Deliverable No. 6.5

Evidence-based co-authored and open-access report of most promising pioneering policies and practices

Call:	H2020-SC6-Transformations-2020
Topic:	TRANSFORMATIONS-22-2020: Enhancing access and uptake of education to reverse inequalities
Funding Scheme:	Research & Innovation Action (RIA)
Grant Agreement no.:	101004392
Project Title:	Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe
Contractual Submission Date:	31/12/2023
Actual Submission Date:	18/12/2023
Responsible partner:	Germany

Germany: country-specific practical implications and recommendations

Sabine Bollig, Magdalena Joos, Irena Kogan

1) Large social and ethnic inequalities – need for systematic and structural solutions

In Germany, children's educational success depends more strongly on their social origin and migration background than in many other countries (see Germany compared to Norway in the fig. 1). This can be traced back to a highly stratified school system with early tracking to educational pathways with significantly different scholastic requirements; a traditional model of half-day schooling, in which the family environment and its cultural and material resources have a significantly greater influence on children's learning outcomes than in countries with full-day schools and large numbers of immigrants with relatively poor family resources.

Solutions are: (1) abolish lower secondary tracks in favour of integrated schools, while avoiding fragmentation of the education system at states level; (2) introduce all-day schools in primary and secondary education (full participation and no fees for children from low SES) while strengthening the links between formal and non-formal education (3) Make measures for the integration of students with a migrant background and new immigrants more binding at all levels (see National Action Plan on Integration). Pioneering Policies/Practices here are approaches that further develop structural changes in participatory process with research input, such as the PRIMUS model schools in North Rhine-Westphalia, which implement longer joint learning for all children from grades 1-10.

**Figure 1**. Intersectional inequalities in reading and mathematics in Germany and Norway
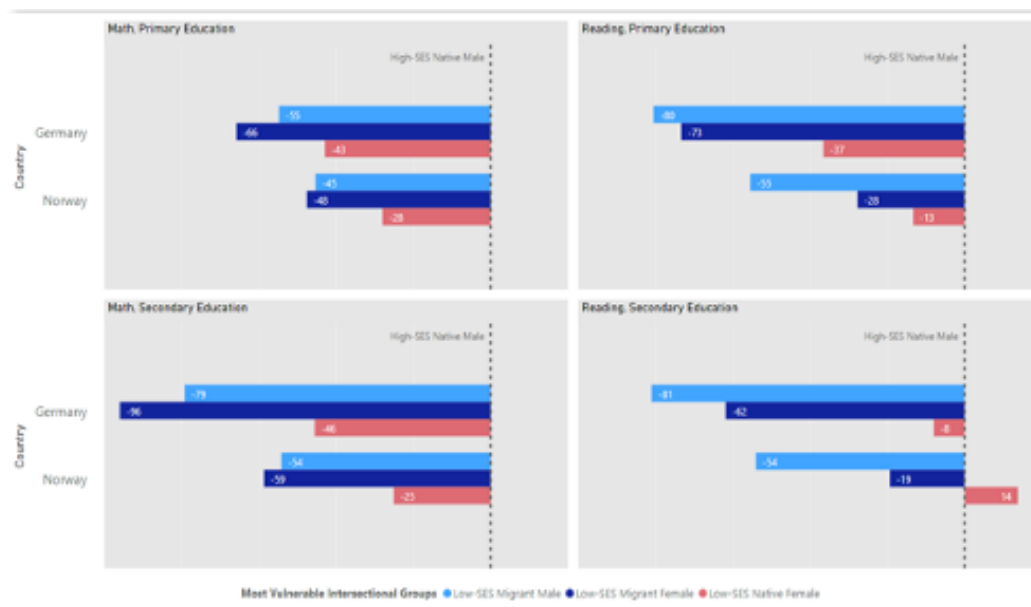
Data sources: TIMSS 2019 (math - primary education), PIRLS 2016 (reading – primary education), PISA 2015 and PISA 2018 (secondary education - pooled), own calculations.

2) High degree of spatial inequalities – need for social space orientation on different levels

The high degree of socio-spatial inequality and educational policy disparities in Germany leads to comparatively unequal spatial conditions for access to and uptake of education (see Fig. 2). Furthermore, educational institutions in disadvantaged areas lack sufficient support to counteract the dynamics of spatially induced intersectional disadvantages and are often themselves exposed to high levels of stress (e.g., bad infrastructure, staff shortage, etc.).

Education policy must take greater account of socio-spatial differences; in particular, the approaches developed to date for "municipal education management" and the data-driven design of "local communities of responsibility"/"educational landscapes" must be aligned with a strong focus on combating inequality (see e.g., the Ruhr-Futur-Program in NRW). The social area indices for data-based funding and support (e.g., higher budgets) which have already been introduced in some city states/regions, should be implemented nationwide and financed through multi-level-cooperation (see federal investment program "Startchancen"-Initiative). For structurally anchoring such approaches, also the fight against the massive shortage of skilled workers, in which the states, districts and organizations with more resources and fewer problems are currently more likely to prevail, should be coordinated with a binding privileged treatment of facilities in social areas under pressure (e.g., introduction of higher salaries for ECEC staff in so-called "hotspots" in Berlin). Pioneering Policies/Practices here are approaches which link this inequality-oriented multi-level governance with a stronger pedagogical social space orientation of the institutions/actors themselves (e.g. Social Area Budget & Social Work in ECEC in RLP) and support strong area-orientated institutional partnerships, particularly between Youth Services and Education (e.g. "House of Education Lurup", "MAUS").

Figure 2. Child poverty rates ("Kinderarmutsquoten") in primary school catchment areas
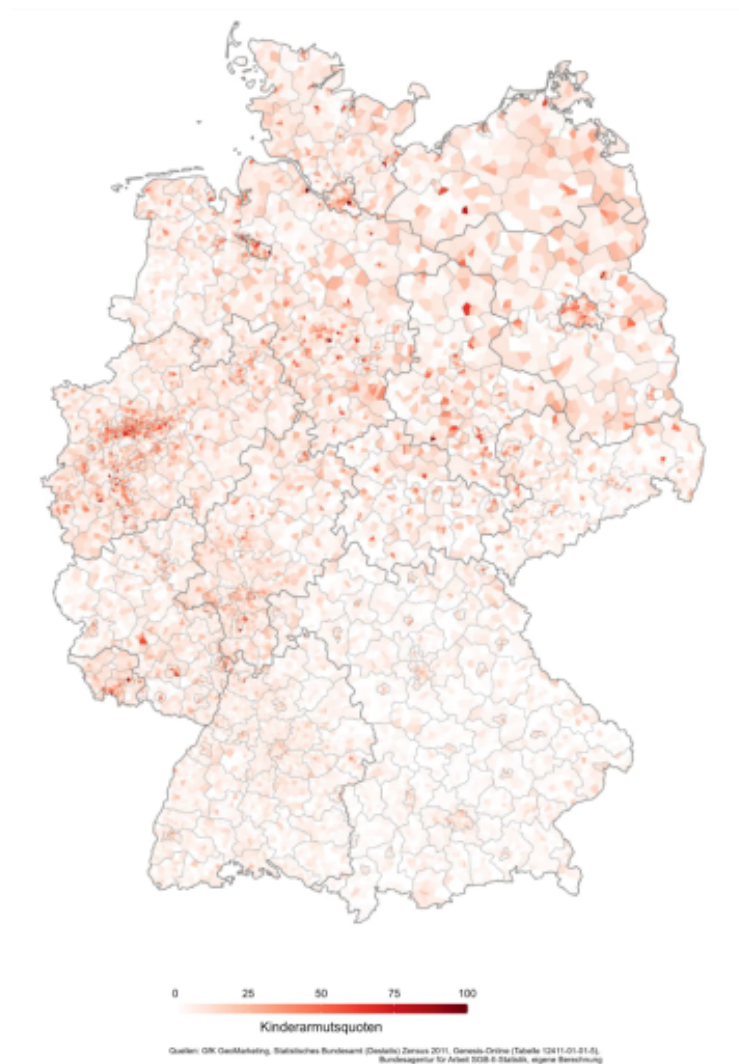

Helbig 2023, in kinderarmut-an-schulen.de

1)   Promoting belonging and anti-discriminatory practices in educational institutions

Structural discrimination against intersectional groups takes place throughout the entire education system in Germany (e.g. "residual school segregation", classism & racism). In addition, the discrepancy between the requirements of educational institutions and the living environment of vulnerable groups is often presented one-sidedly as a problem for these groups, who are labelled as "educationally distant" or "unattainable". These classifications reinforce distance and mistrust and thus also contribute to the already low sense of belonging of intersectionally affected pupils in education (see Fig. 3.).

Together with civil society actors, various programs/practices for anti-discriminatory, diversity and social justice-orientated education and organizational development have already been implemented in individual educational institutions (e.g. networks "Schule mit Courage/gegen Rassismus" & "Demokratieerziehung im Kindesalter DEKI"). To make such approaches more binding, 1) they should be included in basic/further training curricula for professionals as well as guidelines for school development. Furthermore, effective protection against discrimination should be 2) structurally anchored via independent complaints centres with focus on educational institutions and 3) support structures for self-empowerment. Pioneering Policies/Practices, here are mentoring programs for students, such as "Bildungsberater", which combines mentoring for Sinti/Roma students with further training/counselling for schools to mitigate antiziganistic discrimination or also "Balu & Du" for children from non-academic families. In Berlin, independent complaints and advice centres have already been set up at several levels (e.g. ADAS, KiDS, AuF) with a focus on protection against discrimination in ECEC and schools. They offer partisan support for students/parents/teachers as well as counselling and further training for schools. They require structural funding.

Figure 3. Gradient of educational belonging by diverse intersectional groups
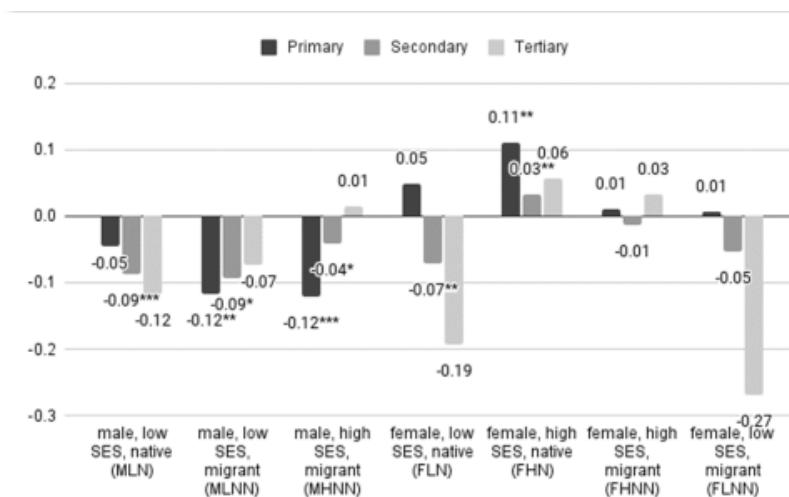
Source: Kleemola et al., in review. Exploring intersectional inequalities in students' sense of belonging in education across educational pathways and contexts.