Vulnerable Children and Inclusive Education

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Outline

• Brief overview of FRA activities

• FRA research related to children in vulnerable situations:
  – Migrant children
  – Roma children
  – Children with disabilities
  – LGBTI children

• Overall trends and conclusions
FRA’S role and tasks

- to provide assistance and expertise on fundamental rights issues to the European Union institutions and the Member States, when they implement EU law → PROVIDING EVIDENCE-BASED ADVICE

- Information & data collection: research & comparative analysis → INFORMATION ABOUT FRA WORK

- to promote dialogue with civil society, in order to raise public awareness of fundamental rights and actively disseminate information about its work → AWARENESS RAISING

Chair’s Statement of the Fundamental Rights Forum 2016

“[43] EU Member States and local educational authorities could support educational establishments and professionals by promoting educational programmes that foster critical thinking and mutual respect: this could include providing assistance to newly arrived migrant children to settle in, or teaching about the history of immigration and its positive influence.”

– Michael O’Flaherty, Fundamental Rights Forum Chair
“Persisting discrimination and marginalisation will not only result in losing the skill and talent that Europe needs, but could also be a grave danger to social cohesion.” – Michael O’Flaherty, FRA Director

Research on migrant integration

Project: Social inclusion and migrant participation in society
The situation of migrant children in education

• De facto segregation of children with immigrant backgrounds in school in 13 EU Member States.

• Lack of active participation in society

• Risk of marginalisation, leading to social exclusion and a lack of opportunities for migrant youths

• Discrimination on the grounds of nationality is not covered or prohibited in 16 EU Member States.

• Most EU Member States do not provide language learning support to immigrants and refugees.
Towards more inclusive education

- **Coordination of housing and education policies** to avoid residential and socio-economic segregation

- **Involvement of parents** in schools and local communities, to improve community relations and educational achievements of all children

- **Improving the intercultural competences of teachers**
Research on Roma
The situation of Roma children in education

- Placement in ‘special schools’ or ethnically segregated classes

- Considerable gaps between Roma and non-Roma children persist at all levels of education, from preschool to secondary education

- Enrolment rates in preschool or kindergarten for Roma children vary vastly across Member States, ranging from 9% in Greece to 83% in Hungary

- On average only 12% of the surveyed Roma aged 18 to 24 completed upper-secondary general or vocational education
Towards more inclusive education

- Increased access to high-quality non-segregated early childhood education
- Strengthening of ties with communities and increased participation of parents
- Involvement of ethnic minorities in communities
- Ensuring compliance with the duty to primary school attendance
In school: "You were told all the time that you were worthless, you’re bad, stupid and all that. So I never had any friends at all." (Interview respondent)

Research on Violence against children with disabilities
The situation of children with disabilities in education

- **Schools remain a common setting for abuse against children with disabilities**, with bullying and verbal insults particularly widespread in educational settings.

- **Children with disabilities are more likely to be victims of violence** than children without disabilities

- **Children with ‘invisible disabilities’** and children with multiple and severe disabilities at **higher risk**

- **Triggers of violence**: exclusion, prejudice, ‘vulnerability’ and ‘easy targets’, overburdening of parents and overextended and untrained personnel

- **Intersection** with other characteristics and multiple layers of risk

- There is a lack of **age-appropriate and accessible complaints mechanisms**; children are not considered to be reliable witnesses
Figure 1: Factors contributing to the persistence of violent behaviour against children with disabilities in educational systems, as identified by respondents.
Measures to prevent violence against children with disabilities

“You have to work with the [children] themselves, the staff working with them and the organisation itself to make sure it is a well-rounded and understood issue.” (UK, Representative of NGO)

“In this field there is still a lot to do. It is a pathway that needs education for everybody.” (Portugal, Public Authority)

“We are dealing with putting out a fire once it breaks out […], but we are skipping the whole area of preparation the environment so that the fire does not start.” (Interview respondent)

“I see no reason to create special programmes, special courses and training. Hostility is hostility, intolerance is intolerance, degrading other people is degrading regardless of their physical or mental state, or emotional condition.” (Poland, Organisation for children’s education, rehabilitation and upbringing)
Towards more inclusive education

All stakeholders

Children with disabilities

Families and communities

Professionals

- Awareness raising and educational campaigns
- Combating isolation of adults and children with disabilities

- Respite programmes
- Training on rights and on recognising abuse
- Early intervention programmes

- Awareness raising on rights
- Self-empowerment trainings

- Guidelines, protocols and standards of care
- Training programmes
- Holistic approach
There are no openly LGBT people in our school. It would be unimaginable. Those children would be marked, I guess. (...) To be gay is totally taboo. School considers that they doesn’t exist.“ (Interview respondent)
The situation of LGBT children in education

- Close to one half of the 18-24-year-old respondents (47%) in the EU LGBT survey indicated that they had hidden or disguised being LGBT at school before the age of 18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents Aged 18-24 Across the EU Experienced at School:</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative comments about the respondent being LGBT</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative comments about schoolmates perceived to be LGBT</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative comments about teachers perceived to be LGBT</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lack of awareness and training

“I’ve had literally no training at all about how to deal with it so no, I would not feel comfortable dealing with it”. Teacher, United Kingdom [UK/TE/68], FRA PA Report, 2016.

"The education system from the kindergarten to the university ignores that people can be different, and only when someone gets a friend or an acquaintance, only then people begin to go deeper and understand that it is acceptable. The tolerance is being formed on the basis of personal experiences, but the education process does not include it as an element."
Teacher, Latvia [LV/TE/10], FRA PA Report, 2016.

“I don’t know so many things. If I end up in a situation where a student shares with me [about their sexual orientation and discrimination against them] or I witness such discrimination or violence, I wouldn’t know how to react. I don’t feel safe and knowledgeable on the topic.”
Teacher, Bulgaria [BG/TE/7], FRA PA Report, 2016.
Towards more inclusive education

• Public awareness-raising campaigns, especially in schools

• Training of professionals and authorities, to address bullying and discrimination of LGBTI persons in education

• Encouraging open and respectful discussions on LGBTI issues in school

• Establishment of properly working reporting mechanisms and monitoring bodies in schools
Promising practices from the Fundamental Rights Forum

- Inclusion in educational materials
- Teacher guides, intersectionality toolkit and norm criticism toolkit
- School exchange
- Promoting parenting education and enhancing dialogue between schools and parents
- Providing a platform for public participation
Overall trends and conclusions

- Schools should always be a **safe and supportive environment for all children regarding their sex, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, religion or disability**

- Schools should **teach and promote** respect for diversity, human rights, including child rights, in their **curricular** components

- Teachers must be supported and trained to deal with cultural conflicts and diversity in a positive way

- **Educational tools** to promote diversity and **inclusive education**

- Schools should foster participation through **democratic processes** involving students, teachers and parents to teach inclusion in practice

- Schools should **assess** their own performance on diversity and non-discrimination through systematic data collection
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