

Ministers, State secretaries, colleagues!

I am delighted to participate in OECD High-level forum on Migration and to introduce session on skills development and integration of immigrants' children into the school system.

There should be no doubt, integration has become more challenging. Immigration flows have become more diverse not only in terms of countries of origin and destination, but also in terms of education levels and categories of immigration – i.e. labour, free movement, family and humanitarian. Labour market integration is more or less immediate for labour migrants, but often a distant, and often not the primary, objective of humanitarian and family migrants.

Therefore the need of acquisition of new skills - host-country specific skills – becomes more important. The host-country language is the most important among these. The role of the host-country language can hardly be overestimated in the integration process.

Recent OECD studies show that in many countries, children of immigrants are entering the labour market in greater numbers. The integration of these children, in particular of those with low-educated parents, is a growing concern.

At the same time children of immigrants are overrepresented among youth who have not pursued upper-secondary education and who are not in employment or training. Support measures and approaches should focus on *individualised approach*. Implementation of individualised tailor-made approaches for youth (especially NEETS) with

an immigrant background (specialised case-workers, targeted additional training and internships).

The challenge is to accelerate the labour market integration of immigrants' through investment in developing skills. Firstly, acquisition of host-country language skills widens the opportunities for further education and training, and therefore the access to employment. Therefore one cannot overestimate the *importance of early intervention* – early contact with host-country educational institutions crucial for future integration of the child. OECD concludes the age of three to four is a critical one in this respect.

Last, but not least is the *role of evaluation*. Integration programs need to be more innovative. Promising small-scale or project based programs could be scaled-up. Monitoring of what works and what doesn't has to be a part or measure.