

Foreword

Migration flows are profoundly changing the composition of classrooms. Whatever the history and context in each country, data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reveals growing social, cultural and linguistic diversity. The ability of societies to preserve and promote social cohesion in the presence of large migration flows depends on their capacity to integrate immigrants.

While migration flows pose challenges for host communities, they also represent opportunities. Diversity has always been at the heart of human progress. Beyond that, migration can facilitate the adjustment in ageing societies. But to unlock the benefits of migration, effective education and social policies are necessary to integrate migrant children successfully into society. Education systems shape immigrants' ability to eventually participate in the labour markets of host countries, contribute to welfare arrangements, and feel part of their communities. The growing share of children among those fleeing conflict has led to a re-examination of how best to integrate foreign-born children into their new communities. This is particularly important given the high likelihood that a large number of young migrants will settle permanently in their country of destination.

Education can help immigrants acquire skills and contribute to the host-country economy; it can also foster immigrants' social and emotional well-being and sustain their motivation to join others in work and life in their new communities – and, by doing so, help them integrate more easily. But ensuring that students with an immigrant background have positive well-being outcomes represents a significant challenge, because many immigrant or mixed-heritage students must overcome the adversities associated with displacement, socio-economic disadvantage, language barriers and the difficulty of forging a new identity all at the same time.

This report looks at the issue from a new angle, by examining the resilience of students with an immigrant background, from academic, social and emotional perspectives. It draws on data from PISA and the European Social Survey (ESS) to identify both the risk factors that prevent immigrant students from successfully integrating and the protective factors that enable these students to thrive. The report paints a detailed picture of the diversity of circumstances that arise as the face and nature of international migration changes. It illustrates how institutional and social features play a key role in reducing the vulnerability of students with an immigrant background to the adverse circumstances that accompany migration, and how education systems should therefore be held accountable for the opportunities they create for students to overcome adversity.

The growing diversity that arises from international migration can be a great opportunity for education systems, forcing teachers to rethink their pedagogical approaches and teaching styles to address the needs of highly diverse student populations. Doing so will better equip them to cater to the needs of each individual student, whether this student has an immigrant background or not. At the same time, if teachers and educators are left without the right support they may not be able to adapt and, as a result, all students may suffer.

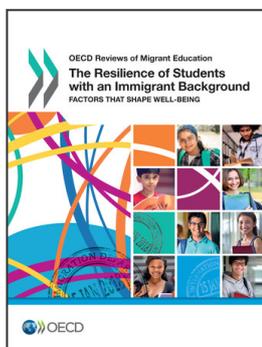
The OECD, with its Strength through Diversity project, stands ready to support countries develop education systems that promote the academic, social, and emotional resilience of students with an immigrant background.

The development of this report was guided by Andreas Schleicher and Yuri Belfali and was overseen by the Education Policy Committee. The report was drafted by Francesca Borgonovi with Alessandro Ferrara.

Lucie Cerna, Jose Marquez and Özge Bilgili drafted materials for specific chapters of the report. Marilyn Achiron edited the report and Henri Pearson co-ordinated its production. Fung Kwan Tam designed the publication. Cécile Bily, François Keslair and Diana Tramontano provided editorial, statistical and administrative support. The report benefited from substantive input from the study's Steering Committee at the European Commission, led by Susanne von Below, with Kristina Cunningham, Vladimir Garkov, Geir Ottestad, Emanuela Tassa and Margie Waters. Finally, the report was enriched by the thoughtful contributions provided by the many participants in the policy fora organised in the context of the Strength through Diversity project and, in particular, by the Education Counsellors.

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