1. Use inclusive language to refer to youth with migrant parents

WHAT and WHY?

Language reflects and influences attitudes, behaviours and perceptions. Using inclusive language to refer to individuals and groups is thus essential for social cohesion. Against this background, referring inclusively to migrants and their children is no easy task, but one that receives increased attention.

The term 'youth with migrant parents' in this publication includes both native-born youth with migrant parents and foreign-born youth. It also includes native-born youth for whom just one parent immigrated. This definition, as well as the usage and scope of the term, is not universal. Some OECD countries speak of 'migrant generations' and others refer to this group as 'youth with a migrant background'. Some OECD countries exclude youth with one native- and one foreign-born parent, while others even include native-born youth whose parents are native-born but whose grandparents migrated, especially in countries where offspring of immigrants have limited or delayed access to citizenship (Will, 2019[7]). In OECD countries that were settled by migration, native-born youth with migrant parents are rarely in the focus – indeed their outcomes are often above those of their peers with native-born parents (OECD/EU, 2018[1]).

In statistics as well as in daily life, the term 'migration background' can be self-ascribed or ascribed by others. Self-identification, as well as the labels others choose, can impact individuals' integration, including feelings of belonging, attitudes and experiences (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001[8]). Identification and self-labelling often depends on context. In a recent study from Sweden, youth with migrant parents, born or growing up in Sweden, self-identified differently in school, their neighbourhood and abroad, with respect to their nationality (Swedish, Swedish-hyphenated) or ethnic affiliation (Behtoui, 2019[9]). Further, in different countries and languages, different terms are more socially acceptable than others.

The most appropriate term for youth with migrant parents is likewise context dependant. For example, referring to native-born youth with migrant parents as 'children of immigrants' can be factually correct, but might not be appropriate for those who are adults. Speaking of a 'host-country' can be relevant when talking about individuals who recently migrated, but is not appropriate for youth raised and educated in that country.

WHO?

OECD-wide, youth who are either themselves foreign-born and arrived as children or who are native-born with at least one foreign-born parent account for nearly one in five 15 to 34-year-olds, or 38.7 million people (OECD/EU, 2018[1]). Their share is increasing in virtually all OECD countries. How individuals, societies and policy makers refer to this crucial group is essential, though not always straightforward. The context

of how and why a particular terminology is used is key to understand current practices and to initiate and frame policy change.

HOW?

Across OECD countries, strengthening the use of inclusive language in this context can take different forms:

- raise awareness of why terminology used to refer to youth with migrant parents matters, by supporting a discourse about adequate language given the national context
- avoid language and vocabulary that make full integration by definition impossible such as when talking about "migrant generations"
- promote the use of inclusive language by setting an example in policy documents and official statistics
- allow for self-identification of individuals and multiple identities in surveys

The first step to ensure inclusive language is to *raise awareness* about the role terminology plays for integration. Inclusive language can promote unity and make all people feel part of a group, hence integrated, by supporting individuals' self-perception as a vital part of their society (Collins and Clément, 2012[10]). Exclusive language is often used unintentionally. Labels, names and expressions can be created and used to portray certain groups as inferior or superior to others. Hence, becoming conscious of how language impacts other individuals and integration more broadly can help to prevent feelings of exclusion and discomfort. Policymakers can foster a trustful dialogue by avoiding word choices which may be interpreted as biased or demeaning and use inclusive language instead. Guidelines such as those developed by regional governments in Australia and Canada can support a respectful and inclusive discourse about appropriate terminology (Tasmanian Government, 2019[11]) (Government of British Columbia, 2018[12]).

Avoiding terminology that divides the resident population into "migrants" or "foreigners" on the one side and "natives" on the other is equally important. A prime example is talking about 'migrant generations', which makes full integration by definition impossible. This terminology, as used in many European OECD countries, also has several conceptional problems. For instance, "second-generation immigrants" perpetuates the migratory experience even for native-born children. The term usually refers to native-born youth with immigrant parents often with no distinction whether one or two parents migrated. In Spain, for example, the most common terminology used by governmental bodies is "immigrantes de segunda generación" while Italy uses the term "seconde generazioni di stranieri in Italia". According to the Italian Ministry of Labour, the expression refers to children of foreigners born or arrived in Italy in the first years of life. Similarly, in France the terms "jeunes issus de l'immigration" and "Seconde génération d'immigrés" refer to young descendants of immigrants. These terms apply to all youth with migrant parents with no distinction on their own place of birth. In the case of Germany, the term "Migrationshintergrund" (migration background) was introduced in official statistics in 2005. However, the concept is grounded in a mix of citizenship of the individual and country of birth. An Expert Commission to the Federal Government advised in early 2021 against the use of the term, because of both conceptual and statistical shortcomings (Fachkommission Integrationsfähigkeit, 2021[13]). Until 2016, the Netherlands similarly disregarded own migration experience, referring to individuals as "autochtoon", irrespective of their place of birth, if both parents were born in the Netherlands. The term "allochtoon" referred to individuals of whom at least one parent was born abroad. While these were deemed neutral terms when they were first introduced in 1971, they have become charged in everyday use and were dropped in 2016, following advice of the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (2017[14]). Going forward, the Council suggested to use 'residents with a migration background' and 'residents with a Dutch background' to distinguish when necessary. However, it also advised against reinforcing the social contrasts between established citizens and

newcomers and adjust terminology based on context. In many countries, a debate remains regarding native-born offspring of immigrants, in particular those of mixed parentage. Austria, for example, uses the term "migration background", but counts children of mixed descent with an Austrian-born parent as "without a migration background". Similarly, in Denmark a person of 'Danish origin' is defined as a person who, regardless of their place of birth, has at least one parent who is born in Denmark and has Danish nationality.

Promoting the use of inclusive – or at least neutral – language starts with *setting a positive example in policy documents and official statistics*. "Native-born to foreign-born parents", the term used in most OECD documents on integration, refers to individuals born in the country and allows for a clear distinction of parental migration history. The term also acknowledges the fact that these persons are native-born and (in most cases) never migrated. Norway's official statistics, for instance, refers to "Norwegian-born to immigrant parents" to denote the native-born offspring of immigrants. In Canada, the population census indicates three terms to refer to the county's national population. "First-generation Canadians" are Canadians who were born outside Canada – so foreign-born. "Second-generation Canadians" are native-born children of immigrants who have at least one parent born outside Canada – reflecting the fact that their parents are generally Canadian citizens and thus integral part of the host-country society. Finally, "third-generation Canadians or more" refers to persons who were born in Canada to two native-born parents.

Allowing for self-identification of individuals is another way to allow language and terminology to depict a more adequate representation of an individual's identify then ascribed by others. In the Netherlands for instance, before the above described terminological changes, less than half of the native-born children of immigrants surveyed considered themselves as 'allochtoon'. There were also wide differences between different groups. Individuals seem to consider themselves less as allochtonen the more at home they felt in the Netherlands, the fewer the problems they had with the Dutch language, and the better their labour market position.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recommends that data disaggregated by ethnicity and migration should be based on self-identification, rather than through imputation or proxy (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018[15]). However, self-identification can change over time and may be partly context-specific, which hampers its use for monitoring over time.
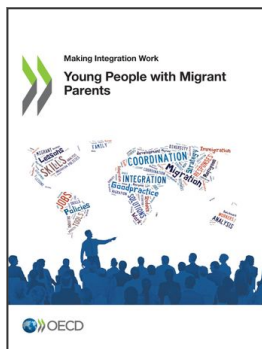
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