



Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe

## 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:	Luxembourg





## Luxembourg: country-specific practical implications and recommendations

*The Luxembourgish team*

### Implications

Concluding from the research results of the PIONEERED (2021-2024) project (deliverables of the Work Packages WP3 – Policy analysis of measures tackling educational inequalities at different stages of the life course, WP4 – Comparative analysis of educational (in)equalities based on MILC approach (centring on secondary analysis of existing quantitative data-sets), WP5 – Pioneering practices in formal and informal education: comparative practice research, and WP6 – Synthesis: Triangulation of country- and level-specific results and selection of most promising pioneering policies and practices), there are policies and practices in Luxembourg exhibiting the potential to tackle intersectional educational inequalities and some indications of their effectiveness at certain levels (e.g. individual student level). However, quantitative analyses of reading and mathematical competencies and academic achievement (WP4-D4.2 & WP4-D4.3) indicate rather persistent inequalities in the Luxembourgish schooling system with pronounced educational disadvantages for low Socio-Economic Status (SES) students, students with migrant backgrounds who do not speak Luxembourgish or German at home, and male students in some subjects (Hadjar et al. 2015, 2018; WP4-D4.2). Thus, the main conclusion is that an accelerated and intensified effort is required to reduce educational inequalities effectively and sustainably.

Before deducing policy suggestions from the PIONEERED findings, it is relevant to ask what the barriers are. Following the PIONEERED methodology, barriers to the implementation of effective policies and practices may exist at the macro level (education system, policy, governance), meso level (educational institutions) and micro level (students, teachers, parents).

Barriers. One major barrier is that many potentially promising policies and practices tackling educational inequalities e.g., more comprehensive, and inclusive school settings, are not (fully) implemented universally throughout Luxembourg (such as the 2009 primary schooling reform) or remain pilot projects (WP5-D5.1). That entails these pioneering policies and practices which are introduced in certain local areas, only providing a limited number of students with new educational opportunities (such as the international public schools). Consequently, few regions and some students benefit from scattered and sometimes short-lived projects that seek to tackle inequalities while a majority of students are in conventional educational settings characterised by persistent forms of educational inequalities. Where macro-level (national) policies exist (WP3-D3.3), the main barrier to their successful implementation is lack of resources (both human and financial). Despite much attempt at both macro (national, WP3-D3.2) and meso (school and district) levels (WP5-D5.3) – for instance quota and allocation of human resources based on social indices in municipalities) to provide academic and psycho-social support mechanisms – there is still need for more financial and trained human resources to ensure coverage and application at both individual and institutional levels. For instance, due to a lack of sufficient human resources within the current funding scheme – not only a lack of specific skills and diplomas but also a lack of multilingual specialists – parents and students need to wait longer to benefit from a support service and the situation can be even worse in disadvantaged

schools. Implementation barriers also relate to certain actors on the individual level, namely teachers and parents. Teacher unions and teachers often oppose new policies and practices (e.g. the 2009 primary education reform) as the implementation often comes with a requirement to change routines and adapt to new regulations (e.g. an adaptation of the way to teach) that is often perceived as more work (see Tröhler et al. 2012). This also results in the perception of a lack of control and accountability at the teacher level. Furthermore, teachers and educators in formal and non-formal education often do not feel well-informed and well-included in the process of the development and implementation of policies (WP5-D5.1 & WP5-D5.3). This is among the reasons why policies and practices are implemented differently in different regions, schools or even classrooms (e.g., new modes of student evaluation by teachers, and pedagogical measures such as team teaching). There were also some indications that parents do not support certain reform policies and practices (WP5-D5.4). For example, parents from disadvantaged social strata do not engage in communication processes with teachers and their children – that would potentially bridge different groups of actors relevant to education – to the extent needed to make a change and reduce disadvantages (Tröhler et al., 2012). They may also lack adequate and relevant knowledge of the system and of (new) opportunities in the education system. There is also a lack of collaboration between formal and non-formal settings (on the meso and macro levels, WP5-D5.3 & D5.4) and between teaching and support staff (on the micro level and within meso level institutions). All these aspects call for more participative than top-down approaches that bridge different actors.

## **Recommendations**

Firstly, creating comprehensive and inclusive settings in the formal education system of Luxembourg would be promising if scaled up to national (macro) level accessible and affordable for all students (WP6. D6.1) based on lowered segregation levels, intelligent classroom arrangements (e.g. composition to cater best for diversity and equal opportunities) integrating individualized pedagogical measures (e.g. team teaching) (WP6-D6.2). Such educational settings at the meso level require relevant and sufficient pedagogical material, infrastructure, human and financial resources. In effect, financial and human resources need to be increased and the distribution of these resources according to a school-specific social index shall be strengthened to benefit all students.

Secondly, the above-mentioned goal requires providing teachers and other staff (individual level) with more knowledge and skills (studies, trainings and ongoing life-long-learning activities). This could involve a harmonization of teacher training to improve quality of learning, teaching, assessment processes as well as training or Communities of Practice for headmasters to facilitate knowledge and practice transfer (WP5-D 5.3 & WP6-D6.4).

Thirdly, policies and practices need to be implemented in a more participative way – relating to macro, meso and micro levels – with an early consultation of different actors (teachers, educators, support staff, scientists, parents, students) to increase ownership, engagement, motivation, awareness, and transparency (WP6-D6.3). There needs to be more and clearer

information for all actors about the purpose and the functioning of policies and practices. This involves compulsory life-long-learning and professional development for teachers and information sessions and workshops on formal and non-formal education opportunities for parents.

Fourthly, there is a need for policies (WP3-D3.2) that would facilitate institutionalization (meso-level) of the few current examples of bridging formal (schools), non-formal (early childhood education and care, day care), and informal education (parents, clubs, youth gatherings, museums etc.) and upscaling these bridges to national level (institutionalization) to improve students' cognitive and non-cognitive (social and emotional) competencies (WP4-D 4.3). This involves bringing different actors at the individual level closer together: teachers in formal education and educators in non-formal education need to closely collaborate in established communities of practice (CoP) to create synergies of peer-learning and equal contribution to students' social and emotional wellbeing and academic achievements.

Fifthly, at the governance level, a stronger emphasis and auditing to realize the defined national and institutional objectives, e.g., on school development plans and on the implementation of reform measures – for example at the level of primary schooling – may also contribute to tackling educational inequalities in a more efficient manner- without undermining the autonomy of schools and teachers, of course (WP5-D5.1 & WP5-D5.4) .

Sixthly, there is a need to reinforce the integration of scientific research and practitioners' lived experiences in policy-making processes at all levels (macro: policies, meso: institutions, and micro: actors). This can be achieved through different methods including, evaluation of educational re-forms, systematic learning and knowledge transfer from pilot projects, and increased transparency and clarity in information sharing in the complex and diversified educational setting of Luxembourg shall benefit all stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, headmasters, and education experts and researchers in an equitable and sustainable manner. All actors need to be equally engaged in evaluation processes as well as conception and design of policies and practices.

## References

PIONEERED Deliverables

WP3-D3.2: Working paper (scientific): Policy analysis on the impact of public policy interventions to enhance access and the uptake of education (based on international comparative analysis); Working paper (scientific): Policy analysis on the impact of public policy interventions to enhance access and the uptake of education (based on international comparative analysis).

WP3-D3.3: Data inventory and database of evaluated public policy interventions (in open format) including its title in English and national language, key descriptive parameters enabling thematic and the geographic search and links to relevant policy documents

WP4-D4.2: Working paper (scientific): Consequences of school segregation on achievement and attainment; Working paper (scientific): Consequences of school segregation on achievement and attainment

WP4-D4.3: Working paper (scientific): Informal/shadow education, its interplay with formal education and intersectional Inequalities.

WP5-D5.1: Report about stakeholder knowledge about current practices tackling/reducing educational inequalities in each country.

WP5-D5.3: Workshop on pioneering practices in reducing educational inequality, developing practical tools that foster equitable educational access and participation within education and society.

WP5-D5.4: Working paper (scientific): Educational-context-related daily life practices focusing on hindering and fostering factors for realising pioneering practices in formal and informal environments.

WP6-D6.2: Synthesis report “Schools – what works to counter inequality?”

Synthesis report “Schools – what works to counter inequality?”

WP6-D6.3: Synthesis report “Are policymakers/ practitioners clear about which groups are the most vulnerable?”

WP6-D6.4: Critical discussion on most promising policies and practices with the Scientific and Policy Advisory Board/SPAB (internal webinar).

### **Other sources**

Hadjar, A., Fischbach, A., Martin, R., & Backes, S. (2015). Bildungsungleichheiten im luxemburgischen Bildungssystem. Pp. 34-56 in: Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, SCRIPT & Université du Luxembourg, FLSHASE (Eds.), Bildungsbericht Luxemburg 2015. Analysen und Befunde. Luxembourg: MENEJ/SCRIPT & University of Luxembourg.

Hadjar, A., Fischbach, A., & Backes, S. (2018). Bildungsungleichheiten im luxemburgischen Sekundarschulsystem aus zeitlicher Perspektive. Pp. 59-83 in: Université du Luxembourg, LUCET & Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, SCRIPT (Hg.), Nationaler Bildungsbericht Luxemburg 2018. Luxembourg: University of Luxembourg & MENEJ/SCRIPT.

Tröhler, D., Hadjar, A., Lenz, T., Voss, P., & Barbu, R (2012). Rapport d'expertise sur le bilan de la réforme de l'école fondamentale. Walferdange: Université de Luxembourg.