

Immigrants and refugees remain at high risk of segregation into different schools and slower school tracks in European countries

Almost one in five students in rich countries are of migrant background

On International children's Day, the 2019 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report on migration and displacement, published by UNESCO, shows that many countries are segregating immigrant students off into different schools or into slower, often vocational, school tracks, which compounds their education disadvantages. Two-thirds of migrants are destined for high-income countries, where they make up 18% of students, up from 15% in the mid-2000s. But they are unequally spread between schools: 15% of students had migrant background in 52% of secondary schools.

[DRAFT] Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General, said: *"Learning shouldn't be a luxury. There are only losses when the education of refugees and migrants is ignored. It opens new opportunities for personal and societal growth and new avenues for creativity, making communities stronger and more resilient."*

Titled, *Building bridges, not walls*, the 2019 GEM Report shows, for instance, that in Berlin one in five primary schools enrol twice as many students with migrant background than live in their catchment area. In 2017, in Italy, 17% of primary classrooms had more than 30% first-generation foreign-born students. In France, five times as many children of non-EU immigrants as children of French or EU parents attend lower secondary school in disadvantaged areas. In the Netherlands, some schools now have 80% immigrant students. Non-native speakers in the United Kingdom were more likely to attend school with disadvantaged native speakers

Manos Antoninis, Director of the GEM Report, added: *"Separating or segregating immigrants into different schools or school tracks compounds their education challenges and exacerbates prejudices, creating a 'them' and 'us' reaction in host countries."*

If not separating by school, many countries separate low achievers into less demanding tracks. Ability sorting leads to inequality and a stronger association between social background and student results. It starts as young as age 10 in Austria and Germany. Such tracking in the transition to secondary school particularly disadvantages male students with immigrant backgrounds. In Germany, they were seven percentage points more likely than their native peers to receive a recommendation for the lowest track and seven percentage points less likely to receive a recommendation for the highest track, *even after* controlling for test scores in reading and mathematics.

International migrants are therefore often siphoned off into vocational tracks: over five times as many students of Moroccan descent were in vocational training in the Netherlands, for example, in comparison to the Dutch. While vocational training can motivate disadvantaged students put off by more academic tracks, it may compromise subsequent opportunities for students with immigrant backgrounds.

The potential of migrants is also being wasted because their skills are not being recognized: over a third of immigrants with higher education in richer countries are overqualified for their jobs, compared to a quarter of natives.

Antoninis continues: *“If we are to help migrants and refugees feel included, and not waste their talents, countries must stop underestimating their needs and their aspirations, and start to reflect them in education policies.”*

Recommendations suggested by the Report:

1. Governments must protect people's right to an education, no matter where they come from.
2. Governments should not treat immigrant students differently, separating them into different education tracks or different classrooms.
3. Student diversity should be reflected in in curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, and with alternative education, including flexible preparatory classes and accelerated education plans.
4. Teachers need to be better supported to fulfil the myriad roles expected of them in educating migrants and refugees.
5. Skills and qualifications' recognition systems should coordinate better and share best practices to make processes simpler, more transparent and more flexible.
6. Governments need to invest in local level data on the size and scope of migration in their countries.

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Notes to editors

Visit the [#EducationOnTheMove campaign](#) page to see the stories of people on the move around the world in real time, showing their challenges, and successes in accessing an inclusive education.

Visit the Report's [electronic press kit](#) containing Report and multimedia materials.

The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report examines the education impact of migration and displacement across all population movements: within and across borders, voluntary and forced, for employment and education. It also reviews progress on education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In view of increasing diversity, the report analyses how education can build inclusive societies and help people move beyond tolerance and learn to live together. Education provided equally builds bridges; unequal provision raises walls between migrants and refugees and their host communities.

Two new global compacts on migrants and refugees recognize education's role and set objectives aligned with the global commitment to leave no one behind. This report is a vital toolkit for these compacts. It covers policy issues that address seasonal migrants, rural school consolidation, intercultural curricula, refugee inclusion in national education systems and elimination of segregation, qualifications recognition, targeting of school funding, more effective humanitarian education aid and teacher preparedness for diverse classrooms in emergency, protracted and “new normal” contexts.