



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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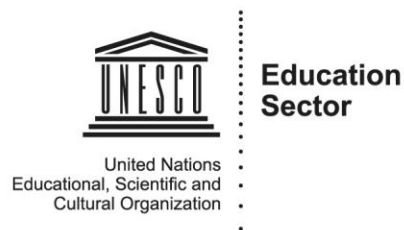
Education
Sector

Ensuring the right to equitable and inclusive quality education

Results of the Ninth Consultation of Member States on the implementation of the
UNESCO Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education

UNESCO Education Sector

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation on which to build peace and drive sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education and the Education Sector provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with a special focus on gender equality and Africa.



The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



July 2017

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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I. Background

Education is a fundamental human right and an essential tool for achieving the objectives of equality and sustainable development.

The Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (referred to here as the ‘1960 Convention’ and the ‘1960 Recommendation’, respectively), which celebrated their 55th anniversary in 2015, reflect UNESCO’s constitutional mission of instituting collaboration among nations to *‘advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunities without regard to race, sex or any distinctions, economic or social.’*

The purpose of these instruments, recently recognized as **a cornerstone of the Education 2030 Agenda**, is not only the elimination of discrimination in education, but also the adoption of concrete measures aimed at promoting equality of opportunities and treatment in this field. They cover the right to education comprehensively.

Under Article VIII of the UNESCO Constitution,¹ Member States are periodically required to submit reports on the legislative and administrative provisions they have adopted and on other measures taken to implement UNESCO’s conventions and recommendations.

In accordance with the specific multi-stage procedure for monitoring the implementation of UNESCO normative instruments for which no specific institutional mechanism is provided (adopted in 2007 and revised in 2015), the frequency for submitting such reports is set at **four year** intervals.

The purpose of reporting is to illustrate the steps taken to implement the instruments, the progress made and the difficulties encountered by Member States.

Eight Member State consultations have been conducted on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation since the adoption of these instruments by the General Conference of UNESCO. Each of the consultations led to a **global report** containing the results of the consultation for submission to the UNESCO Executive Board’s Committee on Conventions and Recommendations and for consideration by the General Conference.

II. Context of the Ninth Consultation

As scheduled in General Conference Resolution 37 C/Res. 89 and Executive Board Decision 197 EX/ Dec. 20 V., and in line with the above-mentioned multi-stage procedure, the **Ninth Consultation** of Member States on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation, covering the period 2012-2016, was launched in 2016 by the Director-General of UNESCO (Circular Letter 4147).

This launch followed the Executive Board’s adoption of specific guidelines for preparing the reports on the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendation, developed by the Secretariat on the basis of framework guidelines (adopted by the Executive Board in 2007 and updated in 2015 by 196 EX/Decision 20).

¹ portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The Secretariat's drafting approach encourages the Member States to provide the most precise information possible.

In compliance with the 2016-2017 timetable for the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations' work on the implementation of UNESCO's standard-setting instruments, which are monitored by the Executive Board, this new report on the results of the implementation of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation will be submitted to the 202nd session of the Executive Board.

It is important to bear in mind that the 1960 Recommendation, which is monitored in conjunction with the 1960 Convention, sought to take into account the difficulties that certain Member States might experience, in particular on account of their federal structure, in ratifying the Convention. Barring differences in wording and in legal scope inherent to the nature of these two categories of instruments, the content of the 1960 Recommendation is identical to that of the 1960 Convention. In addition, the reporting obligation under the provisions of Article VII of the 1960 Convention and the 1960 Recommendation is the same. Consequently, all Member States and not only States Parties to the Convention are expected to take part in the Consultation.

Pursuant to Executive Board Decision 197 EX/Dec. 20 V., the Director-General sent a circular letter inviting Member States to submit to the Organization their reports on the measures taken for the implementation of the two instruments by 30 June 2016. The Director-General stressed that States which are not party to the 1960 Convention are also required to submit a report on the implementation of the 1960 Recommendation.

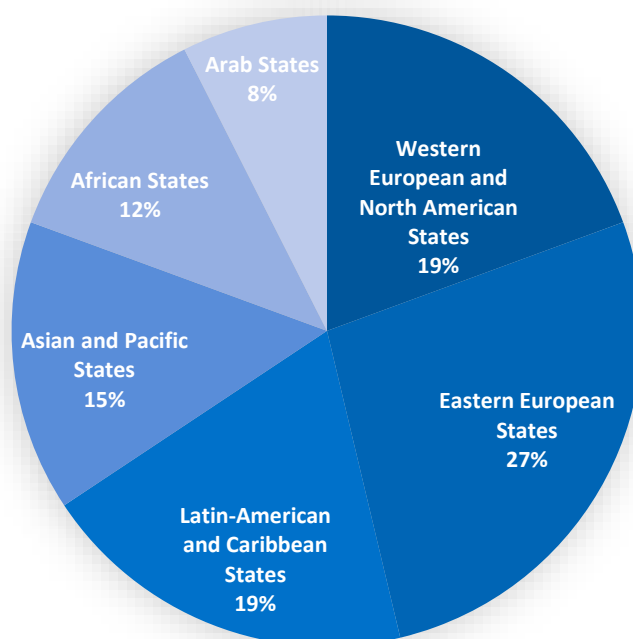
In a follow-up letter (dated 13 July 2016), the Assistant Director-General for Education reminded Member States of their obligation to submit reports as requested and extended the deadline to the end of September 2016. The Secretariat subsequently received several requests for a further extension to enable governments to prepare comprehensive, quality reports. It was therefore decided to extend the deadline until the end of November. The Assistant Director-General for Education notified the Member States of the extension on 24 October 2016.

In order to encourage as many Member States as possible to take part and to facilitate the reporting process, the Secretariat also made this new Consultation **available to Member States online** via a dedicated platform.

NGO partners with official relations with UNESCO were also widely mobilized and encouraged to participate in the Consultation by working with the national authorities.

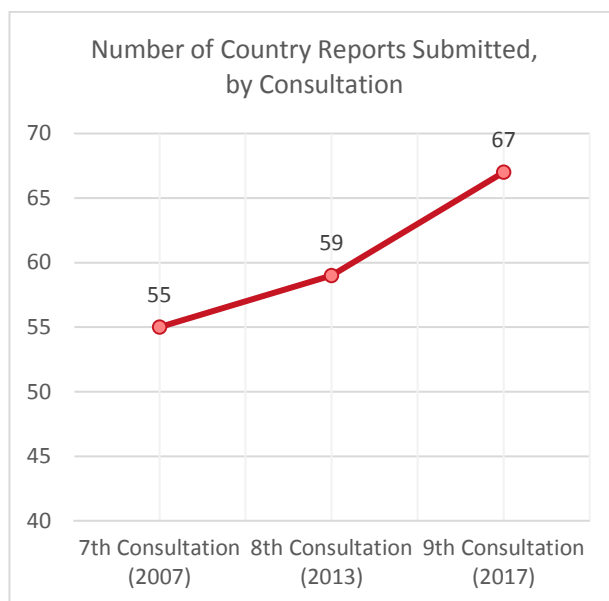
As of 1 June 2017, the Secretariat had received 67 reports from Member States, broken down as follows: 13 from Western European and North American States (Group I); 18 from East European States (Group II); 13 from Latin American and Caribbean States (Group III); 10 from Asian and Pacific States (Group IV); 8 from African States (Group V(a)); and 5 from Arab States (Group V(b)).

Regional Distribution of Country Reports
for the 9th Consultation

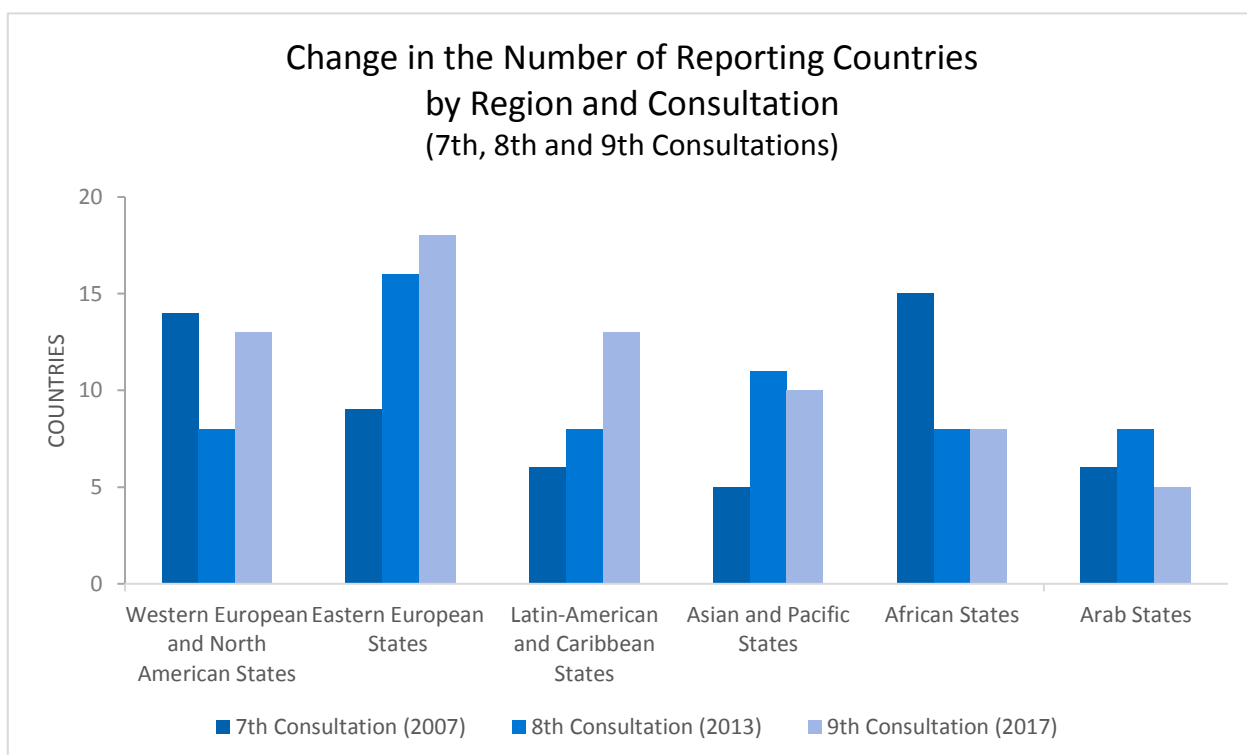


– Western European and North American States (Group I)
Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey
– Eastern European States (Group II)
Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan
– Latin-American and Caribbean States (Group III)
Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
– Asian and Pacific States (Group IV)
Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Cook Islands, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Turkmenistan
– African States (Group V(a))
Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Niger, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia
– Arab States (Group V(b))
Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Tunisia

The reporting rate represents a 13,5% increase in State reporting compared to the previous eighth Consultation (2011-2013), and a more than 21% increase on the seventh Consultation (2006-2007).



This increase in the number of country reports submitted is also reflected in the reporting rate by region. Although the reporting trend varies between regional groups, the data shows an overall improvement compared to the previous eighth Consultation, with the exception of the Asian and Pacific States and Arab States, which did not manage to perform better.



The majority of Member States who have reported are States Parties to the Convention. Altogether, 49 reports on the 1960 Convention and 18 reports on the 1960 Recommendation have been submitted.

67 Reporting Countries for the 9th Consultation

49 reporting on the
Convention

18 reporting on the
Recommendation

As was the case with previous consultations, the national reports vary with regard to the **volume and nature** of information provided and their presentation; while some reports follow the broad layout of the guidelines, others have their own distinctive presentations. The reports received are generally comprehensive, relevant and of good quality.

It is of the utmost importance that UNESCO Member States take part in the periodic consultations. In addition to the fact that they have a constitutional obligation to report to the Organization on the implementing measures they have taken, the reporting exercise provides a good **opportunity to assess** progress made in this area and identify any **persistent challenges** so that corrective measures may be adopted. It also provides an opportunity to establish **constructive dialogue** with all stakeholders – including civil society – and to share best practice in the field. Needless to say, the reporting process at country level must be truly **participatory**.

The information contained in the national reports generally provides the Secretariat with an extremely **valuable resource** for analysis, experience -and knowledge- sharing and research work, above and beyond any formal monitoring mechanisms, thus enabling it to develop **advocacy and information-sharing tools**.

For example, **UNESCO's Global Database on the Right to Education**² is particularly enriched by information provided as part of national consultations. A compendium of practical examples of implementing the provisions of the Convention and of the Recommendation based on the 7th Consultation was published in 2010, and another one **based on the 8th Consultation** was published in 2016.³ These documents present examples taken from national State reports submitted to UNESCO, and therefore from countries which participated in the Consultation. They serve as essential tools for information-sharing, peer-learning and advocacy in connection with the right to education. In addition, based on the 8th Consultation, three series of **thematic mappings** were published on girls' and women's right to education, on the right to education for persons with disabilities, and on the right to education and the teaching profession.⁴

The specific purpose of this report is to present the measures taken by Members States who have submitted monitoring country reports. It is not intended to be exhaustive and cover all Member States, since the consultation involves only those States that participate and share information on the action they have taken.

² www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/right-to-education/database/

³ Available at: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001908/190897E.pdf and unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002451/245196E.pdf

⁴ Available, respectively, at: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002278/227859E.pdf, unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002325/232592E.pdf and unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002348/234820E.pdf

Consequently, it aims to summarize the information provided by Member States in response to the reporting guidelines, highlighting the results of the Consultation and the measures taken with a view to achieving the right to education in the context of the Sustainable Development Agenda and, in particular, SDG4.

III. The Right to Education in the Context of SDG 4- Education 2030

The launch of the ninth Consultation coincided with the advent of the Sustainable Development Agenda, which sets out a transformative and universal vision of education for the next fifteen years, with SDG 4 calling upon States to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’.

As a fundamental and an enabling right, the right to education is one of the key principles underpinning Education 2030. Indeed, an important feature of Education 2030 is that it is rights-based and sees the full enjoyment of human rights as fundamental to achieving sustainable development. Education 2030-SDG 4 aligns the right to education, which has been strongly reaffirmed, with a commitment to making it a reality for all.

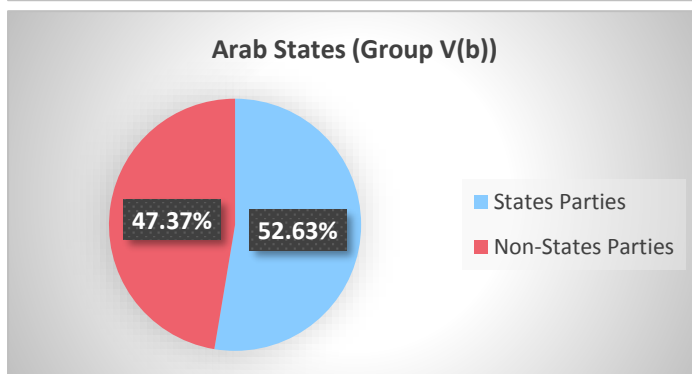
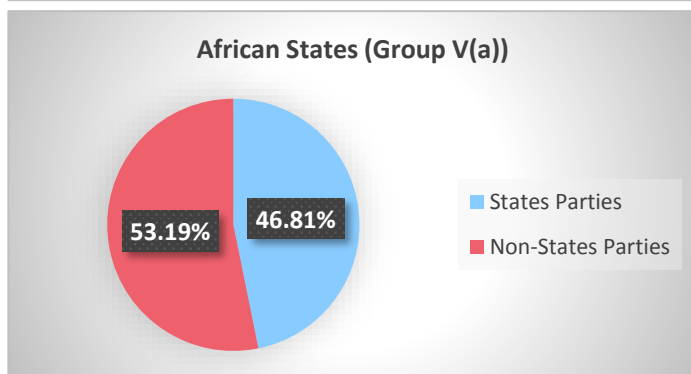
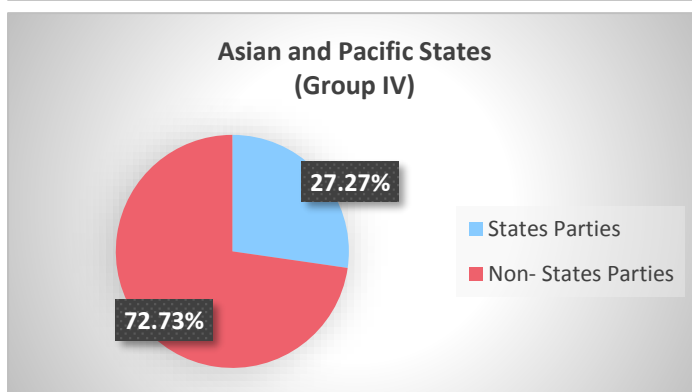
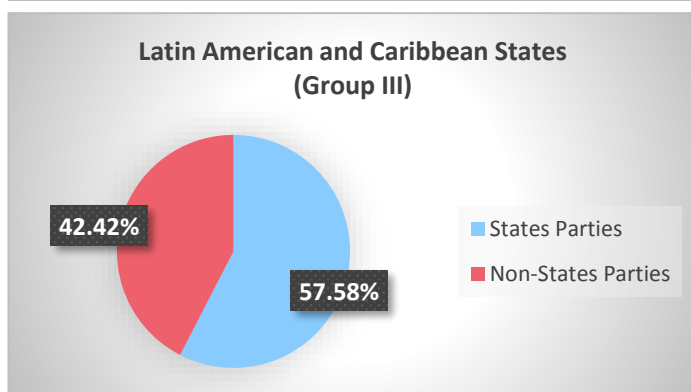
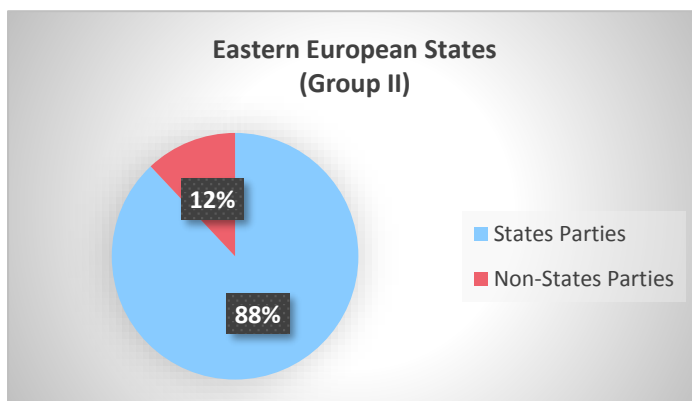
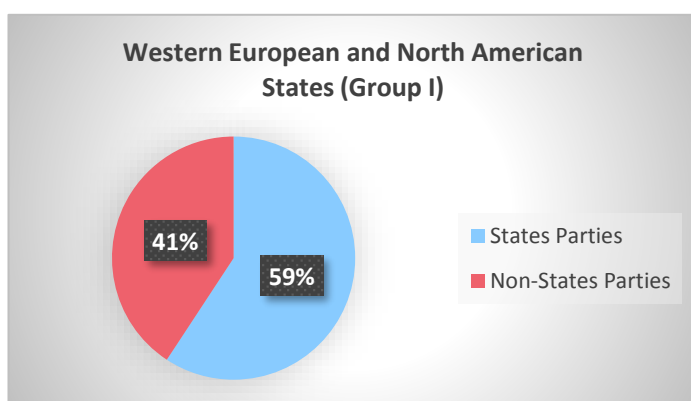
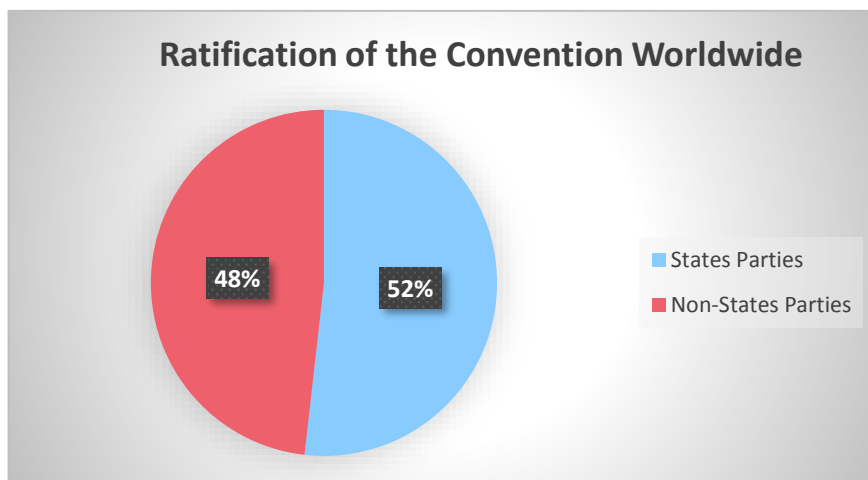
To fulfil the right to education, countries must ensure universal and equal access to inclusive and equitable quality education and learning. This commitment provides a valuable opportunity to stress the role of education as a main driver of development, and its contribution to achieving the other SDGs. However, as a political agenda, Education 2030 does not in itself create legal obligations. Nevertheless, the absence of national legal provisions to fully achieve the SDG 4 targets may undermine the achievement of the education agenda. Conversely, the adoption of a strong legal environment underpinning national policies and strategies would make a significant contribution towards achieving the right to an equitable and inclusive quality education for all.

Indeed, for the effective implementation of Education 2030, States are expected to commit politically to setting up solid national legal and policy frameworks that lay the foundations and create the conditions for delivering sustainable, quality education. Covered by numerous international human rights treaties, the right to education provides a strong legal framework for assisting countries in implementing the education agenda. Special emphasis should therefore be placed on States’ legal obligations to guarantee government accountability and transparency, and to ensure this normative framework translates into concrete action and effectively supports efforts towards meeting SDG 4 and its corresponding targets. Given existent legal obligations under international human rights law, the national frameworks established by States to guide the implementation of Education 2030 must be in compliance with the right to education. In this sense, the development paradigm needs to be changed by adding legal accountability to political commitment. This will help to build stronger momentum and boost national efforts to achieve SDG 4.

In this respect, it is vitally important to monitor the right to education in the context of Education 2030 and the Sustainable Development Agenda, in order to ensure government accountability and transparency. Emphasizing States’ legal obligations will ensure that the objectives and targets will be genuinely implemented. It is in this context that the 1960 Convention – the main instrument for the right to education – has been recognized as a cornerstone of Education 2030.

IV. Ratification of the Convention and domestic legal order

As of 1 June 2017, there were **101 States Parties** to the 1960 Convention.⁵



⁵ The full list of States Parties to the 1960 Convention is available at: en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/cade-list-of-states-parties.pdf

The Year 2015 marked both the 55th Anniversary of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation and the adoption by the international community of the Sustainable Development Agenda. On this occasion, greater awareness was raised of the importance of giving effect to the provisions of these instruments, which was accompanied by a ratification campaign⁶ for the 1960 Convention, and specific actions aimed at providing monitoring assistance.

The ratification campaign for the 1960 Convention was launched by the Director-General (CL 4064) in order to encourage States that are not yet Parties to take the necessary measures for acceding to it. The letter highlighted the fact that, in light of the new Development Agenda, promotion and monitoring of the Convention are vitally important to ensure education that is truly inclusive and for all, and to counter persistent inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes at all levels, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. National-level action aimed at creating equal opportunities and making quality education accessible to all without discrimination must be strongly emphasized; concrete measures taken by Member States in accordance with their legal obligations under the Convention contribute to this process.

The ratification campaign sought to maintain the momentum built up over the past few years in terms of new ratifications. It is certainly encouraging that, since the Seventh Consultation (2006-2007), **12 Member States** have ratified and thus joined the 1960 Convention. As a follow up to the ratification campaign, there was further mobilization to prepare specific ratification plans. UNESCO's Field Offices were strongly encouraged to work closely with national authorities in order to accelerate the ratification process, using material and specific resources developed for this purpose. According to updated information received by UNESCO, some **20 Member States** have launched the ratification process or are initiating steps towards joining the Convention (although two countries have expressed their wish not to join the Convention).

V. Format of the State Reports

The **67 reports submitted** generally follow the Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports⁷ prepared by the Secretariat and approved by the Executive Board in October 2015. Although the general approach is consistent across the various State reports, with some States adhering to the guidelines more closely than others, the number of pages submitted varies considerably.

In total, 2,206 pages were submitted by States as part of this consultation. UNESCO analysed this information, using a comparative approach, to produce this comprehensive report on the right to equitable and inclusive quality education.

⁶ More information is available on the UNESCO Education Sector's website at: www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/right-to-education/monitoring/ratification-campaign/

⁷ *Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports* (bilingual version in French and English) available at: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002442/244245M.pdf

Total number of pages submitted

2,206 pages

Average number of pages

26 reports
≤ 20 pages

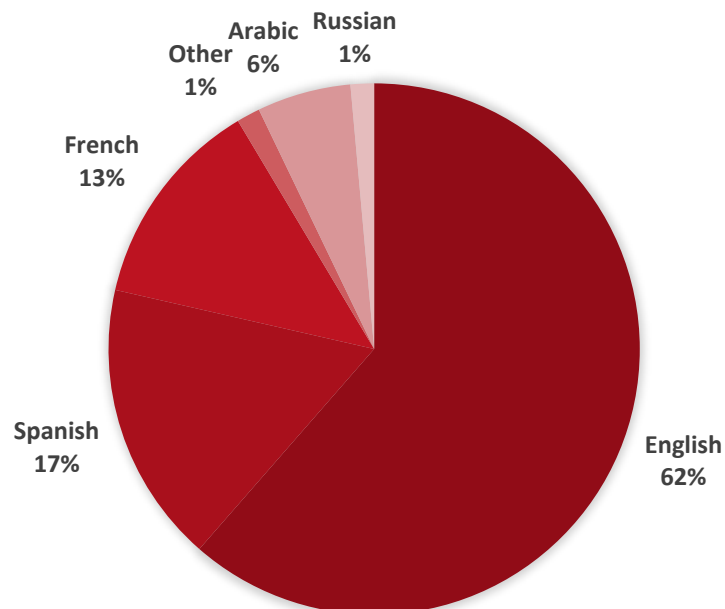
26 reports
of 21-40 pages

6 reports
of 41-60 pages

9 reports
≥ 61 pages

The reports were predominantly submitted in English (43), with the rest of the reports being drafted in Spanish (12), French (9), Arabic (4), Russian (1) or another language (1).⁸

Language



⁸ It should be noted that a few countries submitted their report in two languages.

Regarding the procedure involved in drafting the national reports, several States reported on the actors involved. Interestingly, Serbia stated that its report was produced within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, by collecting materials and following consultations with all sectors, including relevant non-governmental organizations and professional bodies. Similarly, Côte d'Ivoire said that several ministries, representatives of the private sector (religious schools), civil society and the UN all played a part in producing the report. Poland's report was prepared in cooperation with several Ministries, and the draft was shared with civil society organizations and Ombudsmen. The report submitted by Bangladesh was prepared in consultation with UNESCO, other UN agencies, governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. Another point of interest is that Brazil presented the report as a publication.

The scope of the information provided, while generally limited to the application of the Convention and Recommendation, also extended to other areas. In this regard, some States (such as Chile, Gambia, Kuwait and Serbia), presented the economic, historical, geographical and/or political background of their country, in order to contextualize the information provided. Any difficulties encountered were generally included throughout the body of the report rather than solely in the section dedicated to challenges. A few States did not manage to submit complete information on all the sections covered by the Guidelines, focusing instead on specific issues or levels of education.

Furthermore, some States not only referred specifically to the information they provided in their national reports for the Eighth Consultation (Czech Republic, Germany, Georgia, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden) but also referred to reports written for other mechanisms and organizations, which reveals the transversal relevance of this report. Other States referred to the UNESCO Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report or to their national EFA report, or cited the observations made by United Nations human rights bodies.

Several States (Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cook Islands, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Gambia, Georgia, Kuwait, Mexico, Monaco, Niger, Pakistan, Qatar, Serbia, Sweden, Ukraine, Venezuela) made extensive use of diagrams, tables, charts or graphs to give either a statistical perspective on the information provided and/or an overview of the current educational situation in their respective countries. Annexes were sometimes included in order to provide links to useful websites such as those relating to legislation, publications regarding education, references or other pertinent information.

Nine Member States (namely Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Hungary, Latvia, Moldova, Sweden, Turkey and Venezuela) submitted their report online via the dedicated platform.

VI. From non-discrimination towards equal educational opportunities

It is interesting to note that the 1960 Convention and Recommendation commit State Parties not only to forbid all forms of discrimination in education but also to achieve equal educational opportunities. Indeed, the Convention requires countries to go beyond the simple prohibition of discrimination and to ensure this fully translates into concrete reality.

In this context, discrimination may be understood as ‘any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing access to and equality of treatment in education’.⁹ In light of SDG 4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, the Convention has a significant role to play in guiding countries towards realizing the right to education for all without discrimination or exclusion, and promoting equity and inclusion. Efforts made by countries to address the prevalence of discrimination in education will be paramount in order to break down all barriers to education and to achieve universal access to inclusive and quality education.

Defining and enshrining non-discrimination

Almost all reporting States have adopted **constitutional laws and legislative texts that prohibit discrimination in education** and these texts are, to a large extent, based on the grounds specified in both the 1960 Convention and the 1960 Recommendation. For example, the Constitution of Cuba sets out that ‘Discrimination based on race, color of the skin, sex, national origin, religious creeds, or any other type offending human dignity, is prohibited and punished by the law. The State’s institutions educate all, from the earliest age, in the principle of the equality of human beings.’ Similarly, the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo states that ‘No Congolese person may, in matters of education or access to public functions or any other matter, be subject to any discriminatory measure, whether it results from a statute or from a measure of the executive, on the ground of his/her religion, family origin, social condition, residence, views or political convictions, or membership of a certain race, ethnicity, tribe, cultural or linguistic minority.’

Some countries go even further and include additional grounds in order to cover non-discrimination more comprehensively. This is the case, for instance, of Sweden, where two new grounds for discrimination – transgender identity/expression and age – have been added to the Discrimination Act, which already banned discrimination in the educational system based on a person’s sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability or sexual orientation.

From the reports, it appears that the countries have adopted different approaches to banning discrimination. Many countries have either promulgated general anti-discrimination laws applicable to all contexts, or have adopted laws and provisions specific to education and/or to certain groups. A few countries have reported, instead, on the general principle of equality protected by law or on the fact that laws regarding the right to education apply to all and, thereby, imply compliance with the principle of non-discrimination. While there is clearly an intrinsic link between the principles of equality and non-discrimination, it should be noted a

⁹ Convention against Discrimination in Education, Article 1

reference to the principle of equality alone is, in most settings, insufficient to adequately and effectively counter discrimination. Legal frameworks that enshrine both principles offer much stronger legal protection and a more supportive legal environment.

A wide range of examples of such legislation has been reported on by some countries. Hungary has adopted the Act on Equal Treatment and Equal Opportunities, where segregation in education is explicitly prohibited. Similarly, one of the key objectives of its Public Education Act is the prevention of social segregation by means of education. According to a new regulation, which came into force in 2013, anti-discriminative measures must be incorporated into the educational development plans of every school area. In Bulgaria, the Pre-school and School Education Act (PSEA) which entered into force in August 2016, guarantees equal access and inclusion of every child and every student, equality and non-discrimination and preservation of ethno-cultural diversity. In Chile, specific gender-based discriminations are prohibited by a Supreme Decree of the Ministry of Education, which forbids discrimination against pregnant students or mothers. Additionally, in order to ensure the non-discriminatory treatment of resident foreign nationals in relation to recognition of qualifications and grades, Chile has signed bilateral agreements on recognition of professional qualifications and academic grades with Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador in recent years. Each of these agreements includes an article on the effects of recognition to prevent discrimination within the meaning of the 1960 Convention. In Gambia, the Women Act of 2010 requires the Government ‘to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee equal opportunity and access to education’. In Latvia, pursuant to the Education Law, differential treatment has been prohibited, thus guaranteeing Latvian and foreign citizens and stateless persons in Latvia the right to acquire education regardless of material and social status, race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, religious and political affiliation, state of health, occupation or place of residence.

Efforts have also been deployed by some countries to combat discrimination more comprehensively, especially in terms of the curriculum. In Georgia, for example, a November 2014 amendment to the Law on General Education provides that the national curriculum must be academic, objective and non-discriminative. In Malta, the Equality for Men and Women Act states that ‘It shall be unlawful for any educational establishment or for any other entity providing vocational training or guidance to discriminate against any person in the selection and implementation of the curricula’. The law also makes educational establishments and entities providing vocational training responsible for ensuring, within the limits of their competence, that curricula and textbooks do not promote discrimination. In Norway, the Gender Equality Act states that learning materials shall be based on *gender* equality. According to the proposal made by the Government, the provision will be expanded to all discrimination grounds, and will include oral teaching as well as printed learning materials.

In addition, it is important to note that the principle of non-discrimination covers not only laws, but also the administrative practices and individual acts of the public authorities. Likewise, it is important that such non-discrimination laws should not be restricted to public educational institutions since that would compromise the objective of the 1960 Convention. Consequently, the principle of non-discrimination in the 1960 Convention should accordingly be interpreted in such a way that discriminatory acts in private institutions are also prohibited.

Some countries have provided information demonstrating how **regulations could help to strengthen the legal principle of non-discrimination** when applied to the school environment. For example, in Serbia, an entire set of by-laws (rulebooks) has been developed to prevent discrimination in education occurring in specific situations. By way of example, the Rulebook on more detailed criteria enabling an employee, student or another person in an institution to detect different forms of discrimination (2016) serves as a comprehensive document enabling all participants in the education system to identify the various forms of discrimination they may face in specific situations. It is worth noting that this rulebook defines and regulates discrimination in education, the right to protection from both direct and indirect discrimination, violations of the principle of equal rights and obligations, hate speech, as well as harassment and degrading treatment.

It is also interesting to note that some countries have further specified situations where the principle of non-discrimination also applies. In that regard, Latin American countries provide interesting examples. In Ecuador, the right to non-discrimination also applies to parents. The Organic Law on Intercultural Education states that parents have ‘the right to be treated respectfully without any kind of violence or discrimination by authorities, teachers and other members of the educational community’. The law also commits teachers to embracing the principle of non-discrimination and recalls that is the duty of teachers to ‘promote in the academic environment a culture of respect for diversity and eradication of attitudes and practices relating to the various manifestations of discrimination, and of violence against anyone in the educational community, safeguarding in addition the interests of learners without sacrificing their own interests’. In Bolivia, under the terms of a ministerial resolution adopted in 2015, non-discrimination also involves a strict ban on entrance exams for the registration of new pupils at public and private educational institutions. Additionally, denying registration to children of single, divorced or unmarried parents, or those belonging to a particular religion, on any other discriminatory factor is forbidden by law.

Besides the adoption of legal provisions and regulations, States have adopted **relevant policies and measures to overcome discrimination**. European countries have been particularly active in recent years when it comes to devising projects and strategies to prevent discrimination. In Spain, the project ‘CORE- Understanding discrimination, recognizing diversity’ aims to prevent discrimination and violence, as well as strengthen equality in relation to sexual identity. In France, the actions of the French Ministry of National Education in the field of non-discrimination fall within the framework of the French Government’s action plan against racism and anti-Semitism¹⁰, which was launched in April 2015. One of the priorities of the action plan is to ‘shape citizens through transmission, education and culture’. In Slovakia, the Pedagogical Organisational Instructions of the school year 2015/2016 require stakeholders to ‘consistently implement the prohibition of all forms of discrimination and segregation in schools and school facilities’ and to ‘eliminate adverse phenomena such as spatial, organizational, physical or symbolic exclusion or separation of Roma children and pupils from other children and pupils on the basis of their ethnicity (frequently in combination with social disadvantage)’.

¹⁰ *La République mobilisée contre le racisme et l’antisémitisme*

Another interesting measure reported by several States is the organization of **working groups and consultations with stakeholders** to learn how to combat discrimination. For example, in Hungary, the Anti-Segregation Roundtable – involving governmental and civil professional stakeholders – was established in June 2013. The aim of the government was to go beyond the legal prohibition of segregation and to take effective measures to eliminate de facto segregation that bars disadvantaged children from inclusion. A working group was set up in 2015 to develop a medium-term desegregation strategy, involving explicit measures and an implementation plan. Similarly, in Norway, the Minister of Education and Research appointed a working group mandated to advise on Norwegian schools' work against anti-Semitism, racism and discrimination. The recommendations in the working group's report were used to develop a training programme addressing discrimination, anti-Semitism, racism and undemocratic attitudes and behaviour.

Access to justice is a fundamental human right. It plays a vital role both in itself and in ensuring that other rights can be claimed. The right to education is no exception; its effectivity relies heavily on the availability of legal ways to challenge violations, particularly when discrimination occurs. Across the globe, countries have developed legal protection and remedies against discrimination. In Cuba, the Penal Code provides for sentences of six months' to two years' imprisonment or 200 to 500 daily fines, or both, for any person discriminating against another or promoting or inciting discrimination. In the Czech Republic, the Code of Civil Procedure provides for a refutable presumption according to which the petitioner does not have to prove the alleged ground of discrimination. The accused therefore has to refute both the alleged facts indicating discrimination and the alleged reason. A commendable amendment to the legislation on education was adopted in January 2014 in Poland. In order to ensure that the right to education is respected, the law sets out the recruitment procedure for pupils, including the appeal procedure in the case of refusal to admit a candidate, and rules governing the disclosure and processing of participants' personal recruitment data.

However, since access to justice may well be even further out of reach than access to education, some countries have reported on other institutions to which complaints can be addressed more easily. In Chile, the National Education Quality Assurance System was established by law in August 2011. It provides a response to requests for advice relating to discrimination in the school context, provides information and training activities relating to arbitrary discrimination, and deals with complaints of discriminatory acts as well as monitoring education legislation's compliance with the requirement to outlaw arbitrary discrimination. It can also apply sanctions when discrimination in the school environment is in violation of education legislation. In Sweden, a pupil who has been a victim of discrimination or degrading treatment can lodge a complaint to the Child and School Student Representative, who can investigate and may represent the pupil in court, claim for damages from the principal organizer, and pursue these matters with regard to municipalities and independent principal organizers.

Towards realizing equality of educational opportunities

Delivering equality of educational opportunities is the ultimate goal of the 1960 Convention. To do so, Article 4 specifies the measures that should be adopted by States to promote this objective. It includes making primary education free and compulsory, making secondary education in its different forms generally available and accessible to all, making higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of individual ability and assuring compliance by all with the obligation to attend school as prescribed by law. It also requires States to ensure that standards of education and conditions relating to the quality of education are equivalent in all public educational institutions of the same level, encouraging the education of persons who have not received or completed primary education, and providing for teacher training without discrimination. These requirements are also central to delivering the education 2030 agenda and ensuring it is genuinely underpinned by inclusion and equity.

In general, the vast majority of States reported on the provision of free and compulsory education as a way to ensure equal access to education for all. Indeed, ensuring that access to education is provided on a non-fee-paying and mandatory basis is crucial to ensuring that education is not a privilege of the few but a basic entitlement for all. Investment in pre-school education increasingly appears essential to establish equal opportunities for all from the very beginning. In Hungary, in order to prevent early school dropout rates and in line with the Act on Public Education, since September 2015 kindergarten has been made mandatory from the age of three instead of five. Similarly, in Bulgaria, to ensure an equal start for school beginners, the law provides for mandatory pre-school training two years before entering first grade, but not before the child has reached the age of 5. Since equal opportunities should not be limited to pre-university levels, Kuwait reported on laws defending the right to higher education and lifelong learning and on the promotion of access to university faculties for males and females equally. Interestingly, in Armenia, the parent shall be responsible — as prescribed by law — for failure to ensure the right of the child to general education (or failure to enrol in school) before reaching the age of 16. Because the equality of educational opportunities is strongly dependent on the existence and availability of schools, some States reported on measures to increase the provision of public schools (for example, Pakistan and Zambia). In Pakistan, the National Plan of Action to accelerate education-related MDGs aims to enrol new students by building an additional classroom.

National action can also involve targeting specific groups that are more likely to face obstacles when trying to get an education. Consequently, a number of States have detailed their efforts in adopting laws and measures to guarantee educational opportunities to **foreign nationals, refugees and asylum-seekers**. In South Africa, regarding the admission of non-South African citizens, the policy states that the South African Schools Act applies equally to learners who are not citizens of the Republic of South Africa and whose parents are in possession of a permit for temporary or permanent residence issued by the Department of Home Affairs. In Serbia, in accordance with the law on the Foundations of the Education System, foreign nationals shall exercise their right to education under the same conditions and in the same manner as prescribed by the law applicable to the citizens of the Republic of Serbia. In the Netherlands, the obligation to attend school also applies to the children of asylum seekers and illegal residents. Throughout the country, there are several schools and

institutes that provide specific educational provisions for these children, including intensive training in the Dutch language and specific individual pupil guidance. These provisions are offered in regular schools that receive additional support or in separate classes for this target group only. Similarly, in Denmark, children of school age who will be staying in the country for at least six months are subject to compulsory school attendance. Asylum-seeking children are taught in schools at the asylum centres, but they can also attend public schools if certain conditions are met. Upon arrival in Denmark, introductory tuition is offered at the Red Cross asylum school, in order to clarify each child's educational level and provide the children with a basic knowledge of the Danish language and Danish society. Subsequently, tuition is offered at the normal Red Cross asylum classes or at public schools, providing the parents accept the offer and the school in question deems the child to be qualified.

Numerous States have also devised **supporting measures, such as financial incentives and fellowships**, to further promote equal educational opportunities, especially for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and to encourage them to continue their education. In Bulgaria, scholarships have been awarded since 2013 to students of daily and individual forms of education who have completed their primary education. Monthly scholarships are provided for educational achievements, to support access to education and prevent dropping out of school, and to support students with permanent disabilities and orphan students. One-time grants may also be provided to help students to address any individual social circumstances affecting their access to education, as well as for the achievement of excellence in school or in extracurricular activities. In Chile, numerous other scholarship schemes are available, including the Preferential School Subsidy, which has been established by law. This preferential subsidy is designed to improve the quality of education in an educational establishment by means of a special allocation for each priority student, at the first or second level of transition from pre-school, primary and secondary education. For this subsidy, priority students are deemed to be students whose economic situation impedes their chances of embarking upon education, and the subsidy is determined annually by the relevant authority. Macedonia provides an interesting example of inter-ministerial cooperation on this issue. The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy have worked together to design a Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, which is conditional on subject secondary education enrolment and attendance, for students from families benefiting from social financial assistance schemes. It aims to improve access and quality of education for students as well as to boost student retention rates and to cut dropout rates. Zambia provides bursaries to orphans and vulnerable learners, and 60 percent of beneficiaries are female learners. This is to ensure that the strategy promotes female participation in the education system. In Croatia, the National Programme for the Roma sets out instructions for awarding certain advantages to Roma children during the process of enrolment in secondary school. In this respect, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports awards scholarships to all secondary school students who are members of the Roma national minority.

Additionally, numerous States have taken **positive and affirmative action to ensure equality of opportunities**. In Portugal, the ‘Educational Territories for Priority Intervention Programme’ provides targeted support for 17% of Portuguese schools in disadvantaged economic and cultural contexts. In the Russian Federation, affirmative action at higher education level has been devised in the form of quotas. Starting with the 2014/15 academic year, all higher educational institutions set up enrolment quotas for students who were specially entitled to admission to their institutions (accounting for at least 10% of all government-funded enrolment vacancies). For example, in the 2014/15 academic year, students with disabilities enrolled under the quotas accounted for 3.8% of total enrolment. Another example is Hungary, where, under the Higher Education Act, preferential treatment in the form of a certain number of additional points awarded in the admission procedure has been introduced for specific categories of persons. These categories include applicants with disabilities, (socially) disadvantaged/multiple disadvantaged applicants, persons on unpaid leave for childcare purposes or in receipt of pregnancy-maternity benefits, childcare allowance, child-rearing allowance or childcare benefits. It was however specified that preferential treatment can only be provided in connection with the standard admission application assessment and does not involve exemption from fulfilment of basic academic requirements.

VII. Inclusion in education

Guaranteeing inclusion in education was a priority under the previous education agenda established by the Dakar Framework and remains paramount in the new sustainable development agenda - Education 2030. Article 1(a) of the 1960 Convention specifies that depriving any person or group of people access to education of any type or at any level counts as an act of discrimination. Moreover, Article 4 legally binds States Parties to formulate, develop and apply a national policy, which, by methods appropriate to the circumstances and to national usage, will tend to promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in the field of education. These provisions account for the expansion of the right to education for all at country level, by engaging States Parties to make their respective education systems more inclusive.

Inclusive dimensions of the right to education are important with regard to both access to education and the way it is dispensed, and it appears clear that inclusion serves as a guiding principle for countries in adopting and implementing their education laws and policies.

Most frequently reported measures to improve inclusion in education:



Immigrants and refugees

Immigrants and refugees often experience great difficulty in gaining access to education, mostly owing to language, administrative and financial barriers. Yet continuity between learning experiences is essential to provide effective and meaningful learning. In recent years, several States were presented with a further challenge with the increase in the influx of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and asylum-seekers, often with little formal education.

Education is protected under international human rights law as a universal and fundamental right. This means that everyone has the right to education, including refugees, immigrants, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people (IDP). The 1960 Convention affirms clearly that the principles of non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities are central to the full realization of the right to education. Article 1 of the Convention explicitly prohibits any discrimination based on, inter alia, ‘social origin’, ‘economic condition’ or ‘birth’, so that educational opportunities are truly accessible to all. There are also specific provisions recalling States’ duty to respect and guarantee refugees’ right to education: the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and specifically Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, with a view to achieving SDG 4, the Incheon Declaration emphasizes that Member States shall commit themselves to ‘developing more inclusive, responsive and resilient education system to meet the needs of children, youth and adults [...] including internally displaced persons and refugees’. With regard to the children of migrant workers, Article 30 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, guarantees their right to education.

Several States (Armenia, Bulgaria, Chile, Estonia, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, South Africa, Uzbekistan) have reported on this issue and have adopted key measures to ensure their inclusion in their educational systems or to provide them with educational opportunities. Ukraine reported that migrants and refugees have the same right to education as Ukrainian citizens and can access individual study programmes during the adaptation period.

Knowledge of the national language is deemed essential to integrate these groups of people in terms of their continued learning and development and to enable them to participate in society. For this reason, numerous States (Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Germany, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden Poland and Portugal) have provided **language classes** to newcomers. For example, in Norway, language learning has to comply with the national curriculum in Norwegian language and social studies for adult immigrants, and must be provided within three months after settlement. Norwegian language training and social studies form a vital part of the introductory programme, which runs for a full year on a full-time basis. A scheme has also been introduced specifically for refugees, to achieve swift integration into social and working life by giving newly arrived refugees between 18 and 55 years of age a statutory right and obligation to full-time training for basic qualifications.

With regard to migrants, Germany has adopted a targeted support strategy for poorer-performing pupils, which focuses particularly on children and young people from migrant backgrounds. The strategy prioritizes cooperation with parents and migrant organisations, and provides intercultural day-care centres for children and schools.

Several initiatives to help refugees have also been implemented. In Bulgaria, in order to successfully integrate children following enrolment, the host school takes into consideration the differences between the educational system of the country of origin and the Bulgarian educational system and provides additional support in general subjects. In Poland, in September 2015, the Ministry of National Education and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) organised a conference on foreign children in the Polish education system. The conference, attended by school heads, teachers and NGO representatives, touched upon such issues such as better preparation of schools, teachers and the entire school environment to accept foreign nationals, the need to employ multicultural teachers or assistants at schools, and solutions for teaching Polish to newly arrived foreigners. In 2015, regional education authorities held conferences on educating foreign children in Polish schools. Similarly, in Iran, projects were implemented to identify the social and cultural problems of refugee school pupils and their families. Fifteen provincial exhibitions were organised, showcasing the achievements and abilities of refugee pupils as well as their individual skills. The objective was to enhance their self-confidence and dignity, and to empower them for their return to their countries of origin.

Many countries have adopted commendable measures to remove obstacles to accessing education, especially heavy administrative procedures, such as the recognition and equivalence of diplomas. This is particularly welcome as it enables refugee students to access education more rapidly without having to wait long periods before resuming their education. With that aim in mind, significant educational measures have been taken in Portugal to cope with the migratory crisis and ensure refugee students can be rapidly integrated in the

education system. Specific guidelines for granting the equivalence of qualifications have been adopted and, in parallel, the ‘Not Just Numbers’ Project has been devised to foster knowledge about migration and asylum. In Armenia, access to education has been guaranteed to school age children even in the absence of qualifying documents. Furthermore, young people who have lost a graduation document acquired in Syria have been provided with the opportunity to study in the final year of an institution of general education and receive a graduation document. In order to ensure maximum integration, all refugees have been centralized in several schools, where they have been provided with individual psychological as well as educational and methodical assistance. Similar measures have also been taken by Iran. The State has enrolled a considerable number of students with no identification or citizenship documents, providing them with medical examinations, vaccinations and social security booklets. School uniforms and stationery were provided for refugees as well as financial help. Training courses on cultural interactions, health education campaigns and life skills training courses were also organized.

Regarding internally displaced people, Iraq adopted numerous measures such as providing buildings for educational purposes in Kurdistan, providing school supplies (textbooks, stationery), furniture and free compact discs containing all course material to compensate for the poor delivery of books to displaced students. In addition, coordination was organized with the Ministry of Migration and the Displaced to provide 1,000 teaching caravans reaching people who have been displaced. Finally, since accessibility is a major challenge, Iraq has provided funds to transport displaced students from their place of residence to school, thus ensuring their education can continue.

Students with special needs

People with disabilities face specific challenges in the pursuit of their right to education, resulting in reduced access to mainstream education. Specific provisions of international human rights treaties guarantee their right to education and encourage countries to adopt an approach that is inclusive to all, including those with disabilities.

As stated above, the States Parties to the 1960 Convention are committed to ‘formulate, develop and apply a national policy which, by methods appropriate to the circumstances and to national usage, will tend to promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in the matter of education’ (Art. 4). Article 4 further states that ‘the right to education is thus universal and does not admit of any exclusion or discrimination. It needs to be upheld more emphatically, and its all-inclusive dimensions need to be brought into prominence in order that all those who remain deprived of it become its beneficiaries. In fact, promoting the right to education universally in that perspective is an obligation of Governments.’ Moreover, Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) enshrines the right to education for persons with disabilities – a recognition by the States Parties that in delivering this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, they must provide an inclusive education system at all levels. There is growing realization that, since this group constitutes an important segment of society, there should be laws and policies to ensure people with disabilities have access to all levels of education.

Generally, the approaches taken to special education are those best adapted to students' individual needs. States reported that children with disabilities have the option to attend mainstream schools or special schools/programmes (Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Georgia, Germany, Japan, Latvia, Macedonia, Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, Turkmenistan), although policies to encourage integration in mainstream schooling are a priority for some States (Denmark, Ecuador, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden). Special-education schools follow the same basic curriculum used in the general education system, with some adaptations (Bolivia, Cuba, Croatia, Macedonia), or a curriculum that is tailored to their needs (such as Honduras and Serbia). In this regard, in Bolivia, educational institutions with pupils that have disabilities and/or learning difficulties must tailor their methodological curricula to reflect individual characteristics and needs, in coordination with their special education centres. Additionally, auxiliary assistance is provided for in certain States (Armenia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Gambia, Macedonia, Russia, Sweden). To this end, in Armenia, schools are equipped with rooms where individual classes are held for children with special educational needs, organized according to an Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) involving additional specialists: special pedagogues (speech therapist, hearing and visual impairment specialists) social care teachers and psychologists.

Plans to improve special-needs teacher training have been made or implemented (Afghanistan, Brazil, France, Ecuador, Gambia, Georgia, Zambia). In Ecuador, for example, teachers receive training in specific methodological and evaluation tools for teaching children with disabilities, which ensures quality and humane care. In Zambia, the implementation of the Inclusive School Programme equips teachers with skills to enable them to handle learners with special educational needs.

In order to improve learning outcomes, adequate materials and technological innovations have been made available (Bangladesh, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Serbia and South Africa) or financially supported (Brazil) to cater for the diverse needs of learners. In Cuba, the whole network of special-education centres has benefited from the introduction of information and communications technology (ICT). Computers have been installed in all centres, with adjustments and special programmes where needed; these include touch screens, smart boards, switches, Braille printers and voice recognition software for schools serving blind students. In Denmark, through the 'Best possible transitions' initiative, a seamless transition for pupils is promoted through the loan of an 'IT backpack' – a computer with specialized software made available to the student via state-sector schemes and which the student may take to other educational establishments in order to ensure continuous support. Additionally, in South Africa, the White Paper on Inclusive Education takes into account the inclusion of learners with disabilities within the education system. The Department has printed and delivered Braille workbooks to a number of special schools.

Some States have taken measures to ensure that access to education is provided through adaptable infrastructure that meets the needs of children with disabilities (Armenia, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Estonia, Gambia, Georgia, Honduras, Macedonia, Qatar, Russia and Zambia). A specific example of this is Qatar, which provided the entrances of all school buildings with ramps to facilitate access for persons with motor disabilities; toilet facilities in school buildings adapted to the special needs of students, teachers and

administrative staff; elevators (in 80% of schools) and designated parking spaces for persons with special needs. Schools built after 2010 are designed to meet standards for persons with visual impairment, including installation of tactile paving at entrances and exits, and ensuring that elevators can be used easily. In Russia, in November 2015, the Ministry of Education and Science issued a regulation establishing the rules on disabled access to various facilities (administrative buildings, structures, installations and building facilities). The regulation approved the accessibility indicators for educational institutions and for education services to persons with disabilities. Estonia reported making funding available to local governments for small-scale solutions to adapt their school buildings to the needs of children with special needs.

Several States reported providing financial benefits for special-needs children in order to ensure their access to education (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Honduras, Ireland, Niger and Norway) and/or targeting a local government or school that is working to improve access for children with special needs (Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Estonia, Germany, Macedonia, New Zealand, Poland and Sweden). In Bangladesh for example, children with disabilities receive an education stipend.

Some States have opted to establish a system to identify the needs and individual characteristics of special-needs students through, for example, the collection of data, consultations or monitoring (Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, Cook Islands, Czech Republic, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Georgia, Hungary, Honduras, Zambia). An example of this is a measure taken by Australia through the 'Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability', an annual data collection exercise whereby schools and governments report in a nationally consistent way on the number of students in Australian schools requiring an educational adjustment to access education because of a disability. In Cuba, psychological and pedagogical analysis for special-needs students is the responsibility of Analysis and Guidance Centres, which seek to provide quality analysis with a preventive perspective, through guidance, monitoring and specialized assessment, with well-trained specialists leading methodological teams at the various levels of education. In Ecuador, schools are being supervised and monitored to ensure that they are inclusive and comply with accessibility standards for persons with disabilities and provide adequate architectural, technological and communication environments to that end. Another important aspect is the launching of inclusion support units, which assist in the identification of special-needs students with disabilities and place them in the most appropriate institutions.

Interestingly, Bolivia, Honduras and Venezuela reported on measures to remove the stigma associated with disability. In Bolivia, school curricula must include awareness-raising and inclusion of people with disabilities, a process that must be supported in special education centres in the corresponding fields. Similarly, Venezuela, in order to address the exclusionary and negative connotation of difference, changed the terminology from 'person with a disability' to 'functional diversity'. Functional diversity is deemed to be a term that emphasizes what is common to everyone, since diversity is characteristic of what is human, cultural and social. In addition, as part of an innovative programme in special education public policy, Venezuela has created 113 Centres for the Diagnosis, Orientation, Education and Follow-up of Functional Diversity, which are educational spaces for the comprehensive care of children, adolescents, young people and adults with functional diversity. They are staffed by an interdisciplinary group of experts trained to assess biological, physiological and social aspects in a

concrete socio-historical context, through a critical educational approach enabling the educational response to be contextualized in the curriculum.

Children in hospitals are also guaranteed the right to education. Some States adopted measures to ensure there are hospital schools and classrooms for boys, girls and young people who are hospitalized (Chile, Croatia, Cuba and Turkey). In Croatia, home schooling is provided for children who cannot attend regular classes due to major motor impairment or chronic or progressive illness. In some cases, live stream teaching is organized. Similarly, in Cuba, children with severe physical-motor disabilities are taught at home by mobile teachers.

States have also taken measures for specific groups of children with disabilities. Denmark adopted specific measures for children with Asperger Syndrome. A special upper secondary programme consists of classes with no more than 10-12 students in each class, and with classrooms arranged in such a way that students can retire and work individually, when necessary. In addition, each student has a mentor.

With regard to students with hearing impairments, measures were taken by Bulgaria, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador and Turkey. Bulgaria, for example, has taken steps to improve access to information and communication for children and students by providing funding for Bulgarian sign language research, with a view to its use as a natural language. Training has also been given on the use and popular promotion of sign language in Bulgarian society. In Ecuador, a bicultural bilingual education model is used for students with hearing impairments. The written form of Spanish functions as a second language for students with hearing impairments and reportedly helps them to find motivation, meaning and social value in the school environment.

Children from poor households

Children from poor households often lack the resources or social integration that provide access to education and enable them to pursue it. These school-age children may be forced to work in order to support their families, or live in rural areas and therefore lack the resources to travel, or struggle with social exclusion at school. States have reported implementing both financial measures to support access to and pursuit of education, as well as programmes to encourage integration.

Since school fees are not the only economic obstacle for families sending their children to school, many States have devised policies to seek to eliminate other education-related costs. For example, some States (notably, Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Chile, Estonia, Guatemala and Serbia), provide free textbooks or school materials for each pupil in order to help address the social burden for children of poor families and to promote school attendance. Serbia took a step further by giving free textbooks to those not attending school, on the proviso that they must be returned. Interestingly, in Slovakia, since September 2016, allowances have only been provided for pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds who have been assessed by a centre for pedagogical-psychological counselling and prevention and who have been placed in a 'typical class' in a basic school. Other States reported on allocating dormitory places for disadvantaged students (Australia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Iran) or supplying meals (Bangladesh, Chile, Gambia, Estonia, Haiti, Iran, Côte d'Ivoire, Latvia,

South Africa and Venezuela). To this end, in Chile, the School Meals Programme is intended to provide a daily meals service for vulnerable students in subsidized municipal and private educational establishments during term time, at pre-school, primary and secondary level, in a bid to improve school attendance and help prevent school dropout.

Several States reported on providing further financial aid. In this regard, in Argentina, the Universal Child Allowance has been allocated to vulnerable families with children under 18 years old since 2009. It is granted subject to an annual school certification and health checks for the children. In 2015, over 3 million children in total had received the allowance. Other States, such as Haiti, Portugal and Romania have reported on the existence of a subsidy policy and/or specific financial support mechanisms. In Romania, a government decision of 2012 provides for subsidized school attendance costs for high school students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, and provides financial support, mainly in the form of scholarships.

The report submitted by Bulgaria contains an interesting inclusive measure for disadvantaged students – the gradual introduction of a full-day approach to the school day. This measure covered the period from the school years 2010/2011 to 2015/2016 and concerned pupils from grades 1 to 6. Under this approach, compulsory classes are combined with forms of self-study, interest activities and organized recreation. This Ministry of Education measure ensures that all students, including those from vulnerable groups, benefit from various development opportunities and conditions that are better suited to school life. South Africa developed a school-level handbook to support the implementation of the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Programme, in order to turn schools into socially inclusive and supportive spaces. The programme helps the education system respond systematically to vulnerable learners' needs. In Slovakia, an amendment to the School Act of June 2015 introduced measures to improve the education of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The amendment specifically prohibits placing a child or pupil in a special school if the child's special educational needs are only a result of growing up in a socially disadvantaged environment. Lastly, in Malta, Outreach and Detached youth work services are also being developed to cater for the needs of socio-economically excluded and hard-to-reach young people.

For children residing in rural areas, access to education is the biggest challenge. Some States (Chile, Gambia and Zambia) have adopted measures to increase education coverage in these areas. In Gambia, small communities are provided with facilities that enable them to attend multi-grade schools ad locum. Iran developed distance learning and semi-face-to-face education centres. Guatemala also has a distance education programme for young people in rural areas, using audiovisual media. Another measure to ensure access is the provision of transport (sometimes partially or fully financed by the State) as reported by several countries (Bulgaria, Chile, Gambia, Haiti, Iran and Latvia).

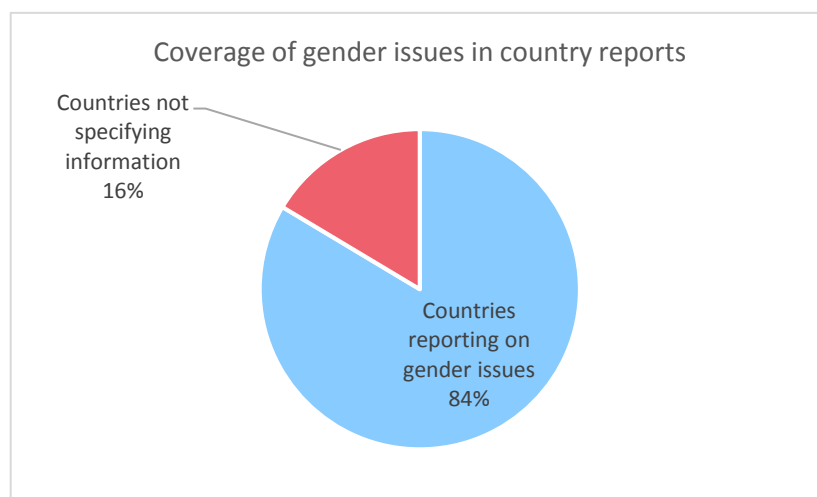
Equality in education can also be traced to the equitable distribution of qualified teachers between urban and rural areas. In this respect, a commendable measure was taken by Gambia, involving a teacher incentive package that encourages such teachers to serve in deprived communities across the country. This package includes the payment of hardship allowances and the provision of housing facilities in deprived communities. Similarly, in Guatemala, teachers living in deprived areas may receive a rural bonus.

These examples illustrate some of the responses that States have implemented over the reporting period. The realization of the right to education continues to hinge on a deeper local understanding of the diverse circumstances in which this right is implemented, and on addressing the underlying factors that prevent children, young people and adults from enjoying their right to education.

Gender equality

The 1960 Convention and Recommendation cover gender-based discrimination and guarantee the right to education for all girls and women. Many other international human rights treaties also protect their fundamental right to education.¹¹ With the adoption of SDG 4 on education and SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment, governments have pledged to eliminate gender disparities and ensure that every child, girl and boy alike, is in school and learning by 2030. It is also worth noting that, within SDG 4, gender equality is mainstreamed in all targets.¹² This is a reminder, if one were needed, that ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right but also a convincing way of accelerating and achieving sustainable development.

In this context, an important number of States reported on their various initiatives and measures to ensure gender equality, in order to eliminate gender bias and discrimination and make their education systems more inclusive for girls and boys, women and men.



The role that curriculum content, teaching tools and practices play in eliminating gender bias is crucial. In this respect, Cuba adopted a new resolution in 2011, introducing a sex education programme with a gender and sexual rights perspective, to be implemented in school curricula at the various levels of education. These activities have promoted high levels of educational development among the female population and resulted in women not lagging behind men. Similarly, the Government of Gambia encourages schools to develop management systems, policies and practices which recognise and address the gender or sex-based needs of both girls and boys. The students, both girls and boys, are empowered through the curriculum and training programmes to promote gender equity and equality and to protect the democratic and human rights of both sexes in schools. In South Africa, the implementation of the ‘Keeping Girls in School Programme’ aims to mitigate the risk of learners’ pregnancy by targeting at-risk girls through a sexual reproductive health

¹¹ Notably, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

¹² See the Education 2030-Framework for Action: www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED/pdf/FFA_Complet_Web-ENG.pdf

programme embedded within a curriculum support model. Furthermore, the ‘Girls’ Education Movement/Boys’ Education Movement’ has the key objective of ‘Making education a social issue’ through a recognition that sports can play a pivotal role in terms of promoting social cohesion in a school environment. In France, one of the fundamental vocations of national education is to ensure that girls and boys have equal opportunities. The School Reform Act of 8 July 2013 reinforced this requirement. Efforts to promote respect for equality between women and men must now begin in primary school. New moral and civic education classes have been introduced. In primary and secondary school, these classes should make it possible to address all types of discrimination more effectively, particularly gender-based discrimination.

Some States have launched initiatives to challenge gender stereotypical educational choices (Denmark, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, France, Germany, Iran, Côte d'Ivoire, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Turkey). In Ecuador, emphasis is placed on the analysis and comprehension of discrimination through the deconstruction of gender stereotypes linked to life projects and education, such as family roles and the traditional division of male and female occupations, the lack of equality of opportunity in the labour market, salary gaps, and so forth. Turkey has established the ‘Women’s Studies Department’ which aims to provide more women with the opportunity to study at university and to increase women’s participation in both academic and administrative decision-making mechanisms. In addition, Germany has taken initiatives to encourage girls to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), through the ‘National Pact for More Women in STEM Professions’, which brings together more than 190 partners in business, research, politics, associations, social partners and the media. An annual ‘Girls’ day’ promotes girls’ interest in STEM subjects through company visits and visits to research institutions. Similarly, in December 2016, Guatemala started a new education programme focusing on gender called ‘TeachHER’. It aims at boosting the education of girls and young people in science, technology, art and mathematics.

Some States such as Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire reported measures to prevent undesired pregnancy among schoolgirls. Burkina Faso developed and adopted a strategic plan to accelerate girls’ learning, which includes the ‘Zero pregnancy at school’ campaign and community mobilization to curb the numbers of adolescent pregnancies in schools.

Creating schools in rural areas and providing adequate facilities enables girls to access education systems. In Bangladesh, the Gender & Inclusive Education Action Plan includes measures towards school infrastructure development and separate toilets for boys and girls. Côte d'Ivoire reported the building of local secondary schools to reduce inequalities in gender and socio-economic and geographic origins when it comes to access to, retention at and completion of the first cycle of secondary education. The local schools construction programme saw a record number of 80 secondary schools opening in 2014-2015. The policy also aims to adapt education facilities to the needs of rural areas and female pupils.

The identification of gaps, barriers and inequalities of women is an important step for guiding decision-making in ministerial policies and strategies (Chile, Denmark, Egypt and Sweden). In this respect, the progress made by Chile in producing statistics broken down by sex has enabled these shortcomings to be identified with regard to

education. Denmark has established a working group to identify challenges with regard to gender equality in education.

Another interesting development by Chile is the provision of support for young mothers in the form of nurseries located close to the educational institution attended by the mother, thus enabling her to have access to and contact with her children during breaks, and to breastfeed and/or extract milk. Egypt encourages girls and their families to enrol in education by offering economic and social incentives and through media campaigns.

Various measures have been taken to reduce gender-based violence (Burkina Faso, Egypt, Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, Venezuela, Zambia). The Netherlands has added sexually unacceptable behaviour to the biannual monitor of social safety in primary education and secondary education. The monitor records verbal and physical sexual assaults and the dissemination of images (sexting) around the school. The monitor enables development trends to be tracked. In 2014, Venezuela launched a campaign entitled 'A Life Free of Violence against Women' in educational institutions to transform public awareness so that equality can be championed by all citizens.

These examples illustrate the need for a gender approach *in* education and not only *to* education.

Indigenous people and minority groups

Indigenous groups and minority groups are often deprived of quality education because of their background or the cultural, linguistic or financial barriers they face. In order to provide an inclusive educational system, numerous States have given details of the steps they have taken towards improving the fulfilment of their right to education.

Indigenous and tribal peoples

Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Honduras and Norway have implemented several strategies that specifically target their indigenous populations. One of these is the Children and Schooling programme in Australia, which is part of the Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Projects under this programme include improved school attendance, educational outcomes and Year 12 attendance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Similarly, in Canada, the First Nation Student Success Program (FNSSP) is designed to support First Nation educators on reserves (Kindergarten to Grade 12) in their ongoing efforts to meet students' needs and improve student and school results. The programme supports activities that increase students' achievement levels in reading and writing and mathematics and encourage students to remain in school. Under the Indigenous Education Plan 2015–2017, which is under review, support is provided for the professional development of Indigenous students interested in pursuing teaching as a career by considering teacher-training needs, sharing knowledge, and initiating dialogue among Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. Another example of good practice is provided by Bolivia, with the development of eight regionalized curricula for indigenous and aboriginal peoples (15 other curricula are currently being developed), the publication of 26 alphabets in indigenous languages and the development of school booklets in 13 indigenous

languages. Additionally, research has been carried out into the knowledge and wisdom of 26 indigenous peoples, and specific scholarships and educational material have been designed. Lastly, the Plurinational Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures (IPELC) has been established, as well as three indigenous universities and language and culture institutes.

Measures to encourage interculturalism in the school educational system have also been reported. In Chile, the curricular framework for indigenous languages in four of the most vital areas of endangered languages, Aymara, Quechua, Rapa Nui and Mapuzugun, has been implemented. The bilingual intercultural education programme has been working on linguistic and/or cultural revival for endangered and dead languages, such as Kawésqar, Yágan and LicanAntai, the objective being that in the not too distant future, it will be possible to implement the teaching of such languages in educational establishments. At the current stage, the primary focus of the programme is on implementation in the curriculum, and the programme is concentrating its efforts on indigenous culture and language learning in school by expanding the coverage of language teaching and socialization through intercultural initiatives. Today, there are study plans and programmes for Aymara, Quechua, Rapa Nui and Mapuzugun respectively. In Canada, thanks to meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations, key education stakeholders, and school boards, the Ontario Ministry of Education has committed to raising awareness of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, traditions, and perspectives (including residential schools and treaties), through culturally appropriate pedagogy, curricula, and professional development opportunities.

With reference to school attendance of indigenous groups and tribal peoples in remote areas, Australia, Brazil and Iran described the measures taken to overcome this barrier. In Australia, the Remote School Attendance Strategy was implemented. By employing local community members as school attendance officers and supervisors, they provide support to enable indigenous children to attend school every day. In Iran, students of deprived, under-populated and tribal regions are supplied with three meals a day, as well as dormitory and other educational and training facilities for free. Additionally, distance learning and semi-face-to-face education centres were developed. The Ministry of Education has financed, in part or in whole, expenditure and fares for minibuses or public vehicles that take students from rural areas to the education centres of nearby villages or towns.

Furthermore, several States reported on providing scholarships for indigenous students (notably Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Honduras, New Zealand, Mexico and Sweden).

Minority groups

Many Eastern European States reported on strategies or programmes that focus on the Roma population (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Serbia and Slovakia). Bulgaria has adopted both a national strategy and an action plan for the integration of Roma people and ethnic minorities for the years 2012-2020. In addition to promoting their full integration, the measures also include working with the parents of ethnic minority children to emphasize the benefits for their children of attending school, as well as working with parents of school children to build positive attitudes towards Roma ethnicity. In Hungary, the National

Social Inclusion Strategy for the years 2011 to 2020 includes support for disadvantaged Roma students to enable them to obtain a degree by assisting and expanding the programme of Roma colleges for advanced studies. Roma colleges for advanced studies complement the role played by the higher education institutions in compensating for disadvantages: they provide support in areas such as skills development, talent nurturing for disadvantaged – primarily Roma – students, career advice, mentoring, tutoring, professional cooperation and scholarship grants. In Ukraine, in order to create more opportunities for educational services provision for the Roma minority, on 21 December 2015 the Ministry of Education and Science approved an Action Plan to implement security policies and integration into Ukrainian society of the Roma minority up until 2020.

Latvia and Poland have introduced teachers' assistant positions. In Latvia, there is a special programme called 'Teachers' Assistants of Roma Background'. The teachers' assistants significantly promote Roma children's education achievements and encourage parents of Roma origin to ensure that their children acquire an education. In Poland, owing to the mobility of Roma children and their consequent need to catch up on the school's curriculum or repeat a grade, specific positions have been established. Under the Pilot Programme, the Roma education assistant and the teacher supporting the education of Roma children work together to enable the school environment to adapt to the presence of Roma pupils in school and establish the educational problems that are characteristic for this group of pupils in the school environment.

In order to improve the multi-ethnic situation, States such as Bulgaria, Macedonia and Ukraine have adopted measures to increase knowledge and awareness and to counter stereotypes. In Bulgaria, students have the right to choose 'Ethnic Folklore - Roma folklore' as part of their elective training, and for this purpose teaching aids and exercise books have been developed to acquaint students with the history, customs and traditions of the Roma. Teaching aids provide information about the Roma tradition and culture and about the different religions, ancient cultures and civilizations. Measures to promote education specialists' ability to work in a multicultural environment are also encouraged. In Macedonia, the National Strategy for the Development of Education 2005-2015 focused on the improvement of the multi-ethnic environment in the country. Special attention was paid to the curricula and textbooks (especially for history, geography and language learning), and to adapting to the concepts of tolerance, intercultural communication and mutual understanding. In Ukraine, the special education orientation course 'Culture of the Neighbourhood' was introduced in secondary schools in multicultural regions of the country. The 'Me. Us. Country' regional programme was also developed to test the grade one workbook 'I, my family, my neighbours'. Hungary reported that measures were taken in response to the *de facto* segregation in primary schools, where the percentage of Roma minorities was higher than average, which led to the spontaneous migration of teachers from the areas concerned and had a detrimental impact on the quality of education. An Anti-Segregation Roundtable was established in June 2013, involving governmental and civil professional stakeholders, not only to legislate for the prohibition of segregation, but also to provide effective measures to eliminate the *de facto* segregation that prevents the inclusion of disadvantaged children.

With regard to minorities in general, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic reported focusing on providing pre-school education for ethnic minorities, in order to achieve lasting results in educational integration.

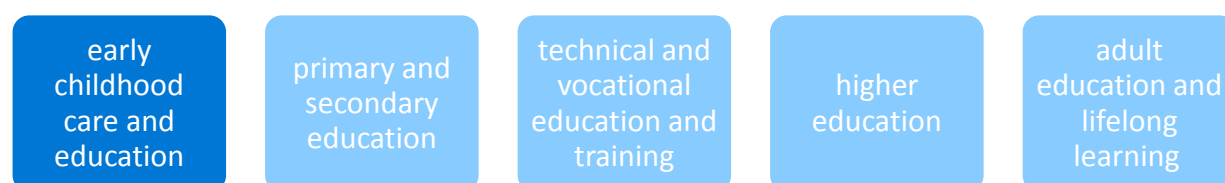
Certain States reported on providing financial aid (Croatia, Czech Republic and Denmark). In Croatia the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports awards scholarships to all secondary school students who are members of the Roma national minority. In Denmark, German minority schools receive a grant per pupil corresponding to 100 percent of the average cost per pupil in the public sector.

Since minority groups often face language barriers, several States have devised policies to facilitate national language learning. For example, in Latvia, the Latvian Language Agency provides systematic, sustainable support for minority education from different funding sources. The objective is to unite Latvian society and ensure the successful acquisition of the official language within the educational system. In Georgia, in order to secure equal opportunities for all national minorities residing in the country, the National Curriculum makes it mandatory to teach a native language (Azeri, Armenian and Russian) as well as a State language in minority schools/sectors. A number of activities are planned and carried out to strengthen State language teaching and thereby help to integrate national minorities into society.

VIII. Progress made on education levels

SDG 4 commits to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all education levels. The Education 2030 Framework for action for implementing SDG 4 stresses the interdependency of all levels, from pre-primary through to higher education, and formal and non-formal education. It specifies clearly that the right to education begins at birth and continues throughout life. As part of the ninth Consultation, States were required to report on the provision of the different education levels in accordance with Article 4 of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation - which covers the guarantees related to the levels of education – as well as the progress made and the challenges faced. The reporting exercise shows that they have implemented relevant measures across all levels of education, from pre-schools to higher education. In addition, several have developed interesting ways of combating illiteracy and encouraging lifelong learning through adult education.

Early Childhood Education and Care



From conception through early childhood, a nurturing and stimulating environment offering structured opportunities to learn and play can have a profound influence on neurological development and improve the chances that children will complete school, experience good physical and mental health, and contribute positively to society. For this reason, SDG 4.2 aims to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

Recent legislative and policy developments have been made by countries across the globe to ensure that access to pre-primary education is largely expanded and provided on a free and mandatory basis, as recommended by the Education 2030 Framework for Action (Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Hungary, Latvia). Some States reported that early childhood education is free for one or more years (Cook Islands, Malta, Costa Rica, Turkey, Ukraine and Zambia). Several countries have adopted legal provisions to establish it on a free and/or compulsory basis and to strengthen the provision of preschool education. Measures recently adopted show a clear trend in this area. In Brazil, compulsory and free pre-school was included by Law in 2013 and Portugal issued a new law in 2015¹³ establishing universal pre-school education. In Poland, pursuant to the amended legislation on education, as of September 2016, children aged six must attend compulsory one-year pre-school preparation. In Estonia, the Ministry was expected to submit draft legislation under which early childhood education and childcare will form a uniformly regulated single system covering childcare facilities and kindergartens, irrespective of the form of ownership. Yet, in many countries, pre-primary education remains optional and subject to parental preference. Cuba, Gambia, France, Mongolia, New Zealand and Norway reported that pre-primary education is not compulsory and is subject to parental preference. In France for instance, education before six years or schooling in kindergarten is not compulsory, but the law stipulates that every child must be found a kindergarten place at the age of three if her or his family so requests.

States also reported on policies targeting early childhood development (in particular Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Honduras, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Latvia, Malta, New Zealand, Niger, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Tunisia, Uzbekistan, Zambia). In Bangladesh, a comprehensive policy on early childhood development, following an intensive consultation process, was approved by the Government in 2013. In Brazil, according to the National Education Plan approved in 2014, early childhood education in preschool must be rolled out across the country for children between four and five years old by the year 2016. A key strategy is the Pro-Childhood programme, which provides technical and financial support to the Federal District and the municipalities to enable them to build and equip public daycare centres and pre-schools. In Cuba, early childhood care is part of national policy. Zambia plans to influence the ongoing review of the Education Policy in order to clarify the commitments regarding education subsectors such as Early Childhood Care and Development Education, which it reported is vague and limited. Armenia, Chile, Croatia, Cuba and Turkmenistan provide programmes and support such as health care, nutrition (such as free meals), educational material or social care for pre-school age children.

Chile reported on several arrangements to provide early childhood care such as family nurseries, work nurseries, and seasonal nurseries that adapt to the needs of the different parent's requirements. Similarly, the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 aims to create flexible opportunities for pre-school education. In Latvia, several alternative pre-school education programmes are available.

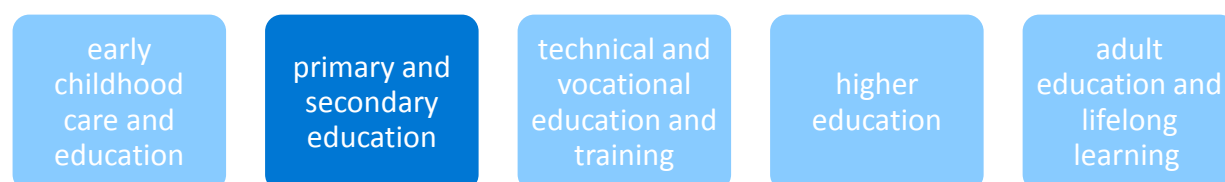
Since ensuring broad access to early childhood care and education implies reaching those who are hardest to reach, many countries have devised **inclusive programmes and specific mechanisms to target certain groups**.

¹³ Pending regulation

Armenia and Bulgaria reported on a programme aimed at raising the level of access to pre-school education for children of families that are seeking or have been granted international protection. Furthermore, Armenia has established centres in school buildings in a number of rural communities in the marzes, where classes are run for children of national minorities. New Zealand provided distance education for students from early childhood, for children in remote or rural areas, while Turkey reported that mobile pre-schools are examples of on-going efforts to reach disadvantaged children. Australia has taken measures to ensure that early-childhood schooling is provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. European States, and particularly Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, and Serbia), have adopted similar approaches to reach national and ethnic minorities. Bulgaria for example, has taken measures involving the retrieval and integration of Roma children in reception kindergartens and preparatory groups at local schools, as well as working with parents. In Serbia, a free, compulsory pre-school preparatory programme, with teaching assistants in preschools, has been introduced to promote the inclusion of Roma children in the education system. Croatia, Czech Republic, Latvia and Poland have bespoke pre-school arrangements for children with special needs, which is important for early intervention and inclusion in the appropriate pre-school and rehabilitation programmes. Finally, in the Netherlands, within the framework of the Opportunities for Development through Quality and Education Act (2010), municipalities are obliged to offer targeted ECEC programmes to all children aged 2,5-4 at risk of a language deficiency and/or educational disadvantages.

Interestingly, Spain established a plan entitled ‘Violence prevention in early childhood’. Some of the Plan’s measures promote zero tolerance to violence from the earliest years and implement strategies that aim to make schools safe places where aggression is rejected and a harmonious atmosphere is fostered.

Primary and secondary education



International standards on education promote access to primary and secondary education. The global commitment driven by the new Education 2030 agenda is to achieve, by 2030, inclusive and equitable quality primary and secondary education, corresponding to 12 years of free education of which at least 9 are compulsory. Under the Convention against Discrimination in Education, countries are also committed to free and compulsory primary education and to making secondary education generally available and accessible to all. Reporting for the ninth Consultation shows that many countries are already engaged in legal and policy reforms to work towards these standards.

The vast majority of States reported on the duration of free and compulsory education. Across the nations, the duration varies greatly and the structure of the education system differs substantially. Of these States, those that reported on **the minimum age for the end of compulsory education** mostly reported it to be 16.

In Canada, the ages for compulsory schooling vary from one jurisdiction to another, but most require attendance in school from ages 6 to 16 and the principle of access remains paramount because each child is entitled to a free public education. In Macedonia, pursuant to legislation on primary education, students aged 16 and students with special educational needs up to 20 years of age no longer have a legal obligation to attend regular primary education. In special cases, at the parent's request and subject to the teacher's opinion, the student is permitted to complete the primary education at the age of 17. Interestingly, Cuba reported that there was no legal upper age for compulsory schooling, and that most of the school-age population continued their education beyond the national compulsory age. In Australia and Estonia, the age is 17. More specifically, in Australia compulsory education includes participation full time (25 hours a week) in education, training or employment, or a combination of these until the age of 17. In the Netherlands and Latvia, the compulsory age is 18. To ensure universal compliance with the obligation to attend school, some States mentioned punitive measures to combat the non-enrolment of school-age children. For example, in Slovakia, sanctions apply if a child's legal representative fails to comply with compulsory education requirements.

The vast majority of States reported that **secondary education is generally available and accessible** (notably Bolivia, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Estonia, France, Hungary, Iran, Macedonia, Monaco, Netherlands, Portugal, New Zealand and Slovakia). Some States reported on difficulties or limitations in ensuring access for every child. For example, Côte d'Ivoire reported that access is restricted by capacity. For this reason, admission is conditional on submission of the primary school certificate for general secondary education and the entry test for technical education and vocational training. A competitive admission system was reported by some States (namely Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Moldova and Latvia). Croatia stated that place numbers are established by the Minister of Education annually, while in the Czech Republic there is an admission procedure and the admission of applicants is decided by the headmaster of the respective school. When admitting students to upper secondary level education in Latvia, schools are free to hold entrance examinations according to the basic education standard, except in those subjects for which students have already received a Certificate of basic education.

Many States reported on providing free education as a fundamental principle. Its duration varies from country to country. However, a large majority of countries provide it at least at primary education level. In Chile, in June 2015, the Act on School Inclusion was promulgated, establishing free education in all institutions that receive State funding and ending the system of co-financing by families. Bolivia reported that it is strictly prohibited to charge for the reservation of places, enrolment, teaching materials or entrance fees for pupils in public and private educational institutions and those which are contracted. It is also strictly prohibited for head teachers or other employees of public and private educational institutions and those which are contracted, to make additional charges of any kind on pupils, their parents, guardians or representatives. In Qatar, however, a token annual amount is collected for contributing to the cost of textbooks and transport from non-Qatari students. The Netherlands and New Zealand reported that voluntary contributions can be made to the school, either for the running of the school or for trips organized by the school. The Democratic Republic of Congo reported on its intention to make primary education free. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Presidential Emergency Programme for

economic recovery, along with support from technical and financial partners, facilitated the roll-out of access to free and compulsory primary education across the board.

Numerous States also reported on **free secondary education** (particularly Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, France, Germany, Honduras, Hungary, Iran, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Macao China, Macedonia, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine). However, Armenia and the Cook Islands reported that students' parents have to pay additional fees, and the Democratic Republic of Congo reported that secondary education was not free.

Countries were invited to indicate whether the minimum legal age for marriage and the minimum legal age for admission to work were aligned with the age of the end of compulsory education. This is of paramount importance. Ensuring the proper alignment of education legislation with labour and matrimonial laws is crucial in order to remove any potential legal loopholes. For instance, a lower minimum age for marriage than the end of compulsory education might give legal cover to child marriage and have a detrimental effect on children's ability to complete their education. Similarly, if the minimum legal age for admission to work does not match the end of compulsory education, it can create situations where children are engaged in child labour, with adverse consequences on their education and healthy development. However, only a minority of States provided precise information on the alignment or misalignment of domestic laws.

Some States reported on the alignment of ages (for example Côte d'Ivoire, Hungary, Malta, Romania and Sweden). Some reported that the **minimum age of marriage** for women and men was set at eighteen (Armenia, Latvia, Macedonia, and Guatemala since 2015). In Latvia and Malta, in an exceptional case, a person who has reached the age of 16 years may get married by a parental or guardians' consent, and Latvia specified that this was the case if the other person with whom the marriage is concluded has reached the age of majority. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the legal marriage age is 16. Similarly, in Egypt, females may marry upon reaching the age of 16 Gregorian years, while the husband must not be under 18. Kuwait reported that the law set it at 15 for girls and 17 for boys. States were also requested to report on the **minimum age for entry into employment**. In Kuwait, Macedonia and Latvia, it is prohibited to employ a person under 15 years of age while Spain reported that the age is 16. Furthermore, Latvia and Spain reported that in exceptional cases children under the age of 16, with the written consent of one of the parents (guardian) may be employed in cultural, artistic, sporting and advertising activities as a performer. It is prohibited to employ adolescents in jobs in special conditions associated with an increased risk to their safety, health, morals or development. In addition, Latvia specified that such employment (determined by the Cabinet) shall not interfere with the education of the child. In Egypt, Labour Act No. 12 (2003) identifies jobs and professions in which children may not be employed until they have completed primary and preparatory education (i.e. age 14). Employers employing children under 16 are required to give them a card confirming their employment, to which a photograph of the child is attached, approved by the competent manpower office.

Several States reported on **difficulties encountered in expanding enrolment in primary education**. Australia and the Cook Islands noted the challenges of providing access to education in geographically isolated areas.

Egypt raised concerns over the increasing gender gap between the enrolment of girls and boys, owing to the existence of an alternative to education for boys provided by work on farms, in workshops or portering, where cheap, unskilled labour is in demand. It may also be attributable to widespread adult illiteracy in the Egyptian countryside, which does not provide children with a supportive environment that encourages them to complete their compulsory education. Macedonia mentioned the need for better systematic solutions and problem-solving, with a view to achieving greater participation in the educational process of street children and children from socially vulnerable families, juvenile detention centres and health institutions. Guatemala reported on problems persuading persons with disabilities to enrol in mainstream schools, because of a persistent attitude of discrimination and exclusion towards them. Haiti reported that, despite existing legislation, many children were working as live-in domestics. Furthermore, institutional shortcomings in the education system hamper the quality of education, leading to high repetition and dropout rates, as well as high illiteracy rates throughout the country.

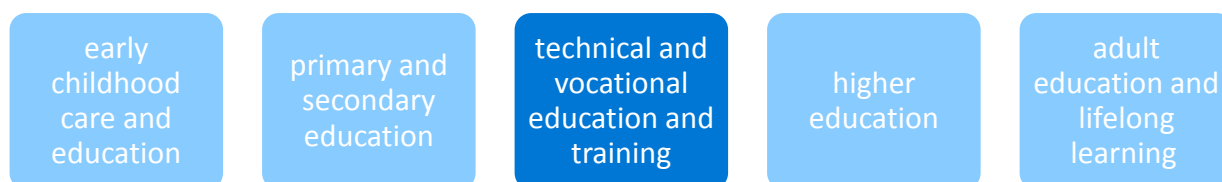
Various States highlighted the **particular challenges faced by certain segments of society**, mainly poor children, girls and women, indigenous peoples and ethnic groups, persons with disabilities and persons living in rural and remote areas, in accessing and completing their secondary education. A further challenge lies in the fact that those issues may be cumulative, creating multiple barriers to education. Consequently, innovative and comprehensive legal and policy solutions are required to address them.

The specific challenges facing **poor households** were outlined in the reports of Armenia, Chile, Guatemala, Haiti, Niger and Serbia. On this issue, Bangladesh reported that poor students also receive a stipend to continue their education and all secondary level students are given free textbooks. Similarly, the 2011 Law on Education in Romania provides free transport, accommodation and meals, as well as subsidies, for socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Costa Rica reported on programmes such as 'New Opportunities', which makes completion of secondary education possible for individuals who, for economic reasons or learning difficulties, were unable to complete secondary studies. Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia and Chile put the emphasis on the challenges that **girls and women** may encounter, especially school dropout as a result of early pregnancy. To combat this issue, Gambia implemented policies such as mothers' clubs, the Scholarship Trust Fund, The President's Empowerment for Girls Education Project and the re-entry programme for girls, which resulted in an increase of over 6,000 girls gaining access to senior secondary education between 2012 and 2015. Some **physical barriers** may also keep children from accessing education, especially inadequate infrastructure and a lack of individualized support for those with special needs and/or disabilities. This is why Estonia has made efforts to renovate school buildings in some areas and adapt them for children with serious educational special needs.

Other States reported that **ethnic minorities and indigenous populations** might not complete secondary education due to social and cultural attitudes (Armenia, Canada, Denmark and Serbia). Denmark has launched a range of initiatives aimed at reducing upper secondary dropout, particularly among students from ethnic minorities, including a 'Retention Task Force', an advisory team for schools on addressing dropout, and an increased effort towards providing training places for all students. The National Congress of Honduras is in the

process of approving regulations on education for indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples, revised by the Ad Hoc Committee, which will see the creation of 11 secondary education institutions in indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities in the country. Lastly, some States reported on difficulties in providing access to secondary schools in **rural or isolated areas** (Armenia, Cook Islands, Côte d’Ivoire, Ecuador, Niger and Romania). In the Cook Islands, after year 10, students may need to travel to another island to continue with senior secondary school. The Ministry supports this by providing transport and a grant for families who host students during the school term. Furthermore, an online school, while not a complete solution, serves to support the more isolated communities, especially in the Northern group. Qatar reported that one of the challenges facing secondary education, on top of those faced by primary education, was a lack of specialist schools for the technical and vocational education of girls. This challenge was overcome by opening a girls’ technical school this year – the banking studies and business administration school for girls.

Technical and vocational education and training



The Recommendation on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), adopted alongside the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education by Member States in 2015 at the 38th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, reflects new educational, social, economic, cultural, and political trends in TVET. Providing an integrated approach to education and training that ensures the promotion of a broad spectrum of knowledge, skills, and competencies for work and life, this normative instrument will effectively support the implementation of the Education 2030 Framework for Action. The vast majority of States reported that they provided TVET. National approaches to the way TVET is provided and the level(s) to which it is accessible may vary significantly from country to country. A wide range of measures have increasingly been taken to expand it, from primary level to upper levels and adult education, and to regard it as part of lifelong learning. Special emphasis was also placed by States on ensuring the quality and relevance of TVET to the jobs market.

Numerous States reported on providing technical and vocational education. States reported that technical and vocational education can be found at the primary level (such as Armenia and Cuba) and/or secondary or upper secondary level (such as Armenia, Côte d’Ivoire, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Macedonia, Malta, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and Venezuela) and/or as part of higher education (such as Chile and Turkmenistan) and/or adult education and lifelong learning (such as Denmark, Cook Islands, Estonia, France, Germany, Guatemala, Macedonia and Netherlands).

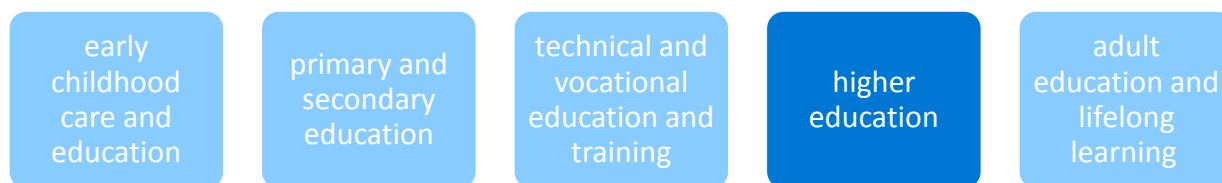
Approaches differ regarding admission procedures. Usually, they can either be carried out without entrance tests or following a professional examination. In Armenia, it is carried out without admission examinations,

except for professions pertaining to art, healthcare and sports, in which case a professional examination must be taken. In Denmark, in connection with the parliamentary adoption of the act on vocational training in 2014, a new combined post-compulsory education scheme was introduced. This combined post-compulsory education constitutes an offer to young people who are either motivated but do not have a realistic chance of completing an ordinary VET education, who make use of non-qualifying offers, or who are not enrolled in an education. It was introduced in August 2015. Similarly, in Germany, youths who do not attend a full-time general education school or vocational school at upper secondary level once they have completed their period of compulsory general schooling are obliged to attend a part-time vocational school. In Slovakia, applicants for admission to the first year of secondary vocational education must have completed lower secondary education pursuant to section 16(3)(b) of the Schools Act, and satisfied the admissions procedure conditions.

A few States reported on whether **technical education is free**. Armenia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Netherlands, Spain, Russia and Uzbekistan reported that it was. In Armenia, the law 'On education', adopted in April 2015, sets out the compulsory conditions for a free-of-charge twelve-year (including vocational) education. The Law enters into force on 1 January 2017. In Denmark, admission to VET is free if compulsory education has been completed and the admission requirements are met. In Chile, New Millennium Grant is a benefit that supports students from the lowest 60% income bracket who are leaving secondary education and enrolling in the first year of a technical-vocational course provided by a higher education institution.

Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Hungary, Iran, Kuwait, Latvia, Macedonia, New Zealand, Slovakia and Ukraine are among the reporting States that have taken measures to expand and/or improve technical and vocational education and training. In 2015 in Poland, in order to improve access to information on vocational education, the Ministry of Education created a Vocational School Map web portal, which enables students to check which vocational schools are offering courses and the results of vocational exams taken by students, as well as enabling employers to advertise the practical education opportunities available. A common approach is to improve the link between vocational education and the demands of the job market (Armenia, Czech Republic, Iraq, Kuwait, Macedonia and Slovakia). In this respect, the Ministry of education in the Czech Republic has announced a development programme aimed at promoting vocational education since 2014. The support it provides focuses on groups of subject areas that are considered indispensable to the needs of the labour market, as well as on their uniqueness and tradition in a given area. Funds from the development programme are earmarked for wages, salaries, statutory deductions and the cultural and social needs fund of the teaching staff who teach in these groups. This measure makes it possible to establish a more favourable environment in which to enhance the quality of vocational education.

Higher education



A new feature of the Education 2030 agenda is its explicit reference to higher education as part of the vision for lifelong learning for all and the global commitment to ensure, by 2030 ‘equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality [...] tertiary education, including university.’ Higher education plays a key role in teacher training and other aspects of educational development, but in addition it can contribute to the advancement of all other goals, spanning health, gender equality, water and sanitation as well as industry and innovation.

According to Article 4 of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation, higher education should be made equally accessible to all on the basis of individual ability. States were required to report on measures relating to access, financial cost, non-discriminatory measures and the challenges faced.

Numerous States reported on legislation that sets out the framework for the operation of higher educational institutions. Generally, admissions are based on qualification criteria such as completion of secondary school or merit-based requirements for certain courses (Armenia, Chile, Cuba, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Sweden, Turkey and Uzbekistan). In this regard, in 2016 Chile produced draft legislation that aims to reform the higher education sector, and which addresses the specific characteristics of technical and vocational training. The admission system seeks to be the least selective and the most inclusive possible. In the Czech Republic, the specific admission conditions regarding knowledge, skills or talent are approved by an elected body of the respective higher education institution and faculty, namely the academic senate, and are equal for all applicants. The accreditation process of study programmes also guarantees equality of access to higher education. In Poland, the recently amended Law on Higher Education facilitates access to this level of education for adults who have already gained professional experience outside a higher education institution. Turkey and the Netherlands reported on their entrance tests. In Turkey, admission to Turkish universities is by a central exam administered by the Student Selection and Placement Centre. Based on the score achieved, preferences are listed in an electronic system and centrally placed in an objective manner. In the Netherlands, individuals who are 21 years of age or older and who do not have the required diplomas can obtain access to higher education programmes through specific ‘enrolment assessments’ which establish whether the individual has the aptitude to successfully participate in and graduate from the HE-programme.

To guarantee the principle of non-discrimination in access to higher education, most States reported on **laws prohibiting all forms of discrimination when accessing education**. In Afghanistan and Norway for instance, in order to provide equal opportunity, special arrangements relating to exams can be provided for students with disabilities in a way that accommodates their particular needs. In Turkey, students studying in countries which the Council of Higher Education deems to be unable to provide education owing to violence and humanitarian

crisis situations may apply for a transfer to Turkish higher education institutions. Foreign nationals also have equal access to higher education according to the reports submitted by Armenia, Cuba, Germany, Macedonia and Tunisia. For instance, in Armenia, access is not determined on a competitive basis, but knowledge checks (such as knowledge of the language) are carried out to direct the applicant either to the first year or to the foundation course. In Cuba, foreign nationals enrol on scholarships granted by the Government.

Several States have made efforts to broaden access to tertiary education, which has resulted in many parts of the world in an increase in the number of students enrolled. By way of example, in Afghanistan, some 100,000 university students were enrolled at public universities in 2012, and that number grew to 171,000 in 2015. In this regard, policies targeted to specific groups were reported. Some States reported on measures to increase female access to higher education (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Netherlands and Zambia). Particular progress in this area was reported by the Netherlands where, in 2009, only three out of fourteen universities had one or more women on the Executive Board. From 2015, that number grew to nine universities. Zambia and Iran reported the implementation of a quota system for the enrolment of female students. **Further affirmative action measures** have also been introduced in several States, notably in Armenia, Brazil, Hungary, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia and Serbia, to encourage the enrolment of students belonging to certain groups and to inspire them to complete their higher education studies. Russia and Serbia took such measures targeting persons with disabilities and/or ethnic groups, to encourage them to continue their education. Mongolia provides special quotas to encourage Tuvan (reindeer herder) people and other disadvantaged groups to pursue higher education in national higher education institutions, and Brazil implements affirmative action for the education of 'self-declared blacks, mulattos and indigenous students' under legislation enacted in 2012. On the other hand, Venezuela targets rural areas as part of its inclusivity policies via the municipalization process, whereby university courses can be provided across the whole national territory, rather than just in the most urbanized or industrialized cities. Canada has programmes and policies to improve access for indigenous people, who often struggle owing, *inter alia*, to the fact that they have to relocate because they live in remote areas. Armenia, Australia, Chile and Ireland reported on measures for the socially vulnerable. In Australia, the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme was established in 2010 to help ensure that Australians from low socioeconomic status backgrounds who have the ability to study at university get the opportunity to do so. The programme provides funding to eligible higher education providers to improve access, retention and completion rates for these students. In Chile, the Support and Effective Access strand of the Educational Reform Programme aims to reinstate the right to higher education by supporting students in preparing for, admission to, catching up on and remaining in higher education, thus ensuring that high performing students in vulnerable groups can obtain degrees. This programme is a specific short-term measure to solve the problem of segregation in higher education. Finally, Ireland, Chile and Uzbekistan have adopted specific measures for students with disabilities. In Ireland, the Fund for Students with Disabilities supports participation by students with a disability in full-time programmes of further and higher education. The aim is to ensure that these students can participate fully in education, on an equal footing with their peers. The support and services provided include assistive technology, personal/academic support and transport.

Positive developments also emerge from reports from countries where special efforts have been made to improve the adaptability and flexibility of learning programmes. For example, evening programmes have provided access to tertiary education for students who might otherwise not have been able to attend university, such as women who have to care for children during the day or students who work in the daytime. A few States reported on such programmes (Afghanistan and Iran). Distance learning was reported to provide access to education in isolated areas or for those who are unable to travel, such as students with disabilities (Afghanistan, Armenia, Cuba, Honduras, Iran, Pakistan, Spain, Zambia). Zambia introduced e-learning and virtual universities, which have enhanced access to higher education. Likewise, in Spain, the National University of Distance Learning serves students who, owing to various circumstances, are unable to take a classroom-based course, mainly because they need to juggle work and studies.

Most States reported that higher education is provided by both public and private institutions (Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar, Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, Venezuela and Zambia). Bangladesh, Chile, Venezuela and Zambia reported on government efforts to strengthen and/or establish more public universities, in view of the cost of higher education institutions, while Iran is making efforts to make higher education public. Côte d'Ivoire reported that it had outsourced the public education service to private individuals and launched private-public partnerships to increase educational provision. Côte d'Ivoire noted that regulation of some private higher education institutions remains, however, a challenge. Haiti also stressed the lack of governance for this education level and the absence of higher education legislation. Similarly, in Zambia, tuition costs for private universities and quality assurance were not regulated by the Government, resulting in a lack of compliance with standards. To address this problem, in 2013 the Government enacted the Higher Education Act to regulate, promote and ensure compliance with minimum standards and quality in the provision of higher education and the award of qualifications. Following this, the Higher Education Authority became operational in 2015. In addition, learning institutions, especially in higher education, were not monitored to ensure consistent output quality. This prompted the Government to create the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) which is a qualifications regulatory and accreditation body. In Norway, private universities and university colleges must ensure that the state operating grant and student fees are used to the benefit of students. Institutions receiving state funding may not give financial dividends or in any other manner transfer profit to the owner or close associates of the owner. Cuba, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan stated that there are no private higher educational institutions.

The **costs of higher education** vary substantially across States. In Australia for example, Australian students contribute towards the cost of higher education within a range from \$0 to a maximum set by the Australian Government. In 2016, the maximum annual student contributions range from \$6256 for subjects including nursing, teaching and humanities to \$10,440 for subjects including law, economics and medicine. In Spain, the cost of university varies greatly from student to student and depends on the Autonomous Community and the course of study chosen, with scientific and technical degrees being more expensive. In any event, the cost was reported not to be high. The average cost of a Bachelor's degree course is 18.33 euros per course credit. Some

States (notably Ecuador, Estonia and Norway) reported that public education was free up to and through the third level of higher education.

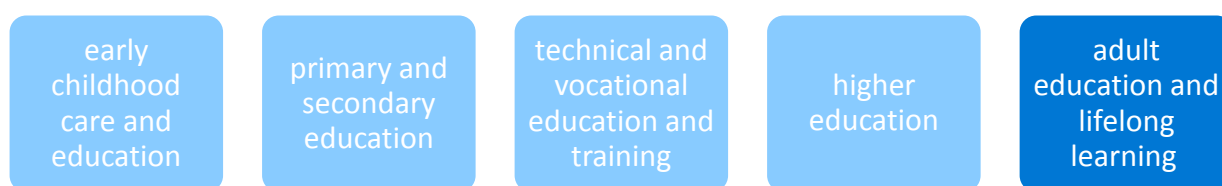
To address the **financial barriers to higher education**, numerous States offer financial assistance including grants and subsidies (Afghanistan, Armenia, Bulgaria, Brazil, Chile, Cook Islands, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Kuwait, Monaco, Moldova, New Zealand, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Qatar, Spain, Tunisia, Zambia). In Afghanistan, in 2012, the Ministry of Higher Education approved a by-law on scholarship distribution, which allocates 30% of the slots to female students. In addition, 7% of scholarships are set aside for nomads, 7% for family members of martyrs and 7% for disabled students at undergraduate level. Interestingly, in France, students with refugee status also have the right to the same grants as other students. Scholarships based on merit were reported by Armenia, Croatia, France, Germany, Macedonia, Spain and Ukraine. In Armenia, aside from a reduction in higher education fees for targeted groups and state grants, a rotation evaluation system enables students with the best academic performance in their year to study on a free-of-charge basis. Students are also provided with dormitories either for free or at discounted prices (Armenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia). In this regard, in Croatia, student accommodation is supported by the Ministry, as are student meals. Students with disabilities (an impairment rating of 50% or more) are automatically granted a place in the student dormitory. Additionally, transport costs are partially covered by the local governments of towns and cities in which the higher educational institutions are located. Denmark and Norway provide support through grants or loans for students' living costs, awarded by the State subject to specific conditions. Interestingly, in Ukraine, citizens who get the top results in the independent external examinations have the right to study on the budget basis. Moreover, they are eligible to apply for state scholarships.

In order to ensure that there is an adequate transfer system of credits between nations, several States reported on a framework for qualifications (Armenia, Cuba, Bosnia and Herzegovina). In Armenia, the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) of the Republic of Armenia has been introduced at all levels of higher and post-graduate professional education, which will ensure comparability of national qualifications with European qualifications. Furthermore, qualifications acquired abroad are subject to an evaluation and recognition process in the Republic of Armenia, conducted by the National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility fund, based on which a statement of information on full or partial recognition or rejection is issued — in Armenian or in English — in compliance with international standards. In Cuba, graduates' certificates or diplomas issued by secondary education institutions in other countries will be accepted for enrolment in higher education if they have been duly validated in the country of origin and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and have also been validated in Cuba in accordance with the established regulations.

Venezuela and Pakistan reported on ICT. Venezuela reported on improving the quality of education by updating and providing computers to all university students through the Canaima programme. Additionally, a support system involving the use of ICTs for teaching and learning processes is available under the National Education Programmes (PNF) at Venezuelan universities.

Some States reported on some difficulties they had encountered. Afghanistan reported on a restricted governmental budget linked to the withdrawal of technical and financial assistance. Given the high number of secondary school graduates, there are not enough places to accommodate them in tertiary institutions. Limited resources also impact on special assistance for disadvantaged groups. Armenia mentioned the continuing rent burden for numerous students, despite efforts to reduce it. Bangladesh faced challenges due to the lack of quality secondary education, which leads to a loss of a good number of prospective students who could have demonstrated their aptitude to study in higher education. Bulgaria reported that socially disadvantaged groups do not continue their education as they are required to start work immediately after secondary school.

Adult education and lifelong learning



The Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education adopted in 2015 refers to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and highlights that the aim of adult learning and education is to equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their rights and take control of their destinies. It promotes personal and professional development and fosters sustainable and inclusive economic growth and decent work prospects for individuals. Consequently, it represents a key tool for improving health and well-being, alleviating poverty and, more generally, contributing to sustainable learning societies.

Furthermore, States Parties to the 1960 Convention have the obligation to encourage and strengthen the education of persons who have not received any primary education or who have not completed the full primary education syllabus, and to enable them to continue their education in an appropriate way.

Reflecting a global commitment to placing lifelong learning at the heart of the new education agenda, almost all States reported establishing adult education opportunities and lifelong learning systems. For example, in Malta, the Ministry of Education and Research encourages adults to return to education – the aim is to bring adults who have dropped out of basic or upper secondary school back to school and to give them an opportunity to complete their education. Turkmenistan reported that it has an independent study system accredited by the State education authority, catering for individuals who have not completed general secondary education in time to receive their certificate. In Venezuela, the José Félix Ribas Mission was created with the goal of ensuring that employment and education help to achieve the full development of the personalities of young people and adults within the model of a participative and proactive democracy. The aim is to continue the secondary education of graduates who are thus able to undertake ventures, integrate in the world of work and continue studying at university level. In Sweden, municipal adult education, which is part of the national adult education system, provides adults with skills at levels corresponding to compulsory school (basic adult education) and upper secondary school (upper secondary adult education). Another example of

lifelong learning opportunities comes from Cuba, which reported that universities were providing education for retired people and senior citizens.

Several States reported on providing (Armenia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Estonia, Gambia, Georgia, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Pakistan, Spain, Serbia, Slovakia and Uzbekistan) or aiming to provide (Cuba) both formal and informal education. Norway reported that all adults have the right to have the knowledge and skills they have acquired through work experience and non-formal and informal learning, evaluated and validated. The validation process often leads to a partial or full certificate of upper secondary education and training. If the results of the validation procedure show that an adult needs only certain parts of a particular subject to achieve a formal qualification, the local authorities are in principle obliged to provide the learner with precisely that training. Niger reported on informal education being developed through bridge classes, second chance classes and alternative education centres. In Spain, the Centre for Innovation and Development of Distance Education is responsible for coordinating and organizing the components and processes of distance education, as well as facilitating access to education for adults and students of school age who, due to personal, social, geographical or other exceptional circumstances, are unable to take ordinary classroom-based courses. It offers non-formal education through Mentor Classrooms, a system of open, free online training promoted by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

Several States reported on how they make **adult education and lifelong learning accessible**. Kuwait reported that most of its lifelong learning programmes are taught free of charge and without discrimination, or for a small fee, which is less than their real cost. In Spain adult education is offered to all citizens over 18 years of age. In addition to adults, people over 16 years of age who have an employment contract that prevents them from attending an educational establishment in the usual way, or who are high-performance sports people, may be admitted to adult education on request. In Serbia, adult education is regulated by the Law on Adult Education of 2013, and the national strategic framework defined by the Strategy for development of adult education in the Republic of Serbia. With regards to refugees and immigrants, in Denmark, they may follow specifically developed courses or they may combine and supplement regular adult vocational training programmes with introductory short training courses and work placement or courses in Danish. Brazil, Cuba and Venezuela have reported on measures targeting prisoners. Cuba, with the signing of the Employment Agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Prisons Directorate, has continued its efforts to enrol prisoners in the various levels of adult education, and their work is integrated with the special education provided to underachieving inmates with special educational needs. There has also been an increase in training for trades and for skilled workers to assist in their full social reintegration.

Placement tests to receive a certificate were reported by Honduras and Czech Republic. In Honduras, adults who interrupted their schooling many years ago and, for example, do not have the relevant documentation but who wish or need to study can undergo a placement test, and receive certification depending on their results. They can then enrol in the immediately higher level if they pass the test satisfactorily. If they do not, they are provided with tutoring so that they can sit the test again. In the Czech Republic, the amended Act on the verification and recognition of further education results enables individuals to get their acquired competencies

recognized by means of professional qualifications examinations as described in the National System of Qualifications. Following a successful professional qualification examination, an individual receives a professional qualification certificate, which has lifelong validity. A similar and commendable measure was adopted by Portugal, where the 'Individual Carnet of Competences' was put in place. It acts as a personal, non-transferable and optional electronic document that lists the skills gained and the training carried out throughout life. Such measures contribute greatly to ensuring a system of continuing education and lifelong learning.

States reported on measures to **improve adult education levels** within the workplace or directed towards developing professional competences (notably Armenia, Bulgaria, Denmark, Latvia, Malta, Norway, New Zealand, Turkey). In Turkey for example, employers in public institutions and organizations are obliged to take measures to provide literacy lessons for staff working within their organizations and offices. In Norway, special efforts are being made to include SMEs in the programme and to encourage applications from industries that employ people with relatively low formal skills. Basic Competence in Working Life (BCWL) courses are adapted to the needs of a particular company or branch. However, the courses aim to go beyond improving participants' employability and corporate efficiency and results, since they recognize and promote aspects such as social inclusion, increased self-esteem and improved general welfare for adults. In New Zealand, the Government funds programmes for adults in the workplace that deliver job-specific literacy and numeracy skills. An improvement in literacy and numeracy skills helps not only those seeking employment, but also those already in the workforce.

Some States (in particular New Zealand and Norway) reported on measures to **assess adult learning progress**. In Norway, a database has been established in order to supply up-to-date reports on the progress of the BCWL programme. The database also includes detailed information on participants (gender, formal education, industry etc.). This makes it possible to monitor the programme's achievements, to ascertain whether it reaches the intended target groups, and to evaluate the long term impact. Similarly, in New Zealand, a Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool was introduced in 2010. It provides reliable information on adults' reading, writing and numeracy skills, which can inform the planning of learning schemes to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills. It also enables learners to track their progress over time.

Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Malta, Spain and Zambia all reported measures to ensure **flexibility in learning**. Cuba reported that a broad range of workers from all sectors can be encouraged to take up adult education by holding evening classes in students' place of residence. Malta reported on its provision of e-learning options and childcare services.

There were also reports of **supplementary programmes** provided by private sources, public-private partnerships, non-profit organisations and NGOs (Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Honduras, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Spain, Uzbekistan). Uzbekistan reported that the activities of its non-governmental educational organizations were subject to licensing and monitoring by the State Testing Committee. In Egypt, through the Strategic Plan for Literacy and Adult Education 2014-2030, the General Authority for Literacy and Adult

Education seeks to achieve an effective partnership with State institutions and civil society organizations in order to address illiteracy in Egypt and achieve across-the-board development.

With regard to **raising literacy levels**, one third of States reported on targeted programmes (Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Gambia, Honduras, Iran, Kuwait, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Portugal, Qatar, Turkey, Venezuela, Zambia). In Honduras, the 2016-2017 national literacy plan, 'Honduras Aprende' (Honduras learns), seeks to cut the illiteracy rate from the current 12.5% to 5% by 2017, by focusing on students who are lagging behind in grades two to six. The plan also includes a post-literacy process with programmes for youth and adults, organized by the Sub-Directorate General for Adult and Youth Education in the Ministry of Education. In the Netherlands, adult education institutions will also place greater emphasis on numeracy and literacy lessons for people who are functionally illiterate as enshrined in legislation adopted in January 2013. In addition, the government has laid down guidelines for improving literacy and numeracy levels in adult education. Such benchmark levels already apply in all other education sectors. Zambia has established the Directorate of Open and Distance Education which has been coordinating the implementation of literacy programmes in the country through the provision of reading, writing and functional skills. Some States (such as Gambia and Iraq) have established literacy centres. For example, Iraq has opened numerous community centres in the provinces to enable women to acquire life skills; these centres also offer lessons that follow the literacy curriculum.

IX. Towards quality education

Quality education is a dynamic concept that changes and evolves with time as well as the social, economic, and environmental context.¹⁴ There is no single definition of 'quality' and most attempts to define it include two fundamental perspectives. Firstly, cognitive development is a primary objective and the effectiveness of education is measured against its success in achieving this objective. Secondly, education must promote creative and emotional development, supporting the objectives of peace, citizenship and security, fostering equality and passing global and local cultural values down to future generations.¹⁵

Ensuring education of good quality for all and at all levels is a continuing concern for the international community. In the past, there was some concern that the previous education agenda focused too much on access and not enough on the quality of the education provided. The new Education 2030 Agenda encapsulates this shift towards quality education so as to ensure 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Consequently, ensuring quality of education is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, under SDG 4 target 4-a, countries should build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability- and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent,

¹⁴ UNESCO, *Contributing to a More Sustainable Future: Quality Education, Life Skills and Education for Sustainable Development*, 2005, unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001410/141019e.pdf

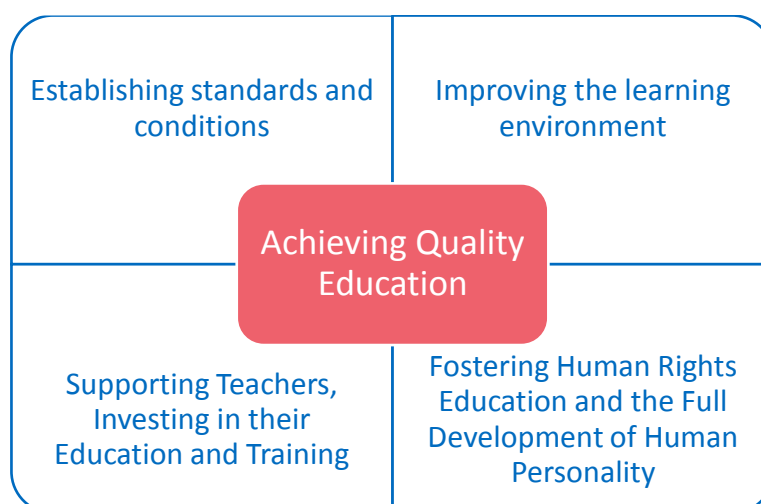
¹⁵ UNICEF/UNESCO, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 32, unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001548/154861e.pdf

inclusive and effective learning environments for all. Under the Education 2030 Framework For Action, quality education involves ensuring that students are learning and acquiring relevant skills once they are in school, in order to produce relevant, equitable and effective learning outcomes at all levels and in all settings. The content of education curricula has to be of good quality and lead, at a minimum, to the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills. The learning environment also needs to be safe, accessible to all and have adequate resources, materials and infrastructure to ensure reasonable class sizes and provide sanitation facilities. Teachers have to be sufficient in number, well-qualified, trained, adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated, and use appropriate pedagogical approaches supported by appropriate information and communication technology. Finally, quality also requires systems for institutional management arrangements, governance, accountability mechanisms, quality assurance and strong public financial management.

Consequently, a good-quality education focuses on learners and their environments, as well as on education content, processes and measurable learning outcomes. UNESCO traditionally promotes access to good-quality education as a human right and supports a rights-based approach to all educational activities.¹⁶ The 1960 Convention contains explicit reference to the quality of education. It makes it clear that the term ‘education’ is defined as encompassing ‘the standard and quality of education’¹⁷.

Member States were asked to report on the measures taken to ensure that the standards of education were equivalent in all public educational institutions of the same level and that conditions relating to the quality of the education provided were also equivalent¹⁸. Educational standards and conditions, the learning environment, curriculum and education materials, teacher training and qualifications are among the main areas reported on by Member States when dealing with quality issues.

Key areas addressed by countries to achieve quality education



¹⁶ EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005

¹⁷ Article 1.2

¹⁸ As prescribed by the Convention in Article 4 (b)

Quality education: standards and conditions

A number of countries have indicated that they have enshrined education standards in their domestic legislation (notably Armenia, Brazil, Croatia, Honduras, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, Turkmenistan and Venezuela). For instance, in Armenia, the law on education provides that state educational standards must be established and promulgated and serve as the basis for assessing graduates' education level and qualifications, irrespective of the form of education they have received, as well as the legal and organizational status of educational institutions. Many other States have made efforts to raise the quality of education through varying educational strategies.

With regards to student outcomes, Iran, Ireland and Mongolia took measures to change the approach to school grades. In this respect, Iran embraced a project to increase the quality of the teaching-learning process by: gradually eliminating the culture of studying for the sake of getting top grades; emphasizing the goals of the Ministry of Education through more concentrated learning processes than those available under the syllabi; gradually eliminating the absolute authority of final exams in determining a student's destiny; and upgrading the mental health of the teaching-learning environment by attaching less importance to marks and grades. Similarly, in Mongolia, whereas quality of education used to be expressed in terms of scores achieved by students in exams, it is now explained by the extent to which knowledge and skills achieved through educational attainment can contribute to effective citizenship and functioning in society. Furthermore, Brazil and Germany have established an educational monitoring system for student outcomes. The Standing Conference in Germany, in June 2015, revised the comprehensive strategy for educational monitoring it had adopted in 2006. It consists of four interconnected areas: international comparative studies of pupil achievement; a central review of attainment of educational standards using a comparison between the Länder; comparative studies that assess the efficiency of individual schools within the Länder; and joint education reporting of the Federation and the Länder.

A common strategy to improve the quality of education is to address overcrowded classrooms, invest in educational materials and ensure there is appropriate infrastructure. The Czech Republic reported taking measures to ensure schools and school facilities have the staff and techniques needed to provide for the education of pupils with a health, social or other disadvantage. Certain States reported that textbooks are provided free of charge (such as Armenia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Japan, Malta, Macedonia, Malta, Venezuela and Zambia) or specifically for vulnerable groups such as disabled children (Uzbekistan). Schools have been equipped with laboratories and libraries (Armenia) and other States reported on measures to introduce or strengthen ICT in the school system (Armenia, Bangladesh, Cuba, Georgia, Kuwait, Monaco, Sweden, Uzbekistan and Venezuela). In Monaco, the year 2015/2016 saw a major investment in school equipment such as interactive tablets and video projectors. In Venezuela, the Canaima Educational Project distributes mini laptops to children in primary school and tablets to secondary-school and university students. Numerous States reported having favourable teacher/learner ratios (Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Latvia and Monaco) and pupil/class ratios (Iran and Iraq). Armenia, Chile, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Macedonia, Niger, Qatar and Turkey have taken steps to improve infrastructure standards in order to ensure a safe environment and

appropriate physical conditions for study and life. In Macedonia, for example, the Ministry of Education and Science devised some programmes aimed at building and renovating schools in urban and rural areas for the period 2013-2015, in order to ensure equal quality of primary and secondary education for all children. In Qatar, safety and security measures have been put in place in all educational institutions and school buildings are provided with emergency exits and safety equipment and devices. In Georgia, Resource Officers ensure the safety of general education institutions and their grounds. They are reported to respond promptly to any violations of school order that have been identified or occurred. They are also responsible for ensuring that no one brings any sharp weapons or firearms into the school, and for policing the ban on alcohol and drugs distribution within the educational institution and its grounds.

Another important way to improve the quality of education is to revise the content of the curriculum (Bangladesh, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Georgia, Iraq, Poland and Uzbekistan). Cuba has put into place strategies such as environmental studies and aesthetic and art classes. Poland plans to overhaul the core curriculum for pre-school and general education, and to optimise it in terms of learning outcomes and transparency for its beneficiaries: schools, teachers and students. The aim is also to raise the profile of general requirements, including the key student skills required by the labour market, and to improve students' creative and critical thinking skills, self-organization, effective communication skills and teamwork.

In order to ensure that standards are being respected, many countries have established external evaluation systems and other forms of assessment to gauge the efficiency of their educational programmes (Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, New Zealand, Pakistan, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkmenistan and Ukraine). In New Zealand, the Education Review Office, which is independent of the Ministry of Education, is tasked with evaluating and reporting publicly on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services. The Office's findings inform decisions and choices made by parents, teachers, managers, trustees and others at the individual school and early childhood level, and at the national level by Government policy makers. In Malta, the Quality Assurance Department is legally responsible for ensuring quality in all compulsory schools. Its main function is to carry out inspections and external reviews and to ensure that the conditions are in place for children and students to achieve the set learning targets and develop the necessary skills. In contrast, Estonia reported that there is no independent inspectorate, which means that no complex, full-scale inspection is conducted. The Ministry of Education and Research establishes the inspection priorities for each school year and the county governors carry out thematic inspections accordingly. Some States reported that they ensured quality education through school self-assessment arrangements (Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Macedonia and Malta). More specifically, in Malta, an internal review (school self-reflection) is seen as an integral part of the school development planning process, and the resulting actions and objectives are taken on board and reflected in the School Development Plans. The internal review processes and development planning are reported to involve all stakeholders and point the way forward for the school community.

With regard to experience and knowledge sharing, some States reported on the importance of promoting good practices in order to develop and reinforce the quality of education. In this respect, Kuwait reported on an

important cooperation experience between the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Singapore, which involved setting up a diagnostic study of education in Kuwait in 2013. Other States reported on setting up expert committees or advisory structures (Chile, Iraq, Niger). With the assistance of a number of international organizations, Iraq set up a Committee of Experts to establish a quality standards framework for teachers, supervisors and management. In Chile, which is transitioning to the new institutional framework, the ‘Mobilize for Public Education’¹⁹ initiative provides 25 billion pesos through the Public Education Support Fund. The aim is to activate school councils consisting of representatives of students, parents and guardians, education assistants, teachers, managers and service providers, pursuant to the General Education Act. The aim is to engage them in constructive dialogue and prioritize projects which they themselves define.

Some States such as Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Georgia, Hungary, Kuwait and Latvia, reported on their accreditation system, particularly for higher institutions, as a way to improve the quality of education. In Denmark, accreditation is mandatory for all institutions of higher education and is a prerequisite for obtaining public funding. In Latvia, the State Education Quality Service is responsible for both the legal accreditation and external evaluation of schools and their programmes. The accreditation decision is based on the conclusions and recommendations of an expert commission, typically comprising three representatives from the sector (i.e. national government, municipalities and other schools). The expert commission measures multiple sources of evidence such as the school’s self-evaluation report, classroom observations, documentation and surveys against 19 quality criteria, including aspects relating to discrimination.

An example of good practice relating to the governance of the education sector comes from Armenia. In 2015, with the support of the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Education and Science drafted model codes of ethics and guidelines that aim to enable higher education institutions to develop their own rules of conduct in order to enhance the integrity of the higher education system. This process was carried out within the framework of the ‘Strengthening Integrity and Combating Corruption in Higher Education in Armenia’ project, developed jointly with experts and higher education institutions.

Learning environment

Ensuring a quality school environment is essential for the physical and psychosocial-learning and well-being of students. All sorts of negative behaviour such as bullying and discrimination affect children’s learning processes in a negative way and impede their right to education. Efforts to create a safe and violence-free environment, combat bullying and corporal punishment in school and/or provide remedies were reported by several States (Argentina, Burkina Faso, Chile, Côte d’Ivoire, Denmark, Ecuador, Germany, Honduras, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Macedonia, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Serbia, Spain, Turkey and Venezuela).

Several States, notably Brazil, Chile, Haiti, Japan, Latvia, Monaco, Netherlands, Serbia, Ukraine and Venezuela, have adopted **legislation against violence in schools**. In Japan, the law incorporates comprehensive measures

¹⁹ Unofficial translation

to counter bullying and the legislation on education strictly prohibits corporal punishment by teachers. In the Netherlands, a law on social safety in schools was adopted in May 2015 and has required schools to provide a socially safe school environment. In Australia, the legal framework was strengthened to provide additional protection against discrimination. Through amendments to the Sex and Age Discrimination Legislation Amendment Act, students are legally protected from sexual harassment. This also covers sexual harassment by adult students and staff members from other institutions that they may come into contact with in other settings (for instance, inter-school events). These amendments provide greater protection for children from sexual harassment, particularly where it may occur through the use of modern technology, such as texting or the use of social networking sites.

Promoting standards, developing guidance and raising awareness also appears to be a common strategy to tackle school violence (for example, in Argentina, Burkina Faso, Denmark, Hungary, Iraq, Ireland, Macedonia, Malta, Norway, Poland, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey and Venezuela). A good example is Norway's 'Partnership against bullying', covering the period 2016-2020. Under this mandatory partnership to ensure good, inclusive childhood- and learning environments from kindergarten through to upper secondary school, the government has launched several measures to combat bullying at local and school levels. The Directorate for Education and Training has produced guidance material entitled 'Children's well-being – adults' responsibility. Preventing bullying starts in kindergarten', which is designed to assist staff in developing inclusive practices and a good psychosocial environment, in close cooperation with parents. In South Africa, the booklet *Safer Schools for All: Challenging homophobic bullying* was developed as part of the National School Safety Framework dedicated to promoting safety for all within South African schools. It specifically targets the School Management Team (educators, principals and their management teams as well as the school governing bodies) and learners, and encourages SMTs to create an affirming and safe environment for learners, educators and parents who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered or Intersex (LGBTI), or parents with children who are LGBTI to support and accept their children. In Denmark, since 2009 it has been mandatory for schools to adopt a set of values. The value framework must include an anti-bullying strategy and provide guidance for good behaviour and respectful relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers. With regard to awareness-raising activities, Norway, Spain and Turkey have implemented interesting measures. In Norway, the educational authorities have funded various anti-bullying and learning environment programmes. The campaign 'Better learning environment' is an ongoing national five-year effort to this end. In Spain, there are awareness campaigns on data protection and the prevention of cyberbullying, grooming or sexting. In Turkey, the 'Prevention of Violence Against Children Project' includes raising awareness amongst parents, NGO members, non-teaching staff, teaching staff and students.

Some States reported that schools have a point of contact to deal with bullying. In Ecuador, the Student Counselling Department professionals provide effective assistance, intervention, leadership and follow-up in such cases. In the Netherlands, there is a permanent coordinator within each school who serves as the contact person for the school's anti-bullying activities, and who also acts as a counsellor for students and parents.

Identifying victims of bullying and discrimination is a vital step in order to provide adequate support. In this respect, in Ecuador, in 2013 the Ministry of Education drew up the 'Protocols and roadmaps for dealing with violence and/or sexual violence detected or committed in educational institutions within the national education system'. The document underlines that all professionals working in educational establishments have a responsibility to identify situations of violence, as well as an obligation to denounce such cases immediately and to duly inform the competent authorities. In 2015, the document was updated to reinforce the prevention of violence aspect, with a focus on violence motivated by sexual orientation, gender identity or ethnic status. It provides guidelines on the action to be taken when situations of violence and/or sexual violence have been identified in educational establishments. In Norway, a new subject called 'Pedagogies and student knowledge' has been included in training programmes for teachers, principals and education management, so that teachers and other school staff can be aware of any signs of exposure to discrimination or bullying.

Monitoring is another important measure for preventing risks of violence and discrimination (Denmark, France, Latvia, Netherlands, Serbia and Qatar). In Denmark, all pupils must fill in a survey about their well-being every year from 2015 and onwards. In the Netherlands, monitoring of the perceived safety of pupils in schools must be done using a tool that provides a representative overview, and the inspection assesses the efforts of a school in this area. Furthermore, the biannual social safety monitor registers the social safety of LGBT students and teachers within primary and secondary education. As from 2016, this topic has been added to the social safety monitor of intermediate vocational education schools as well.

Regarding access to justice and restoration, a few States reported on such mechanisms (Denmark, Ecuador and Venezuela). In Denmark, any person can turn to the Parliamentary Ombudsman to the Children's Office about a decision taken by the authorities, or about a treatment they have received from the authorities. With the Children's Office, children's access to the Ombudsman has been improved. The Ombudsman's jurisdiction applies to conditions for children in public and private schools. In Ecuador in 2013, the Ministry of Education signed the 'Tripartite framework convention on inter-institutional cooperation between the Ministry of Education, the Judiciary Council and the Prosecutor General's Office'. The aim of the convention is to institute effective legal proceedings and to impose sanctions in situations of violence and/or sexual violence towards children and adolescents committed within the school environment.

Teaching profession

Teachers play a vital role in determining the quality of education provided in schools, as stated in the Incheon Declaration: 'We will ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.' Article 4(d) of the 1960 Convention engages States Parties to provide training for the teaching profession without discrimination. The conditions, qualifications, rights and duties of teaching staff are further protected by both the ILO-UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997).

Minimum standards and qualifications for teachers are key to providing a good quality education. An important number of States reported on legislation and regulations for the recruitment of teachers and standards for initial training (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Cook Islands, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Georgia, Honduras, Japan, Latvia, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Qatar and Zambia). In Australia, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers underpin a nationally consistent approach to teacher registration. All teachers are required to demonstrate that they meet the standards in order to obtain registration or re-registration. All states and territories have mutual recognition provisions in place to allow greater flexibility in the registration of teachers and improve mobility for the teaching workforce. Furthermore, in December 2015, all education ministers endorsed a revised and strengthened process for the accreditation of initial teacher education courses which are expected to have a significant impact on the quality of the future teaching workforce. In Qatar, a professional teacher licensing system was put in place by the Ministry of Education to ensure that teachers' levels of competence meet national professional standards. Licensing is subject to an accurate assessment of a teacher's performance, ensuring that it meets professional standards. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh has made efforts to ensure quality in teacher education by setting up the National Teacher Education Council, which works to establish a national standard of teacher education. The Government has a plan to set up a national university of education to meet the nation's teacher education needs. In Bulgaria, the State requirements for awarding the professional 'teacher' qualification are set by Ordinance of the Council of Ministers. Interestingly, in cases where the teaching position is occupied by persons without a professional 'teacher' qualification, the school must prepare and implement a plan to enable this person to acquire pedagogical proficiency.

Some States reported on teacher performance monitoring systems (Cook Islands, Ecuador, Estonia, Honduras and Pakistan). In the Cook Islands, the Performance Management System (PMS) for Cook Islands teachers is an attempt to improve practice through professional development and the achievement of performance excellence. The purpose of the PMS system is to provide staff with an opportunity to be appraised and to provide a clear overview of their performance. It allows staff to identify personal goals and the professional development support they will need to achieve them. There have been recent changes to the PMS system making it a more user-friendly system that promotes the growth of staff, motivating and empowering them toward demonstrating excellence. This system highlights greater mutual professional accountability as a strategy to raise the actual and perceived status of the teaching profession. In Estonia, both teachers and school leaders must have an opportunity to assess their skills levels, receive feedback about their performance and development needs, and receive payment corresponding to their contribution and job performance.

Since teachers are essential to guaranteeing quality education, they must be provided with **continuous professional development**. In this respect, several States reported on measures to provide teacher training (Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cook Islands, Croatia, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Slovakia, Qatar, Tunisia, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Zambia). For example, in New Zealand, the entry criteria for teacher training programmes relate to academic

qualifications and dispositional qualities. These are set by the tertiary education institutions that offer teacher education programmes. Teacher education programmes need to meet the standards defined by the Education Council and by national quality assurance bodies. These criteria vary across Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers and between individual programmes. New Zealand offers a wide variety of ITE programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. They all include a mix of practical learning as well as university-based study. Teachers in Cuba are also trained to interact with their pupils' families to prepare them to take an active role in educating their children. In Hungary, a training system for practising teachers is operated by the Educational Authority in order to develop their basic skills, continue their professional development and give them adequate knowledge of sex education. NGOs are involved in organizing training courses 'preparing teachers for supporting child victims of bullying (school violence, domestic violence, sexual abuse, internet or on-line abuse)' and the private sector organizes training on 'Sex education from pre-school to secondary school. Guidance for teachers to support students towards an adulthood without taboos'.

More specifically, some States provided in-service training in order to ensure lifelong professional development for teachers (Bangladesh, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Gambia, Georgia, Portugal, Monaco, Sweden, Tunisia). In the Czech Republic, all teaching staff have a statutory duty to gain further professional qualifications. A system of further training for teaching staff has been introduced by law and it is based on the accreditation of educational institutions and their educational programme, some of which are standardized. In Croatia, upgrading professional knowledge is a statutory obligation for all teachers. It is ensured through a system of accredited conferences, seminars and workshops organized at the national, county and town levels by the Institute for Development in Education, teacher training faculties and colleges, professional teacher associations and activities, as well as by some NGOs. The introduction of an in-service training package in Gambia, to support teachers in improving their content knowledge, is another innovation which has benefited a lot of teachers. The opportunity given to teachers for further training from one stage to the other is another initiative. Teachers can apply for further training, scholarships and study leave with salary. The introduction of a teacher register is another step in professionalising teaching. Finally, another example is in Pakistan, where in-service training covers a wide range of areas: pedagogy and knowledge of pedagogical content; subject content knowledge; testing and assessment practices; multi-grade teaching, monitoring and evaluation; and programmes to cater to emerging needs such as training in languages and ICT.

Some States reported calling on experts to improve teacher quality and the educational environment. In Australia, the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, comprising eight educational experts, was established early in 2014 to provide advice on how initial teacher education could be improved to better prepare new teachers for the classroom. In Spain, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport is working on a project to modernize, professionalize and enhance the value of the role of the teacher. To this end, it has commissioned a team of prominent experts to draft a white paper, which will serve as a basis for stakeholder debate: the White Paper on Teaching and the School Environment (2015).

States reported on the regulation of teachers' salaries and/or their salary in respect of other civil servants (in particular Armenia, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Cook Islands, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Gambia, Germany,

Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Monaco, New Zealand, Spain and Turkmenistan). While many countries indicated average salaries and benefits for teachers, very few actually provided information on the salaries of other civil servants or other professions to allow for comparison, as requested. In Armenia, according to education legislation, ‘The remuneration rate for the work carried out by pedagogical (academic and teaching) staff at state education institutions may not be lower than the average salary of employees of budgetary institutions’. This legal requirement is ensured in the field of professional education. Professional education institutions provide academic and teaching staff with increments using funds received from their paid instruction systems. Another interesting example is provided by Côte d’Ivoire, where a decree establishes that teachers can benefit from positive salary discrimination with regard to other civil servants in the same grade. In Ecuador, all professionals with higher education diplomas have an equal opportunity for reclassification. Beginning in August 2015, more than 23,000 teachers were reclassified to grade G of the scale to guarantee a dignified salary, reflecting the tertiary level training they had received. In Germany, remuneration for teaching careers is in line with the corresponding grades in the upper and highest grades of the civil service. In Latvia, according to the Education Law, the State funds teacher salaries and subsidises some other costs (e.g. teaching aids, school lunches in primary school). In 2015, work was underway on a new teacher’s wage calculation model and wage raising schedule. The model advocates a rise in teachers’ wages, while promoting an increase in the quality of teachers’ work and ensuring efficient use of financial resources. Bangladesh raised a concern regarding teachers’ salaries. The government has been providing a 100% salary subsidy to teachers employed in non-governmental institutions, in order to provide balance with other professions and raise the status of non-government teachers in society. The number of non-government educational institutions are increasing day by day and, as a result, the government has to spend an increasing amount of money from the revenue budget. Haiti reported on wide pay gap and discrepancies depending on whether teachers were working in public or private institutions, and in urban or rural areas.

Some States reported that they had increased salaries in order to raise interest in the teaching profession and improve the quality of general education (Armenia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Hungary, Iraq, Sweden, Turkmenistan), and provided financial aid such as rewards, subsidies, bonuses, grants and/or preferential loans (Bulgaria, Egypt, Gambia, Iraq, Kuwait, Mongolia, Slovakia, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Zambia). Hungary is gradually implementing a new comprehensive system of teacher appraisal and career advancement, while increasing teacher remuneration yearly until 2018. From August 2013 until January 2015 the average teachers’ salary grew by around 40 percent and will continue to grow 3-4 % every September until 2017. The highest salary increase is given to teachers who are placed in the Master Teachers category following their appraisal. Regarding financial aid, in Bulgaria, pedagogical specialists working in a small village outside their settlement are entitled to reimbursement of their transport costs from their home to the workplace and back, or for workplace rent, under the terms and conditions specified in an Ordinance issued by the Minister of Education and Science. In Egypt, the Prime Minister issued a decision in January 2014 introducing a job-related hardship bonus for teachers. The decision stipulates that teachers shall be awarded a bonus in recognition of their efforts during the school year and for the burdens of the job they undertake. Tunisia and Mongolia provide preferential loans for housing. In this respect, the Ministry of Education in Tunisia has proposed a

package of benefits for secondary school teachers in an attempt to improve their financial and social conditions. The main elements are the creation of a housing office at the Ministry of Education, which will offer teachers loans on favourable terms to purchase housing or land. Armenia, Chile, Gambia, Guatemala, Uzbekistan and Zambia reported efforts to improve support to teachers in rural areas. For example, in Gambia, to ensure better working conditions for teachers and to attract teachers to remote areas, the Ministry offers various incentives, including a hardship allowance and teachers' quarters, which have been built in some rural schools. Thanks to these incentives, some teachers receive twice their basic salary, which has attracted many qualified teachers appointed on open-ended contracts to these areas. Female teachers receive a 5% additional allowance if posted in hardship areas.

A common challenge is strengthening the social status and attractiveness of the teaching profession (Armenia, Bulgaria, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Ecuador, Estonia, France, Honduras, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Slovakia, Sweden and Uzbekistan). In Chile, actions have been undertaken to strengthen initial teacher training and provide the incentives and support teachers need to take up a teaching career. Other efforts focus on developing an attractive professional career that allows for specialization and recognizes both individual and collaborative work, and providing a remuneration package commensurate with the enormous importance of teaching. In Cuba, since 2013, there has been an audiovisual communication programme to improve the image of teachers. Television advertisements focusing on the lives of individual teachers are broadcast regularly, and there is also a programme for teachers on one of the national educational channels. It offers teaching staff methodological suggestions for their class preparation and professional advancement. In Ecuador, one objective for 2020 is to reduce the number of contractual teachers in public education. The optimum workforce is one with approximately 90% of teachers appointed on open-ended contracts, which ensures stability and growth within the public school system. The remaining 10% are contractual teachers who are encouraged to take the various competitive examinations to become members of the profession and obtain an appointment. In Sweden, an initiative called the 'national coalition for the teaching profession' has been launched with the aim of taking a more long-term and comprehensive approach to improving status and attractiveness of the teaching profession. These proposals relate to the recruitment of teachers and pre-school teachers, but also to getting practising teachers to remain in the profession. For example, the Government is reviewing the requirements for introducing shorter supplementary educational courses in order to attract more people with different professional experience or training to the teaching profession.

Tanzania is the only State to report explicitly on the occurrence of cases of discrimination concerning teacher training. The country referred to a *de facto* geographical discrimination arising from the restricted opportunities offered to teachers in the Tanzanian Islands as compared to their mainland peers. A third of States specified that there is no discrimination in accessing teacher-training or professional employment, while the rest did not include any information about this issue. In this regard, Australia reported that teacher employers, as well as the statutory authorities that regulate teacher registration, are required to comply with legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment. Individuals have a number of avenues to pursue complaints and request process reviews in case of alleged discriminations or unequal treatment.

Human rights education and development of the human personality

In order to draw up a comprehensive educational policy that ensures quality for all, it is imperative to consider the goal of education as stated in the 1960 Convention, which calls upon Member States to ensure that ‘Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; it shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace;’ (art. 5.1(a)). SDG 4.7 reiterates the importance of ensuring that all learners acquire knowledge of human rights, global citizenship, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, and appreciation of cultural diversity. Education in human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the development of the human personality are key factors in teaching students their rights, respect and tolerance towards others, and how they can affirm their role in society. The significance of this teaching is reflected in the measures taken by States to ensure quality education.

Commitments to include global citizenship education and human rights education in the curriculum were expressed by the majority of reporting countries. In this respect, in April 2016 Chile promulgated legislation whereby every educational establishment recognized by the State must have a citizenship education plan that includes: an understanding and analysis of the concept of citizenship and its associated rights and duties; promotion of knowledge, understanding and analysis of the rule of law; promotion of students’ knowledge, understanding and commitment to human rights; an encouragement for students to value the country’s social and cultural diversity, and for student participation in subjects of public interest. In Hungary, the knowledge of the basic concept of anti-discrimination is included in the social participation elements of National Core Curriculum. The curriculum also prescribes the transmission of positive attitudes based on full respect for human rights, including respect for the values of equality and democracy; openness to participation on every level of the democratic process; the expression of a sense of responsibility; and respect for and acceptance of common values that support community cohesion (for example, respect for democratic principles). In Slovakia, as part of the revised state education programmes in force since September 2015, content and performance standards on human rights, in particular as regards vulnerable sections of the population – the rights of children, women and minorities – were added to civics studies. In Ecuador, the Government has implemented the 2016 national curriculum, which incorporates an inclusive and pluralistic approach, taking into consideration gender perspectives, the concept of the most vulnerable and least protected socioeconomic, ethnic, age and cultural groups such as workers, farmers, women, children, indigenous nationalities, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) groups, persons with disabilities, citizens with African ancestry and Afro-Ecuadorians, which have borne the brunt of social constructions and representations based on stereotypes and prejudices that undermine rights.

Certain States reported on including health promotion in the curriculum (Argentina, Cuba, Denmark, Monaco, Sweden and Zambia). Cuba, for example, put special emphasis on environmental health, sex education, the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, nutritional education and food hygiene, road safety and accident prevention, awareness of tobacco, alcohol and drugs as well as other addictions and other

non-transmitted conditions. The aim is to encourage children, adolescents, young people and workers in schools to consider their health and healthier lifestyles and promote gender equality and equal rights.

In order to encourage the strengthening of human rights values and to step up awareness-raising, some States reported launching various campaigns and competitions (France, Qatar, South Africa and Venezuela). France set up the René Cassin human rights prize, which is an advocacy competition based on European human rights law; the *National prize for citizen-students*, which is an advocacy competition based on legal aspects of daily life; and the *Act for your rights* competition, which encourages students to illustrate the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.²⁰

Another important measure is the way teachers are trained. In this regard, Denmark, Gambia, Germany, Iraq, Portugal, Qatar and Sweden took measures to ensure that teachers are well-equipped. In Germany, most Länder have taken special measures that are tailored to this issue, such as in-service training for teachers, subject-specific symposia and teaching conferences, or as part of teacher training, where the subject of human rights as a cross-sectional subject receives special attention. In addition, the Länder as a rule endeavour to support schools and teachers through regular newsletters and appropriate Internet material.

With regard to enabling the full development of the human personality, in Ecuador professional educators strive to carry out activities that will provide students with life skills, which include self-knowledge, empathy, assertive communication, interpersonal relations, decision-making, management of problems and conflicts, creative thinking, critical thinking, managing emotions and feelings, and managing tension and stress in order to strengthen the individual personality.

In certain States (Iraq, Kuwait, New Zealand and Uzbekistan), civil society and NGOs complement the role of formal education in order to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the overall development of the human personality.

X. Private education and rights of minorities

Private education and Parental choice

Education freedom means that everyone is free to establish educational institutions as long as they conform to minimum educational standards established by the State. It is also the right of parents or legal guardians to have their children educated in accordance with their religious and moral convictions. Article 5.1 of the 1960 Convention recognizes this right.

The State must fulfill its obligation to provide free, quality education in order to ensure that children are not discriminated against in accessing education. Furthermore, the personal freedom of any person to choose between state-organized and private education is a reference to parental freedom. Thus, in this respect, the State has a negative obligation not to interfere in this parental choice.

²⁰ Unofficial translation

Most States reported providing non-compulsory religious education while some States reported that either an ethics course or religious course is compulsory (such as Hungary). France, Georgia, Ukraine and, to some extent, Uzbekistan reported that religious education is not taught in public schools. Although public education is secular in France, which means that religious education is not taught in its own right, it features in the programmes of related subjects such as history, the arts, history of art and philosophy. In contrast, Monaco reported that religious education is part of the programme in both public and private schools; however, it is not imposed against parental wishes. Some States place particular emphasis on parental choice (Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Germany, Haiti New Zealand, Slovakia). In Bulgaria, 'Religion' is taught as a subject in compulsory-elective and free-elective training. Religion curricula include concepts relating to Christianity and Islam. In Denmark, throughout the entire school career, students learn about religions as part of 'Christian studies'. The course aims to provide information to enable students to reflect on and discuss themes connected to religion, and to make responsible personal choices in that area. Although the teaching is knowledge-based and does not include any religious practice in school, parents or students who object on conscientious grounds can be exempted easily. Armenia and Macedonia reported that religious activities and advocacy in educational institutions are prohibited. In Germany, according to the Law on the Religious Education of Children, once a child has reached the age of 12, a decision made by a child's parents must have the child's consent. From the age of 14, each child is free to decide whether to attend religious instruction, unless Land legislation makes other provisions. In Ukraine, schools are secular but religious organizations are also able to establish religious education institutions as required by their needs. Consequently, the legislation of Ukraine provides for schools of two types - secular and spiritual.

Additionally, several States reported on laws authorizing private, religious and special support schools. For example, in Croatia, according to the Law on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09), the initial accreditation procedure for the performance of higher education activity is conducted in two stages: granting consent for the establishment of a higher education institution, and issuing a licence for performance of higher education activity. In Ecuador, the National Education Authority is responsible for authorizing the establishment and operation of all educational institutions, and for supervising and monitoring such institutions. Within that framework, special support institutions must meet accessibility standards for persons with disabilities, provide an adequate architectural, technological and communication environment, and meet the minimum standards established by the National Education Authority.

Generally speaking, the reports submitted reveal that constitutional and legislative frameworks are used to regulate non-public educational systems, which ensures non-discrimination in terms of access and parental freedom to choose their children's education in conformity with their moral and religious beliefs. Interestingly, in order to ensure equal access to education, Bolivia reported that it is strictly prohibited to charge for the reservation of places, enrolment, teaching materials or entrance fees for pupils in private educational institutions and those that are contracted. Several States reported on measures adopted to ensure that non-public educational institutions are meeting the standards required to provide quality education (Armenia, Denmark, Ecuador, Gambia, France, Germany and Kuwait). Some States reported that the standards are the

same in both public and non-public institutions (notably Armenia, Croatia, Moldova, Sweden), while Canada reported that the legislation and practice concerning the establishment of separate educational systems and private educational institutions vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Supervision of private teaching institutions was reported by some States (France, Germany, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Turkey, Uzbekistan). In this respect, in November 2015, France reinforced its control over private teaching institutions not under contract with the State. In 2016, a guide, which is currently being piloted by several regional education authorities, was produced to support and facilitate the work of the inspectors. The vade mecum should soon be deployed throughout France. Private institutions under contract are subject to stricter monitoring in order to check whether educational programmes and teaching hours, as well as the freedom of conscience of students, are being respected. Furthermore, checks are carried out on the financial and administrative management of such private institutions. State-paid teachers in private institutions under contract are also evaluated and given a teaching score. In Malta, the Education Regulatory Compliance Section performs regular compliance checks to monitor compliance with legislation by each and every church or independent educational institution.

Support for private school education was also reported by some States (Denmark, Iraq, Japan). In Iraq, investment in private education, which is guaranteed and regulated by Statute no. 5 (2013), is encouraged in order to develop the education sector, promote cooperation between private and official institutions at all stages and in all types of education, offer advanced, high-quality and diverse educational opportunities for all sections of society in a manner commensurate with the needs of development, and provide job opportunities. In addition, the private sector assumes the role of partner to the Ministry. Denmark reported on providing private schools with a substantial state subsidy based on the number of pupils in these schools. However, the growth of private actors in education (Côte d'Ivoire, Pakistan) may lead to further challenges. In this respect, Côte d'Ivoire reported that due to the limited availability of public education, some children are assigned to private educational institutions where completion of studies is extremely costly. Some States (for example New Zealand, Qatar, Spain) provide financial aid to enable equal access to private schools. In New Zealand, the Government supports students from low-income households to attend private schools through Aspire Scholarships. These scholarships provide funding towards fees and course-related costs at a private school of their choice.

However, it has been noted that in some States some regulations and/or laws (such as anti-discriminatory legislation or regulations concerning the scope of teaching activities) only apply to public educational institutions, which raises concerns about the standards applicable to private educational institutions.

National minorities

According to Article 5.1(c) of the 1960 Convention, States Parties have agreed on the importance of recognizing the right of members of national minorities to carry out their own educational activities, including school maintenance and, depending on the educational policy of the individual State, the use or teaching of their own language, provided certain quality and access standards are met.

Several States reported protecting national minorities' rights in their constitution (such as Armenia, Bolivia, Croatia, Iraq, Macedonia, Pakistan, Romania and Venezuela). For example, in Armenia, Article 56 of the Constitutional amendment of 2015 states that 'Everyone shall have the right to preserve his or her national and ethnic identity. Persons holding affiliation to national minorities shall have the right to preserve and develop their traditions, religion, language and culture'. Croatia reported that members of national minorities can exercise their constitutional right to education in their mother tongue and script. In Macedonia, pursuant to Amendment VIII to Article 48 of the Constitution, national minorities have the legal right to establish cultural, art, educational and scientific institutions and associations in order to express, nurture and develop their identity.

The national legislations also regulate the rights of national minorities to study in their mother tongue (in particular Armenia, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela). In Armenia, pursuant to a Governmental Decision from 2002, a class with a small number of learners may be opened under certain circumstances, subject to authorisation of the Ministry of Education and Science, which provides an opportunity to open classes comprised of only Yezidi children in Yezidi-populated communities. According to the amended Order No 388 in 2016, a learner affiliated to a national minority shall be enrolled in a school or class providing instruction in the national or native language of the learner or in a school or class providing a course on that language. Where no such school or class is available, the parents of the learner select the language of instruction. In Bulgaria, according to the Public Education Act, pupils whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian have the right to study – alongside compulsory study of the Bulgarian language – their own mother tongue in municipal schools under the protection and control of the State. In Hungary, a self-governing minority may take over from the State the right to operate institutions set up to provide pre-school and primary school education for children belonging to the minority, by concluding a public education agreement. According to the Minority Act of 2011, a nationality class or study group can be launched at the request of at least eight parents. When that number is not met, language studies can be organized in an extracurricular form, providing travelling teachers, if necessary.

In addition to legislation, other States reported on how students who have a different mother tongue to that of the national language are provided with classes to enable students to study their mother tongue either in mainstream schools or in minority schools (for example, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, Zambia). The Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education signed a new Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction. The protocol sets the key parameters for collaboration between the Government of Canada and the provincial/territorial governments on official languages in education and provides a mechanism through which the federal government provides contributions to the costs incurred by the provinces and territories in the delivery of minority-language education and second-language instruction. In Sweden, pupils in compulsory or upper secondary school can receive mother tongue tuition in a national

minority language, provided that there is a suitable teacher available. No other prerequisites apply to pupils belonging to a national minority. Roma children can also receive tuition in two mother tongue languages if they are immigrants to Sweden. A municipality or an independent school can arrange bilingual tuition in school years 1 to 6 for a group of pupils entitled to mother tongue tuition. A maximum of half of the teaching hours may be used for teaching in the mother tongue. In Turkey, a 'Living Languages and Dialects' course has been included in the curriculum and implemented gradually since 2012-2013. In this context, education programmes in the Kurdish, Adyghean-Abkhazian, Georgian and Laz languages and dialects have been put into practice.

Denmark, New Zealand and Poland reported on consultations and research carried out to ensure that the language needs of national minority children are being met. In this respect, in Denmark, the Ministry has conducted intensive information and consultation activities concerning the integration of bilingual children in primary and lower secondary school. Research-based development studies have been enhanced in order to strengthen second language teaching and good practice in schools with bilingual children. In New Zealand, efforts have been made to further discussion of language issues, including through the establishment of a language policy network by the Human Rights Commission. The language policy network looks at issues such as language discrimination, access to interpreting services, and the place of the Māori language, Pacific languages, and languages spoken by other ethnic groups. The Commission is also promoting Pacific Languages weeks (for example Samoan, Tongan, and the Cook Islands Māori Language Week). Poland established several working groups to improve respect of ethnic and national minorities, one of which is the working group for financing educational actions to safeguard the national, ethnic and linguistic identity of minorities.

Aside from the language, the curriculum has also been adapted to other national minority needs (notably Armenia, Bulgaria, Denmark, New Zealand, Moldova, Ukraine, Venezuela). In Armenia, each year the Ministry of Education and Science approves a model curriculum for general education schools or classes of national minorities, where class hours are set aside for studying the native language, literature, culture and history of national minorities for the 1st-12th grades (41 class hours per week). A database of pupils from national minorities has been created within the Department of General Education of the Staff of Yerevan Municipality, in order to involve them in their national holidays or in other events. In Venezuela, the Ministry of the People's Power for Education, through the General Directorate for Intercultural Education, develops programmes for the comprehensive education of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and communities, valuing *inter alia* their languages, world views, values, wisdom, knowledge and mythologies, as well as their social, economic, political and legal organization. All of these elements constitute a national heritage and form a cornerstone of interculturality in the Bolivarian education system, in the full meaning of Venezuelan identity.

Educational standards were also reported to be regulated (in particular Malta, Slovakia and Zambia). In Slovakia, educational standards are set for the following languages of national minorities: Hungarian language and literature, Roma language and literature, Ruthenian language and literature, Ukrainian language and literature. Performance and content standards for Roma language and literature at primary level, lower secondary level and higher secondary education are included in the revised State education programmes for each level of education, while the performance and content standards for Roma studies for the same levels are

currently being revised. Finally, target requirements for the *Maturita* school graduation exam in Roma language and literature have been drawn up. Pupils who have completed a set number of hours in Roma language and literature may take this subject as part of the *Maturita* exam.

Some States reported on providing textbooks for the national minority groups (such as Armenia, Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Sweden and Ukraine). In Armenia, school textbooks are published and republished every year for national minority schools. In Serbia, free textbooks were also given to all national minority pupils in education. In Macedonia, not only do national minorities have the right to free textbooks, but also to free school public transport and free accommodation in student dormitories. In Sweden, the Government is taking steps to provide teaching materials in the national minority languages. For example, the Sami Education Board has been given further funding to produce such materials.

Hungary and Norway reported on funding for national minorities. In Hungary, budget funding for the activities of church-run educational institutions, as well as for minority self-governments, is allocated on the basis of general rules applicable to state-financed institutions and at an identical rate (in accordance with the Act on Public Education). In Norway, specific funding is earmarked to enable municipalities to support minority children's language development and is used in different ways; bilingual assistants, pedagogical material or Norwegian language activities.

With reference to teachers, some States reported on targeted measures. Armenia runs regular training courses for teachers working in national minority schools. Due to a lack of highly-qualified Yezidi language teachers, that language is taught, by way of exception, by teachers who do not possess the relevant education, following recommendation by non-governmental organisations. In Venezuela, one of the most significant advances in the area of bilingual intercultural education has been the development of educational guidance materials for teachers. These combine accepted features, such as respect for indigenous peoples' world views as contributions to and reference points in the whole historical and cultural process of the nation, with a recognition of their own specific knowledge, all backed up by key elements for strengthening bilingual intercultural education. In this connection, monolingual and bilingual textbooks and teachers' guides have been published in indigenous languages such as Bari, Baré, Yaruro, Kariña, Wayuu, Warekena, Baniva, Warao and Curripaco. Of particular interest are the Constitution published in the Wayuunaiki language, the Warao Educational and Instructive Guide in multimedia format, and the publication of bilingual instructions for the implementation of the Kariña Pedagogical Guide.

Some challenges have emerged, however. For example, some territories have experienced difficulties in protecting the right of minorities to be taught in their own language; others reported challenges in providing equal opportunities and rights, owing to cultural and geographical diversity.

XI. Challenges encountered by Member States

In their national reports, States outlined to varying degrees the obstacles and difficulties they face in implementing the provisions of the 1960 Convention or the Recommendation. A comparative analysis of the report reveals that, while their situation may be specific to them to a certain extent, the reporting countries do share many common challenges or difficulties.

The reporting exercise therefore provides an opportunity to promote peer learning and sharing of good practices between countries. Their efforts to outline their challenges also show that they have seized on this reporting exercise as a valuable opportunity to engage in a **self-assessment process** and have started to reflect on how to overcome their difficulties. Such a diagnosis may be seen as a prerequisite for establishing long-term solutions.

Although the challenges reported by the Member States are often crosscutting and intersectoral, they can be grouped into three main areas: those related to equitable access and inclusion; those dealing with the quality of education; and those relating to the system and governance.

Challenges relating to equitable access and inclusion in education

The countries' reports pointed out serious challenges with regard to equity and inclusion. Generally speaking, they show that socio-economic factors, poverty, ethnicity, location and gender account for significant patterns of discrimination and exclusion in education.

In many countries, social background continues to play an important role in determining whether children will be more or less likely to pursue their education and to perform well at school. Poverty and socio-economic factors were repeatedly cited by countries as serious challenges in the implementation of the right to education. A few countries added that the indirect costs of education, such as materials, accommodation and transport, may lead to lower attendance rates, since poor households cannot afford to send their children to school. This is a serious concern since it severely hinders children's ability to fully participate in education, regardless of their social origin or status in society, and to lift themselves out of poverty. Consequently, this affects the principle of equality of educational opportunities, which is a key pillar of the right to education.

Cultural and traditional attitudes that undervalue the importance of education or restrict opportunities for some groups are an additional problem to achieving universal access to equitable and inclusive quality education. Harmful practices such as early marriage and child labour continue to prevail in some parts of the world, depriving children of their right to go to school. In addition, the lack of re-entry systems and teenage pregnancy are also significant causes of exclusion. Although the extent of gender disparities can vary significantly between countries, gender bias and discrimination continue to act as a strong impediment to girls' and women's right to education. Misperceptions of the role of education and traditional representations may also severely limit the opportunities offered to girls and boys, but also to other vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities. Indeed, persons with disabilities face significant obstacles, ranging from physical accessibility of the school premises to the adaptability of education content to their specific needs, and their

vulnerability is often aggravated by the stigma associated with disability. Minority groups are another group exposed to a high risk of marginalization since they are less likely to participate in quality education, partly due to language and cultural barriers.

A wide majority of countries described the challenges they faced with regard to rural and remote areas. The frequent urban/rural divide reveals large disparities in access to education. The number and quality of educational programmes available throughout the national territory often varies greatly between regions, which makes it more difficult to reach those living in remote areas. Those who are actually enrolled in school may have access to fewer educational opportunities when transitioning to secondary education or higher levels. In remote areas, indigenous peoples and nomadic groups may be further out of reach, owing to additional barriers.

In their reports, the countries presented the challenges they face in relation to the so-called migrant and refugee crisis. In that respect, a comparison with the previous consultation (Eighth Consultation, 2011-2013) is striking. For the current consultation, many more countries have described the difficulties they face in providing education for refugees and migrants, which shows how pressing this issue has become. In many parts of the world, migrants and refugees encounter administrative obstacles, such as the need to show documents in order to be enrolled. Particular difficulties may arise when no system of recognition of foreign qualifications and diplomas has been established, creating a complex situation for determining the newcomers' level of education. Various States reported providing educational programmes, languages courses tailored to their needs and other arrangements, but noted that it can be challenging to fully guarantee their right to education.

Challenges relating to the quality of education

Difficulties relating to the quality of education is one of the most commonly shared challenges reported by Member States. They often have to deal with an education system that is unable to cope with the rising demand for education and the diverse needs of learners.

A lack of qualified, trained and motivated teachers resulting in overcrowded classrooms and unsatisfactory student performance was reported as the main obstacle to achieving quality education. The shortage of qualified teachers, which is structural in some areas, and the absence of adequate and continuous teacher training impact heavily on the quality of education. According to the reports, teachers and educators often suffer from poor working conditions, low social status and inadequate benefits. This generates a vicious circle that affects the education system as a whole.

An inadequate school environment – including aging infrastructure and obsolete equipment – combined with outdated textbooks and materials, are factors in the persistence of a non-supportive teaching and learning environment. There is an additional need to upgrade curricula, standards and textbooks in order to improve the quality of education. For many countries, it was not possible to secure the substantial investment needed to renovate and upgrade facilities and equipment, mainly due to national budgetary constraints. As a result, some schools do not have electricity, safe water and adequate sanitation, or even separate toilet facilities for

boys and girls. The school environment was also reported to be unsafe, with children and teaching staff subject to violence and insecurity. In some parts of the world, armed conflict or occupation/control of schools create an unstable and precarious environment.

Challenges relating to the system and governance

Budgetary constraints were cited by a vast majority of countries, regardless of their development status, to explain the lack of effective implementation. A restricted budget may not allow adequate investment for the education sector, and this has enormous repercussions on the quality of education (limited recruitment of teachers, deterioration of school buildings and of learning conditions, etc.).

With regard to governance, a large number of countries mention the lack or weakness of the monitoring system², which ought to allow for rigorous follow-up of the measures taken. The inability to make a proper assessment of the implementation status of the measures seriously undermines the efficiency of the whole process and often leads to unsatisfactory results. Closely related to that is the frequent lack of reliable data and indicators to support the monitoring process, and numerous reporting countries point out that this is largely detrimental for the implementation of the right to education.

The absence of a supportive legal and policy environment, combined with the coexistence of obsolete legislation and policies, remain factors that strongly hinder the improvement of the right to education and the implementation of the provisions of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation. Some States cited a general lack of knowledge and awareness of the provisions of these instruments.

As noted by several countries, the lack of involvement of relevant stakeholders, notably parents and civil society organizations, may explain the inefficiency of the education system in some regions. Strengthened cooperation at all levels, including between national and local authorities, must be dramatically improved in order to deliver concrete results.

XII. The Way Forward and Specific Recommendations

In response to the barriers that keep children and young people out of school and deprive adults of lifelong learning opportunities, the reporting countries have initiated measures, methods or mechanisms to improve implementation of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation. Country reports build on lessons learned and contain various suggestions for action to overcome the abovementioned challenges. A number of indicative recommendations can be drawn from these findings and proposed to countries for consideration in view of the full realization of an equitable and inclusive quality education for all.

① Towards a comprehensive and holistic approach of the right to quality education

The adoption of the Education 2030 agenda has encouraged countries to adopt a comprehensive and holistic approach, beyond the quantitative measure of access to education. In that respect, many countries report the adoption of a lifelong learning approach to education, and to the right to education in particular. Investment in

the ‘early years’ and early childhood care and education is cited by several States across the globe. For example, Ecuador’s reflection on the best way to establish a system of continuing education for youth and adults who have not completed their education is timely. Other countries have developed bridges between vocational education and higher education to encourage access to university. Recognition of prior learning and the establishment of alternative paths will be crucial to ensuring lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In order to adopt a comprehensive, holistic approach, investment must be provided. In addition, quality – a key feature of the Education 2030 agenda – is a central concern for the reporting countries, and is a core component of the right to education. It is also an issue that encompasses many challenges. To ensure the highest levels of quality in education, adequate funding is vital. States should be encouraged to review the resources they allocate to education and to guarantee sustainable financial resources for the implementation of the right to education.

② Towards more inclusive and equal societies

Ensuring equality of opportunities and inclusion in education are key levers for reducing the different kinds of inequalities that exist throughout society. However, a common feature of the reports is that factors such as social background, poverty, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and geographical location still create social and cultural barriers that are a challenge to delivering inclusion and equality of opportunities. Education 2030 requires all girls and boys to be able to complete free, equitable and quality basic education, leading to effective learning outcomes and ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable by 2030. Ensuring adequate legal protection under the right to education is the first step in this direction. Multiple forms of inequality and discrimination also need to be addressed via various comprehensive policies. In this sense, the national strategies such as those for Roma integration are – when implemented properly – a good example and should be extended to tackle other forms of discrimination. Generally speaking, solid mechanisms to promote the enforcement of the right to education, combined with adequate resources and effective collaboration with various stakeholders, are also necessary to address the issues.

③ Awareness-raising campaigns

The reporting countries often pointed out a lack of information on the right to education, and many of them have taken active steps to foster awareness-raising. A very positive step, taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Latvia and Mongolia, is the decision to translate the Convention against Discrimination in Education into the national language and to disseminate it widely. The publication of key international or national human rights documentation is also a very positive step forward. To increase public awareness throughout their territory, a number of countries have attempted to explain the content of the Convention or the core principles of the right to education by publishing booklets, leaflets and guidelines, and running workshops. These initiatives could be adopted by other countries and applied on a more systematic basis. Many country reports highlighted the important role played by the National Commission for UNESCO in terms of advocacy, awareness-raising and debate. National commissions often have a key role in promoting UNESCO’s mandate and activities, and many of them have played an active role in relation to the right to education. Equal emphasis was given by various

countries to the active role played by the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network and UNESCO Chairs in stimulating debate and awareness-raising.

④ Investing in research and data collection and management

Various States reported that they have invested in research and described how an improved data collection system could be used to assess the situation and to inform programming and policy-making decisions. It is indeed crucial to establish robust systems to collect, record and analyse data and to use evidence to support law and policy-making. Brazil has designed a 'Basic Education Development Index' to facilitate diagnosis of the education system and to help drive change. States, municipalities and schools need to work together to improve their ratings and to achieve national targets. If combined with a policy of accountability in the education system, such monitoring systems could make a significant contribution to improving the quality of education. To appreciate the different needs of learners, it is essential to ensure that the data is disaggregated. In-depth research into the shortcomings of the education system is also an area that deserves particular attention. A good example comes from Egypt, where the Center on National Education and Development has carried out research to identify the reasons for education failure and dropouts.

⑤ Engaging in participatory processes and valuing good practice

In a bid to improve coordination, some countries have established working groups and partnerships with relevant stakeholders. Involving parents is also a key factor to ensure that their challenges and concerns are taken into consideration and adequately addressed. Inter-ministerial work and strengthened coordination between national and local authorities can prove decisive in fostering the implementation of laws, policies and programmes and in promoting good practice. Since information-sharing is often an obvious weakness, many States have adopted this approach to education. In this regard, Ireland has provided a new guide for school self-evaluation, in order to encourage learning from good practice. The guide aims to foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student. Fostering synergies and building on good examples is key to ensuring the right to education translates into a concrete reality for all.

⑥ Making full use of UNESCO's Global Database on the Right to Education

Member States could make greater use of UNESCO's Global Database on the Right to Education to assist in implementing the right to education and the 1960 Convention and Recommendation. As a practical tool for monitoring, research and advocacy, the Database provides country-specific information relating to the right to education under constitutional, legislative and policy frameworks. It covers all dimensions of education: pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher education, TVET, adult and non-formal education, literacy, inclusion and gender equality, teachers, financing framework, etc. Given its considerable potential in the context of SDG 4 - Education 2030 Agenda, UNESCO's Database on the Right to Education also serves as a tool for implementing UNESCO's Strategy on education-related standard-setting instruments (adopted by the Executive Board in October 2015). Countries could be invited to make greater use of it as a platform for information and experience-sharing and international and regional cooperation, and to provide additional information on the implementation status of the right to education.

Annex: Reporting Member States

Table of reporting Member States disaggregated by regional group and by consultation

	7th Consultation (2005-2007)	8th Consultation (2011-2013)	9th Consultation (2016-2017)
Western European and North American States (Group I)	Austria, Canada, Cyprus*, Denmark*, France*, Germany*, Italy*, Norway*, Portugal*, San Marino, Spain*, Sweden*, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*	Canada, Cyprus*, Finland*, France*, Germany*, Luxembourg*, Norway*, Sweden*	Canada, Denmark*, France*, Germany*, Ireland, Malta*, Monaco*, Netherlands*, Norway*, Portugal*, Spain*, Sweden*, Turkey
Total	14	8	13
Eastern European States (Group II)	Croatia*, Czech Republic*, Georgia*, Hungary*, Latvia*, Russian Federation*, Slovakia*, Slovenia*, Uzbekistan*	Armenia*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Bulgaria*, Croatia*, Czech Republic*, Estonia, Georgia*, Hungary*, Latvia*, Montenegro*, Poland*, Romania*, Russian Federation*, Serbia*, Slovakia*, Uzbekistan*	Armenia*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Bulgaria*, Croatia*, Czech Republic*, Estonia, Georgia*, Hungary*, Latvia*, Poland*, Republic of Moldova*, Romania*, Russian Federation*, Serbia*, Slovakia*, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Ukraine*, Uzbekistan*
Total	9	16	18
Latin-American and Caribbean States (Group III)	Brazil*, Chile*, Colombia, Ecuador*, Grenada, Jamaica*	Argentina*, Barbados*, Brazil*, Chile*, Costa Rica*, Cuba*, Dominican Republic*, Panama*	Argentina*, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil*, Chile*, Colombia, Costa Rica*, Cuba*, Ecuador*, Guatemala*, Haiti, Honduras*, Mexico, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)*
Total	6	8	13
Asian and Pacific States (Group IV)	Australia*, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka*	Afghanistan, Australia*, Bangladesh, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of)*, Nauru, Pakistan, New Zealand, Philippines*, Sri Lanka*	Afghanistan*, Australia*, Bangladesh, Cook Islands, Iran (Islamic Republic of)*, Japan, Mongolia*, New Zealand*, Pakistan, Turkmenistan
Total	5	11	10
African States (Group V(a))	Benin*, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire*, Gabon, Guinea*, Malawi, Mali*, Mauritius*, Niger*, Senegal*, South Africa*, Uganda*, United Republic of Tanzania*, Zimbabwe*	Burkina Faso*, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritius*, Nigeria*, United Republic of Tanzania*, Zimbabwe*	Burkina Faso*, Côte d'Ivoire*, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Niger*, South Africa*, United Republic of Tanzania*, Zambia
Total	15	8	8
Arab States (Group V(b))	Algeria*, Bahrain, Egypt*, Jordan*, Kuwait*, Qatar	Bahrain, Egypt*, Iraq*, Jordan*, Kuwait*, Morocco*, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic	Egypt*, Iraq*, Kuwait, Qatar*, Tunisia*
Total	6	8	5
Total Reports	55	59	67

*Refers to Parties to the Convention