of workshops and classes in real time (multigrade, multilingual classrooms), a professional development and resources area for teachers and a community area for members (schools, professionals/entities from the educational field and relevant rural development actors). Access is free to all schools registered as members.

[Digital Academy for Parents](#) (*Academia Digital para Pais*) is a digital literacy project that gives parents and guardians the opportunity to attend training that promotes digital skills. Training sessions take place in the children's schools on an after-work basis. Developed with the aim of supporting families in the context of distance classes imposed by the pandemic, the programme, in its 1st edition (school year 2020/2021), benefited around 1,000 families and included 1,048 hours of training, involving 53 school groups, with 344 trainers and focused on schools in Educational Priority Intervention Territories (TEIP). The project is coordinated by the Portuguese Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and E-REDES.

[Schools For All](#) is a project being implemented under the 'Local Development and Poverty Reduction' programme in Greece, by the European Wergeland Centre (EWC), under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and with the support of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP). Through the project school directors and teachers are trained to create safe and inclusive schools and classrooms for learners from diverse backgrounds. The program aspires to contribute to enhancement of social cohesion and reduction of economic and social disparities.

[The Omama program](#) is a Slovak initiative run by the NGO Way Out, which aims to support children from marginalised socio-economic backgrounds to develop their educational potential in early childhood (age 0-6). Through educational activities, games and counselling carried out directly in the families' homes and in parents' clubs, the organisation works to foster the appropriate stimuli to promote healthy child development, while building parenting skills and improving the overall family environment. Activities are carried out in cooperation with local social workers, early intervention professionals and other stakeholders who are in direct contact with the poverty-afflicted communities, and local residents are trained to directly support the initiatives. Counselling is also provided to pregnant mothers.

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<sup>64</sup> Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain and Switzerland

## 8. Tackling multiple discrimination: an intersectional approach

In this section, we unpack the concept of intersectionality in education and training, before presenting a set of research insights to conclude the Issue Paper. The section also aims to provide some insights into how anti-discriminatory actions and practices can be designed to respond to such complex situations.

### 8.1. Understanding intersectionality and multiple discrimination

This Issue Paper has focused on addressing some of the different types of specific discrimination which individuals and communities may face in and through education and training. While developing and implementing these specific approaches remains crucial, it is also important to note the need in parallel to take a holistic approach to combating discrimination. To address the multiple forms of disadvantage which individuals may experience, it is essential that educational policy is viewed through an intersectional lens, considering the holistic nature of each individual and avoiding assumptions based on individual characteristics.

People's identities consist of many multifaceted and interacting dimensions, such as our sex/gender, (dis)ability, citizenship, socio-economic status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. Identity is also contextual, because we may share different aspects of our identity in different contexts (e.g. family, work, education). All these dimensions are difficult to disentangle.

Understanding the multidimensional nature of identity is relevant not only for how we are perceived by others, but also for how we ourselves perceive others. These perceptions can give rise to discrimination. This discrimination can take many forms: intrapersonal (how a person views themselves, e.g. beauty ideals, fear of being different), interpersonal (how a person views others, e.g. mistrust of certain ethnic groups, overt or covert homophobia, assumptions about people with disabilities), institutional (when perceptions and discrimination become embedded in how institutions operate e.g. schools saying that they cannot deal with children with disabilities or excluding transgender children because it supposedly upsets parents); and systemic (when policies, practices or systems intentionally or unintentionally exclude groups of people e.g. through the digital divide, not considering disability access).

The concept of multiple discrimination recognises that discrimination can occur on the basis of more than one dimension or perceived characteristic of a person's identity. For example, a person who is discriminated on the grounds of their gender may also be discriminated on the grounds of their religion or their sexual orientation. Such discrimination can, and often does, create cumulative disadvantage, meaning that a person is the victim of a range of different forms of discrimination.

Intersectionality presents a challenge in education when educational systems and schools do not see students holistically and instead funnel them into categories with only targeted policies. For example, refugee students may be perceived as requiring language and trauma support, and students with behaviour disorders are often perceived to require specialist disability support. However, an intersectional approach would be needed for a refugee student with a behaviour disorder to acknowledge that they require both forms of support, and that that support might need to be different because of the interaction of the two characteristics. There can also be a danger in targeting or labelling individuals based on one characteristic or one solution. For example, Muslim women are often represented in university prospectuses studying or graduating, but almost never playing sport or socialising.

In its paper on ['Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework'](#) the OECD defines intersectionality as meaning 'that a person can embody multiple dimensions

of diversity and as such, be exposed to the different types of discrimination and disadvantages that occur as a consequence of the combination of identities’.

The impact of Covid-19 has exacerbated many situations of intersectional disadvantage. For example, school closures and home schooling have posed specific difficulties for parents who themselves have poor literacy skills and as such find it hard to support their children in schoolwork. Accessing online resources, while lacking digital phones, computers or internet has proven to be another big obstacle for Roma pupils and students. Similarly, the disadvantage already faced by girls with disabilities (compared both to male peers and non-disabled peers) and those at risk of violence, was compounded by distance learning and a potential lack of access to digital devices. The intersection of being in a rural area, with less connectivity and fewer services, further caused an accumulation of disadvantage for many groups.

Several educational approaches can support an intersectional approach, such as whole school approaches, human rights-based approaches or person-centred education.

## 8.2. Key research insights on multiple discrimination and intersectionality

Professor Sandra Fredman<sup>65</sup> has defined three main ways in which multiple discrimination<sup>66</sup> can manifest itself:

- Sequential multiple discrimination occurs when a person suffers discrimination on different grounds on separate occasions. For example, a woman with a disability might suffer discrimination once because of her gender and on another occasion because of her disability;
- Additive multiple discrimination occurs when a person is discriminated against on the same occasion but in two different ways. For example, a gay woman might claim that she has been subject to harassment both because she is a woman and because she is gay;
- Synergistic or ‘intersectional’ discrimination occurs when discrimination does not simply consist in the addition of two sources of discrimination, but rather the result is qualitatively different. For example, black women may experience discrimination in a way which is qualitatively different from either white women or black men.

As originally defined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality ‘describes the social, economic, and political ways in which identity-based systems of oppression connect, overlap, and influence one another to create distinct experiences for people with multiple identity categories’<sup>67</sup>. Intersectional discrimination happens when two or multiple grounds operate simultaneously and interact in an inseparable manner, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination<sup>68</sup>.

A challenge relating to school level dynamics is that the provision of services in schools is often connected to one identity marker, and sometimes not the most relevant in a particular situation. Too often, schools address or fail to address the intersection of student identities and the importance of these various identities to an individual. Instead, they only focus on one aspect

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<sup>65</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Fredman, S., *Intersectional discrimination in EU gender equality and non-discrimination law*, Publications Office, 2016, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/241520>

<sup>66</sup> Multiple Discrimination has been defined as: ‘situations where a person can be subjected to discrimination on more than one ground.’ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=776&langId=en>

<sup>67</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberle (1989) ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’, University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Issue 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/intersectionality-and-multiple-discrimination>

of students' needs while ignoring or downplaying others<sup>69</sup>. So, a female refugee will receive services relating to her status as a refugee, but not a *female* refugee. Bešić (2020) has noted in her analysis of intersectionality and inclusion that 'once a student is identified as needing specialised support in a specific area, other aspects of that student's needs may be pushed aside or overlooked...and that, by focusing on only one identity marker (e.g. disability), researchers and practitioners miss the bigger picture, namely, that students are excluded/discriminated against on multiple levels...implementing inclusive education in this expanded definition will likely require not only changes in attitudes, but also changes in practices at every level of the education system'<sup>70</sup>.

The Council of Europe (CoE) has pointed to some key outcomes of studies on the relationship between intersectionality and the victims of multiple discrimination<sup>71</sup>. It notes that presently there is a lack of data (as well as legal mechanisms) when addressing intersectional discrimination in Europe.

According to the CoE, when a single grounds approach is used when addressing multiple discrimination, victims are presented in essentialist terms, which can render minorities within a minority invisible in the public sphere - both in broader society and within the minority group. It further notes that those experiencing multiple discrimination:

- frequently suffer from discrimination within the minority group;
- are more likely to experience more instances of discrimination than those experiencing singular forms of discrimination;
- are more likely to suffer from aggravated forms of discrimination, which are often more intense and make the person more vulnerable in society;
- are more likely to suffer from structural inequalities in society, to be at risk of poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation.

Academic research in the field has shown that the combination of structural inequalities, (historical and contemporary) patterns of exclusion and discrimination, low expectations, as well as attitudes of intolerance, negatively impact sense of belonging, self-esteem, educational engagement, and future life-chances among many young people from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds. Many of these young people face multiple discrimination. It has been found that students who are the targets of multiple discrimination (e.g. gender and ethnicity) tend to have lower self-efficacy than students who suffer from only one type of discrimination.<sup>72</sup> Negative impacts are exacerbated by various factors at the structural level (e.g. segregation policies, policies of exclusion, lack of resources or a lack of effective monitoring of the quality of educational provision)<sup>73</sup>. At the institutional level, exclusion and discrimination are reinforced by, for instance, ineffective or insensitive teaching approaches, as well as insufficient preparedness of school staff to deal with diversity, lack of support structures or unfavourable learning environments, etc.<sup>74</sup>. At the interpersonal level, it has been

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<sup>69</sup> Waitoller, F. R., & Kozleski, E. B. (2013). *Working in boundary practices: Identity development and learning in partnerships for inclusive education*. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 31, 35–45,  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X12001709>

<sup>70</sup> Bešić, E. *Intersectionality: A pathway towards inclusive education?* *Prospects* 49, 111–122 (2020).  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09461-6><https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11125-020-09461-6>. No page numbers.

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/intersectionality-and-multiple-discrimination>

<sup>72</sup> MacPhee, D., Farro, S., Canetto, S. S. (2013). *Academic self-efficacy and performance of underrepresented STEM majors: Gender, ethnic, and social class patterns*. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 13(1), 347–369. doi: 10.1111/asap.12033 [[Google Scholar](#)]

<sup>73</sup> See e.g., Kahlenberg, Richard D. *Combating School Segregation in the United States*. In Bekker, J.; Denessen, E.; Pteres, D., Walraven, G. (eds.) *International perspectives on countering school segregation*. Antwerp & Apeldoorn: Garant, 13-32, 2011.

<sup>74</sup> See e.g., Burns, T., & OECD (Eds.), *Educating teachers for diversity: meeting the challenge*, Paris: OECD 2010, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/educating-teachers-for-diversity\\_9789264079731-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/educating-teachers-for-diversity_9789264079731-en) ;  
Wissink, I. B.; Haan, M. D., 'Teachers' and Parental Attribution for School Performance of Ethnic Major-ity and Minority Children', *International Journal of Higher Education*, 2(4), 2013,  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272658965\\_Teachers%27\\_and\\_Parental\\_Attribution\\_for\\_School\\_Performance\\_of\\_Ethnic\\_Majority\\_and\\_Minority\\_Children](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272658965_Teachers%27_and_Parental_Attribution_for_School_Performance_of_Ethnic_Majority_and_Minority_Children)

found that those that are prejudiced against one minority group are more likely to be prejudiced against other minority groups<sup>75</sup>. In the often-cited study by [Stonewall \(2001\)](#), people who were prejudiced against any particular ethnic minority were twice as likely to be prejudiced against gays or lesbians and even four times as likely to be prejudiced against the disabled.

In the following, we present some key findings from the research literature on addressing multiple forms of discrimination and intersectional discrimination and moving towards inclusive solutions in education systems and policies.

### **Considering all dimensions of education systems to promote diversity and tackle intersectional discrimination**

To tackle all forms of discrimination, including intersectional discrimination, and promote diversity and inclusion in education systems, research points to the importance of reflecting on all the different elements of education systems – as well as actors within education systems - to implement a holistic approach.

The CoE notes that policies and practices need to address all the different dimensions of intersectional discrimination. The basis of this, according to the CoE, can be found in EU law and in the CoE treaty system, especially through human rights law and the European Court of Human Rights<sup>76</sup>.

In terms of addressing multiple discrimination, the CoE also refers to the role that substantive equality can play in terms of furthering of opportunity. The main functions of such substantive equality approaches are:

- Redressing disadvantage;
- Addressing stigma, prejudice, stereotyping and violence;
- Enabling participation and giving voice to those disadvantaged; and
- Accommodating difference through structural change<sup>77</sup>.

According to the CoE, an intersectional approach to discrimination offers a multi-level analytical approach to achieving what it calls 'social justice for all'<sup>78</sup>.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) points to this multi-level analysis as well, highlighting that:

'Equity and inclusion cannot be studied in isolation. Societal, school system and school-level factors all influence the design and implementation of education policies aimed at promoting the academic outcomes and broad well-being of diverse populations, setting standards, creating curricula, organising instruction, developing evaluation and assessment tools and providing adequate resourcing policies'<sup>79</sup>.

In the same paper<sup>80</sup>, the OECD presents the theoretical and analytical framework used for the [Strength through Diversity: Education for Inclusive Societies](#) project. This analytical framework provides useful pointers for educational policymakers on the different factors and elements which should be considered when designing education systems which promote inclusion and

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<sup>75</sup> It should be emphasised that: 'people are not, as a general rule, discriminated against because of who or what they really are, but because of what they are thought to be or represent.' See: <https://www.abo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2002-Makkonen-Multiple-compound-and-intersectional-discrimination.pdf>, p.2.

<sup>76</sup> The EU mentions in particular the protections offered by Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits discrimination (Article 21)

<sup>77</sup> See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/intersectionality-and-multiple-discrimination>

<sup>78</sup> See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/north-south-centre/intersectionality>

<sup>79</sup> Cerna, L., et al. (2021), 'Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework', OECD Education Working Papers, No. 260, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94ab68c6-en>, p.23.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

tackle all forms of discrimination, including intersectional discrimination. The paper states that the design and implementation of inclusion policies needs to involve factors that go beyond the individual student level and that these include:

1. **Students:** migration-induced diversity, ethnic groups, national minorities and indigenous peoples, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, special education needs, giftedness;
2. **Teachers and support staff:** diversity within the teaching workforce, the number and quality of teachers, teachers' professional development and awareness of personal bias, diversity-related knowledge in teacher education (and similar aspects for support staff);
3. **School leaders:** diversity among school leaders, quality of school leaders and their commitment to building inclusive learning environments; preparation for diversity;
4. **Schools:** characteristics of school facilities and school climate, socio-economic diversity, availability of resources, family and community engagement, learning environment;
5. **System and sub-system:** distribution of responsibilities and resources, curriculum, characteristics of education system (degree of school choice), learning settings, incentive structures for teachers and school leaders, roles of stakeholder groups;
6. **Society:** economic conditions (e.g., income inequality), labour market trends, demography and cultural diversity (migration, minority groups, etc.), political environment, role of media and perceptions of diversity in society, social policies<sup>81</sup>.

Furthermore, the paper underlines the importance of reflecting on the following five key elements of education systems:

1. **Governance:** that an overall, systemic framework for governing diversity, inclusion and equity in education is designed;
2. **Resourcing:** that resources are used effectively to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education;
3. **Capacity development:** that the system is able to build capacity for all stakeholders to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education;
4. **School-level interventions:** that schools provide effective interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education;
5. **Monitoring and evaluation:** that processes and outcomes are monitored and evaluated to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education<sup>82</sup>.

The content of these five elements is summarised in the report in a table as follows<sup>83</sup>:

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<sup>81</sup> Cerna, L., et al. (2021), '*Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework*', OECD Education Working Papers, No. 260, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/94ab68c6-en>, p.23.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p.29.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p.30.



1. Governing diversity, inclusion and equity in education	2. Resourcing diversity, inclusion and equity in education	3. Developing capacity for managing diversity, inclusion and equity in education	4. Promoting school-level interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education	5. Monitoring and evaluating diversity, inclusion and equity in education
<b>1.A Educational goals</b> and goals for diversity, inclusion and equity [including curriculum policies]	<b>2.A General distribution</b> of resources and diversity in education [e.g., funding formulae]	<b>3.A Awareness</b> of diversity in education at the system level  (among all students; across society)	<b>4.A Matching resources</b> within schools to individual student learning needs  [allocating teacher resources within schools (e.g., class size); use of space; use of time; digital technologies resources]	<b>5.A Monitoring and Evaluation of outcomes</b> of diversity, inclusion and equity in education at the system level  [evaluation of policies and programmes targeted at inclusion and equity; development of indicators; monitoring; reporting on outcomes]
<b>1.B Regulatory framework</b> for diversity and inclusion in education  [recognition of diversity and the need for specific provisions; rights of specific student groups]	<b>2.B Targeted distribution</b> of resources  [including matching human resources to schools; programmes to fund provision for specific student groups]	<b>3.B Recruitment, retention, preparation and evaluation</b> of school staff  [teachers, school leaders, support staff, including professional development and mentoring]	<b>4.B Learning strategies</b> to address diversity  [student assessment (including diagnostic assessment); individualised learning; classroom strategies; use of technology for learning]	<b>5.B Evaluating processes</b> for diversity, inclusion and equity in education at the local and school level  [evaluation of schools and local education administration (their role in achieving inclusion and equity)]
<b>1.C Responsibilities</b> for and <b>administration</b> of diversity in education  [distribution of responsibilities; specific agencies; stakeholder engagement; organisation; supervision]		<b>3.C Preparation of all students</b> for diversity in education  [including student-student mentoring]	<b>4.C Non-instructional support and services</b>  [e.g., career counselling; personal counselling; medical and therapeutic services]	
<b>1.D Education provision</b> to account for diversity in education  [diversity of offerings; learning setting; choice; and selection]			<b>4.D Engagement with parents and communities</b>	

## School leadership and school ethos

School principals have a major impact on a school's culture<sup>84</sup>. This is primarily due to their leading and steering role in the school. [Cohen \(2015\)](#)<sup>85</sup> has noted that school principals are the most important change agent in the school. They are a major contributor to establishing a positive school culture or ethos, thereby creating and promoting programs that can build a climate of inclusion and equity for all<sup>86</sup>. School principals help define the ethos of the school, sometimes more informally and sometimes formally anchored and communicated. Ideally, part of a school's ethos is to promote the acceptance of various kinds of diversity in the school and how they might intersect. Having an inclusive school ethos has been found to promote inclusion and equity, a perceived sense of school belonging among students from diverse backgrounds, as well as encouraging positive social relations among students<sup>87</sup>. A challenge for any programme that promotes awareness of diversity and inclusion is how to do justice to how intersectionality plays a role in the lives of school children, but also how it impacts the parents and the community<sup>88</sup>. A further complicating factor is the hierarchies and exclusionary mechanisms that can exist within minoritized student groups. Students that belong to multiple minoritized communities can include or exclude each other (ingroup versus outgroup) based on perceived group characteristics and the prejudices associated with belonging to those groups<sup>89</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Darmody, M.; Smyth, E., 'Governance and Funding of Voluntary Secondary Schools in Ireland', *Research Series*, No. 34, Dublin: ESRI, 2013,

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262456186\\_Governance\\_and\\_Funding\\_of\\_voluntary\\_secondary\\_schools\\_in\\_Ireland](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262456186_Governance_and_Funding_of_voluntary_secondary_schools_in_Ireland)

<sup>85</sup> Cohen, E. (2015). *Principal leadership styles and teacher and principal attitudes, concerns and competencies regarding inclusion*. *Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci.* 186, 758–764. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.105

<sup>86</sup> Habbeger, S., *The Principal's Role in Successful Schools: Creating a Positive School Culture*, NAESP Re-search Paper, 2008. [https://www.naesp.org/resources/1/Principal/2008/S-O\\_p42.pdf](https://www.naesp.org/resources/1/Principal/2008/S-O_p42.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> See e.g., Dimitrellou, E (2017) *Does an inclusive ethos enhance the sense of school belonging and encourage the social relations of young adolescents identified as having social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) and moderate learning difficulties (MLD)?*

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321001513\\_Does\\_an\\_inclusive\\_ethos\\_enhance\\_the\\_sense\\_of\\_school\\_belonging\\_and\\_encourage\\_the\\_social\\_relations\\_of\\_young\\_adolescents\\_identified\\_as\\_having\\_social\\_emotional\\_and\\_mental\\_health\\_difficulties\\_SEMH\\_and\\_mld](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321001513_Does_an_inclusive_ethos_enhance_the_sense_of_school_belonging_and_encourage_the_social_relations_of_young_adolescents_identified_as_having_social_emotional_and_mental_health_difficulties_SEMH_and_mld); See also: Engel, Laura C., John Holford, and Helena Pimlott-Wilson. 2019. 'Effectiveness, Inequality and Ethos in Three English Schools'. figshare. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/6173>

<sup>88</sup> See e.g., [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alex-Ajavi-2/publication/269605332\\_Making\\_trans\\_parents\\_visible\\_Intersectionality\\_of\\_trans\\_and\\_parenting\\_identities/links/5b20560eaca272277fa81e27/Making-trans-parents-visible-Intersectionality-of-trans-and-parenting-identities.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alex-Ajavi-2/publication/269605332_Making_trans_parents_visible_Intersectionality_of_trans_and_parenting_identities/links/5b20560eaca272277fa81e27/Making-trans-parents-visible-Intersectionality-of-trans-and-parenting-identities.pdf);

[https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Race-and-SEND-Survey\\_Final\\_170322.pdf](https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Race-and-SEND-Survey_Final_170322.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> See e.g., <https://www.communitypsychology.com/people-of-color-experience-discrimination-within-lgbt-spaces/>

Still under-researched is how at the school level teachers who have several 'minoritized identities' themselves are perceived and treated by their colleagues and their students. Initial evidence does show that gender and race intersect in particular ways for teachers in schools<sup>90</sup>.

### Reducing bias: the role of unconscious bias

Part of the human condition is to be vulnerable to unconscious or 'implicit' biases<sup>91</sup>. The OECD has noted how implicit biases at for instance the individual and social level, as well as in legal and policy levels, can lead to the invisibility of certain marginalised groups. The OECD further emphasises that 'an intersectionality approach in educational policy making, and policy making in general, is therefore essential to foster inclusive societies...as such, an intersectionality approach requires a holistic and comprehensive approach to tackling discrimination and designing and implementing policies'<sup>92</sup>. 'The goal of intersectionality policy analysis', according to the OECD, 'should be to identify and explore the ways in which policies address the inequalities experienced by various social groups'<sup>93</sup>. With respect to concrete research, the OECD mentions that there is a 'lack of disaggregated data to design, implement and monitor effective initiatives for inclusion and that there remain significant gaps in the availability of disaggregated data on diversity'<sup>94</sup>. This corroborates the analysis by Professor Fredman (mentioned earlier) that intersectional discrimination 'is also difficult to monitor, since many national statistics do not include data disaggregated by both sex and race, still less by other sources of intersectional discrimination, such as ethnic minority people with disabilities'<sup>95</sup>.

The few academic studies that have looked at implicit biases and how they intersect suggest that implicit biases operate across multiple categories asymmetrically, but that there is a dominant category and ancillary categories. The perceived dominant category will have the greatest impact on others' behaviours and perceptions<sup>96</sup>. This also applies to the teaching profession. Even teachers who have egalitarian beliefs and who operate under the assumption that they do not discriminate tend to have implicit biases towards various groups and these biases will differ depending on the group membership or perceived group membership of students. Even well-intentioned teachers often produce inequitable outcomes. Such implicit biases are triggered by often unconscious beliefs and perceptions about race, disability, religion, ethnicity etc. Being the target of implicit bias can have an impact on student's sense of belonging, inclusion, expectations, motivation to learn, and self-esteem<sup>97</sup>.

Teacher training focusing on implicit biases and how such biases can lead to discriminatory behaviour have shown that they can be effective. However, single-session implicit bias interventions, which are more common than continuous training, have the capacity to alter individuals' implicit biases in the short term but tend to have limited impact on biases over the long term or on overt changes in behaviour. Instead, multifaceted, long-term implicit bias

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<sup>90</sup> Alice Bradbury, Antonina Tereshchenko & Martin Mills (2022) *Minoritised teachers' experiences of multiple, intersectional racisms in the school system in England: 'carrying the weight of racism'*, Race Ethnicity and Education, DOI: [10.1080/13613324.2022.2069734](https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2022.2069734)

<sup>91</sup> See e.g.: Emberton M. Unconscious Bias Is a Human Condition. Perm J. 2021 May;25:20.199. doi: [10.7812/TPP/20.199](https://doi.org/10.7812/TPP/20.199). PMID: 33970098; PMCID: PMC8784036.

<sup>92</sup> See: <https://www.oecd.org/education/strength-through-diversity/1.%20Seventh%20Policy%20Forum%20Proceedings%2021%20September%202020.pdf>

<sup>93</sup> Mezzanotte, C. (2022), 'The social and economic rationale of inclusive education: An overview of the outcomes in education for diverse groups of students', OECD Education Working Papers, No. 263, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/bff7a85d-en>.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

<sup>95</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Fredman, S., *Intersectional discrimination in EU gender equality and non-discrimination law*, Publications Office, 2016, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/241520>

<sup>96</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35587425/>

<sup>97</sup> Staats, C. (2015) American Educator. *Understanding Implicit Bias: What educators should know*, 29-43. [https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/ae\\_winter2015staats.pdf](https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/ae_winter2015staats.pdf)

interventions have been shown to have the capacity to produce long-term reductions in participants' implicit biases and related behaviours<sup>98</sup>.

### History education as a tool to address intolerance and promote inclusion

As pointed out by the Council of Europe, among others, the teaching of history through a critical thinking lens can promote multiperspectivity, social cohesion and inclusion (of a plurality of voices and viewpoints)<sup>99</sup>. When students better understand the histories of marginalized, excluded, oppressed and persecuted minority groups, they are more capable of grasping the realities that minority groups face today. An understanding of past exclusionary histories of ethnic and racial minorities, religious communities, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ persons, as well as slavery and colonialism can help students understand the roots of exclusion and persecution, as well as the consequences of such histories of exclusion and persecution. Nevertheless, these tend to be treated as distinct types of oppression and discrimination. History textbooks tend to be very broad in their focus and often miss the histories of excluded communities and treat them separately. This oversight can be corrected by for instance focusing on histories of social movements for change. Ensuring that books and other educational resources reflect some level of intersectionality can help promote inclusion and address (majority) biases and show that social phenomena are complex and interconnected. A recent approach is that of 'intersectional history'. According to [Samantha Cook \(2020\)](#)<sup>100</sup> this approach represents 'the study of the past through the lens of social and political discrimination in organisations and systems over time and how they overlap and intersect in multiple, complex ways with gender, race, class, or sexual identity... The study of intersectional history can offer diverse voices and perspectives... it promotes social equity and community engagement. In particular, it connects us and makes us a part of our neighbourhoods, which have their own social and cultural histories'<sup>101</sup>.

### Citizenship education to counter discriminatory attitudes and promote inclusion

The earlier-mentioned [OECD report](#) refers to the role of citizenship education as a tool to promote inclusion. It states that:

'Policies that promote inclusion through the curriculum might, among other elements, include direct or indirect references to diversity, such as gender fluidity or ethnic minority groups' history, flexibility for accommodations and modifications (e.g. for students with special education needs; gifted students; rural contexts), and a consistent citizenship education based on a participative pedagogy'.

Citizenship education has also been identified as a tool to address discriminatory attitudes. The CoE has underlined that 'democratic citizenship and human rights education are [...] increasingly important in addressing discrimination'<sup>102</sup>. A cross-country (23 countries) [study from Durham University](#) showed that in many cases, (global) citizenship education (GCE) in the curriculum had a significant positive impact on student attitudes towards equality, tolerance and diversity (as well as engagement with society). However, this was not always the case. In some instances, GCE led to the opposite effect (less tolerant attitudes). Students might develop more tolerant attitudes towards certain groups and less tolerant attitudes towards other groups depending on the approach used in GCE. The authors also conclude that teacher

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<sup>98</sup> See e.g. Hanover Research (2019) *The impact of implicit bias training* <https://f.hubspotusercontent00.net/hubfs/3409306/The-Impact-of-Implicit-Bias-Training.pdf>; Forscher, P.S. et al. 'A Meta-Analysis of Procedures to Change Implicit Measures.' PsyArXiv, August 13, 2018. pp. 2, 19. <https://osf.io/dv8tu>

<sup>99</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/0900001680493c9e>

<sup>100</sup> <https://samanthamatalonecook.com/making-history-matter-teaching-intersectional-history/#:~:text=What%20is%20intersectional%20history%20and,%2C%20class%2C%20or%20sexual%20identity>. No page numbers

<sup>101</sup> For an example of an intersectional approach to education about women's history see: <https://edprepmatters.net/2022/03/teaching-womens-history-through-an-intersectional-lens/>

<sup>102</sup> See: <https://rm.coe.int/the-state-of-citizenship-in-europe-e-publication/168072b3cd>

education, training and support are crucial for the successful implementation of GCE programmes<sup>103</sup>.

Along these lines, researchers tend to make a general distinction between two ideal types of citizenship education: 'minimal citizenship education'<sup>104</sup> and 'maximal citizenship education'<sup>105</sup>. In contrast to minimal citizenship education, maximal citizenship takes a broad approach, with active citizenship at its core. It is an inclusive approach to learning and helps to promote social cohesion in a diverse society<sup>106</sup>. Knowledge and understanding are important, but the development of skills and attitudes are key, allowing pupils to gain the competences needed to participate in society. Studies of what constitute effective types of such approaches to citizenship education show that giving teachers the conceptual tools to implement this broader type of citizenship education can be highly effective. For instance, [Barr et al. \(2015\)](#), in an in-depth social psychological study of the *Facing History and Ourselves*<sup>107</sup> programme for teachers, found that the historically oriented anti-bias programme countered intolerance and 'promoted respect and tolerance for the rights of others among the students, an increased awareness of prejudice and discrimination, and a sense of civic efficacy'<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> Welpy, O. and Taamouti, A. and Bracons Font, G. (2019) 'Evaluating the impact of global citizenship education on young people's attitudes towards equality, diversity and tolerance.', Project Report. WISE/Qatar Foundation. <https://dro.dur.ac.uk/30199/1/30199.pdf?DDD29+vrfd57>

<sup>104</sup> Minimal citizenship education tends to take a rather narrow approach, teaching 'civics' in content-led, knowledge-based fashion. The focus tends to be on giving information about a country's history and the structure and processes of its system of government, while seeing citizenship as a status. In this ideal type, the teacher mostly lectures.

<sup>105</sup> See: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/PCE01/PCE01.pdf>

<sup>106</sup> See: Adebayo, Gabriel O. 2019. 'In Search of Maximal Citizenship in Educational Policy for Young People: Analysing Citizenship in Finnish Religious Education in View of the 'Maximal' Conception' *Social Sciences* 8, no. 8: 232. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8080232>

<sup>107</sup> Information on *Facing History and Ourselves* can be found here: <https://www.facinghistory.org/>. It has been recognised through the European Commission's Inno4Div's project as one of the most inspirational projects in Europe in terms of development of intercultural and democratic competences in teacher education. See: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC122560>

<sup>108</sup> See: Barr, D.J. 'Early adolescents' reflections on social justice: *Facing History and Ourselves in practice and assessment*' *Intercultural Education* 16, no. 2, 145-160. See also: Donbavand, Steven, and Bryony Hoskins. 2021. 'Citizenship Education for Political Engagement: A Systematic Review of Controlled Trials' *Social Sciences* 10, no. 5: 151. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10050151>

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