

Chapter 6. Towards social mobility-friendly policies

The chapter builds on the insights gained in the previous chapters to make policy recommendations on how to improve social mobility across and within generations. It relies on the two premises that societies should grant equal opportunities to all of their citizens and that they should attempt to protect individuals' and households' income trajectories against adverse personal and labour market shocks. The chapter identifies five broad policy areas on which countries should focus to improve citizen's mobility prospects: health and family policies, education, labour market policies, tax-and-transfer policies and local and urban policies. For each of these areas, it presents a selection of best-practice programmes and policy initiatives that were recently implemented in OECD countries and emerging economies and that are suited to improve mobility outcomes.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Introduction

The previous chapters have provided an in-depth assessment of the lack of social mobility within and between generations, and explored the consequences, the levels and the drivers. Within working lives, higher income inequality is not offset by higher levels of mobility, and from one generation to the next, the inequality of parents' incomes implies inequality of educational outcomes and of the overall life chances of their children. This chapter discusses particular policies to foster more socially mobile societies, with a focus on two policy strands:

- One main policy challenge for growing economies is to ensure opportunities for moving up the ladder even at the low end, while preventing the top end from pre-empting advancement.
- Another key role for policies is to guarantee protection against the effects of unforeseen personal events or temporary shocks, to foster resilience.

There are sticky floors at the bottom and sticky ceilings at the top of the income distribution (see Chapters 2 and 3). Insufficient education levels, persistent unfavourable labour-market circumstances, or challenging family circumstances can lock in income mobility over working lives. Policies can contribute to support sustainable income trajectories by acting on these different drivers. For example, policies ensuring adequate education or training to those in need, smoothed and secured labour-market transitions or income support during trigger life-events can be instrumental in securing and supporting income trajectories throughout the whole life cycle.

There is also compelling evidence of the strong impact of parental background on children's outcomes in terms of health, education and socio-economic status (see Chapters 4 and 5). Yet, international differences highlight that policies have the potential to play an important role in determining how advantages or disadvantages are transmitted from one generation to the next. To improve intergenerational social mobility, policy needs to address how to overcome barriers to create more opportunity for those left behind, targeting public investment into children's development to compensate for the lack of parenting skills and resources among disadvantaged groups.

This chapter discusses five key policy areas to promote social mobility: health and family policies, education, labour market, tax and transfer policies, as well as local and urban planning and housing policies. It focusses, on the one hand, on the role of public subsidies and institutions in helping to improve the mobility prospects of the most disadvantaged and to secure income trajectories of others. At the same time, it also considers how to compensate for the effect of parental disadvantages and which possible support measures can improve the outcomes of the poorer children in order to address social mobility. The chapter provides a large range of selected country policy examples.

Key issues and main findings

- Health issues can act as an obstacle to occupational careers and result in downward mobility, adding to the challenges faced by individuals and their families. Public investment in health has the potential to support social mobility over the life course and across generations, for example, by cushioning income losses or necessary labour-market changes during health issues. In particular, access to sickness and disability insurance for all households is a prerequisite.

- Family policies, in particular policies for work and family balance, early education and care policies, together with services and income support schemes can help to level the playing field for all children by compensating disadvantages at home and avoiding the transmission of disadvantage to children. They can also support parents in their participation in the labour market and mitigate the detrimental impacts of financial hardship on children's future outcomes.
- Early interventions in childcare and education are the most effective policy tools to create level playing fields and to reduce gaps among children. But measures to support social mobility need to be taken also later on. Prevention of dropping out of school, in particular, is a key intervention to avoid unequal opportunities in the long run.
- Social transfers can contribute to more sustainable mobility patterns. Income-support schemes of an adequate level can help to cushion the negative impact of life events (such as unemployment, childbirth, divorce, sickness) for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds but also for their offspring, with spill-overs in non-income areas. Measures to ensure the adequacy of resources after divorce, but also family benefits and labour-market policies, can prevent such life events from becoming a driver of persistent downward mobility. Well-designed in-work benefits can contribute to better pathways to employment and initiate future opportunities.
- Labour-market policies can make a substantial difference for earnings and occupational mobility throughout the career. Strengthening the transition from school to work, addressing the occupational barriers for disadvantaged groups, ensuring that recruitment processes are fair, minimising the impact of unemployment spells and building effective lifelong learning systems are the building blocks toward stronger social mobility.
- Social mobility also requires policies to reduce regional divides and inequalities between neighbourhoods in cities. Addressing spatial segregation is particularly important. The concentration of poor households in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can replicate disadvantages across generations and prevent improvements over the life course. This requires a range of well-coordinated local development and urban planning policies, including measures for housing and transport.

6.1. Which health and family policies can best foster social mobility?

By taking action on health inequalities for adults and their children, governments may promote upward social mobility. Health problems can have a long-lasting detrimental impact on incomes and labour-market participation (Chapter 3). Moreover, health and health behaviour depend significantly on parents' health and socio-economic status (Chapter 5).

Family policies are another track to boost social mobility and ease stickiness at the bottom. Children growing up in low-income families are less likely to achieve higher education, upper occupation status or high-earning jobs (Chapters 4 and 5). Family-related events, such as childbirth or divorce, can also result in long-lasting income losses or changes in work arrangements within families that are especially detrimental to

women (Chapter 3). Key areas for intervention include support for parents at work, adequate support during life trigger-events and resources for families in need.

Available evidence suggests that intergenerational educational mobility tends to be higher in countries where public spending on health and family policies is higher. The educational attainment of children depends less on their parents' education in countries with higher public expenditure on health. For instance, Aizer and Currie (2014) found that increases in spending on health are most strongly associated with reductions in the importance of family background. Crettaz and Jacot (2014) found that expenditures on family policies have reduced the gap between individuals whose parents are well educated and those who have a more modest background in terms of the likelihood of going to university.

6.1.1. Promoting universal access to health care and public health policies that benefit the poor

Health is a key factor in explaining social mobility. There is a well-known socio-economic gradient in health status and health behaviour: education and socio-economic background affect lifestyle, obesity and smoking (Marmot et al., 2008). Several studies have found that an important share of the intergenerational transmission of work status goes via children's health (Case et al., 2002; Eriksson et al., 2005; Hertz, 2006). In turn, chronic conditions and poor health impact labour-market outcomes and earnings, reducing the chances of upward mobility. Public investments in health have the potential to offset the negative impact of health shocks on intra-generational mobility and the transmission of health disadvantages from parents to offspring.

Health conditions have significant consequences on household incomes and children's future outcomes, either because they can lead to labour-market withdrawal and/or because they imply increased expenditures if out-of-pocket payments are high (Chapter 3). This is especially valid in emerging economies, where health insurance systems are not always mature. Measures to broaden the access to sickness and disability insurance are a prerequisite to avoid the long-term negative impact of adverse health shocks on income trajectories. China, for instance, has developed a New Cooperative Medical Scheme (NCMS), which increased the health insurance coverage of rural households from less than 15% before 2000 to over 90% by 2009.¹

The poorest segments of the population are most at risk of bad health outcomes, but also more vulnerable to the adverse impact of health shocks, and they are less well-covered by health insurance (Liu, 2016; Lundborg et al., 2015; Grunow and Nuscheler, 2013). Heavy out-of-pocket expenditure and long delays in reimbursement procedures can also weigh on people's incomes. Health insurance systems therefore need to pay attention to the coverage of the poorest segments of the population, especially when these are split between public and private providers, or fully privately provided, so as to prevent downward intra-generational mobility. In addition, in order to keep the link with the labour market, disability benefits should be designed to favour activity rather than inactivity in the long run.

Australia introduced in 2017 a range of reforms² to encourage younger Australians to take up private health insurance by allowing insurers to discount hospital insurance premiums for 18 to 29-year-olds (Australian Government, 2017a). In France, all legal residents are covered by social health insurance (99.9% of the population), following the 2000 Universal Health Coverage Act (*Couverture Maladie Universelle*, CMU), which changed the public insurance entitlement criterion from professional activity to residence.

This allowed a small but growing share of the population who were previously not covered to benefit from the same rights as the rest of the population. In the Netherlands, the Inclusive Redesign of Work Processes (IHW) guides employers in redesigning the work processes to create employment opportunities for young people with a disability, especially if they are low-qualified or low-educated. This implies, for example, reallocating simple tasks from qualified workers to create a position that can be filled by a worker with lower qualifications (Scharle and Csillag, 2015).

The most disadvantaged receive less high-quality health services, relative to their needs, than the richest and middle-income groups, partly because the poorest groups in society are least likely to take a proactive approach to seeking health services. Several features of health systems were associated with large inequalities in health access: absence of universal health coverage, a large share of private financing and out-of-pocket payments, and the non-existence of public screening programmes (Devaux and Loofer, 2012).

Inequalities can originate at very early stages in life. By providing a positive start and reducing disadvantages even before birth (i.e. during pregnancy), children, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, will benefit from improved development outcomes in terms of health. Programmes that provide pre-natal and post-natal care to low-income families and that deliver services at home to address barriers to take-up for mothers are associated with positive child well-being and other outcomes (Greenberg and Shroder, 2004). Home visiting programmes consist of visits from social workers, parent educators or registered nurses to low-income families with pregnant mothers and babies in the home. The visitors provide health check-ups and referrals, parenting advice and guidance on navigating other government programmes.

Examples of such programmes are the Children in New Zealand Early Start Programme, which improved health care and health outcomes as shown by greater use of general practitioners, higher rates of well-child checks, fewer hospital attendances for accidents, injuries and poisonings, and greater use of preschool dental services (Williams et al., 2008). Evidence from the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) in the United States shows that it led to an increased use of prenatal care, better nutrition during pregnancy, decreased smoking, and increased birthweight, and the postnatal effects included decreased injuries, visits to emergency room, decreased maltreatment and increased weight (Williams et al., 2008). However, the expansion of a similar programme in England found that adding the FNP programme to existing health care services created no additional short-term benefits to the measured main outcomes such as smoking during pregnancy, average birthweight, the proportion of children attending or being admitted to hospital, or preventing a subsequent pregnancy (Robling et al., 2015). This raises questions about the appropriate targeting needed for home visiting programmes to be effective and about their replication on a larger scale.

Food and nutrition programmes can help with malnutrition and poor nutrition, especially for children who suffer food insecurity. Poorer families are more likely to alter food purchases during difficult times. OECD (2014a) showed that on average across the OECD 13% of people reported that they did not have enough money to buy the food that they or their families needed, and this share increased during the economic downturn in Europe and the United States. Food insecurity can lead to serious mental development and growth problems and influence children's school performance. National school meal programmes are used in several countries as a practical means of reaching food-insecure school-age children directly so as to offset hunger and insufficient nutrition. In the United

States, it was found that almost one-half (47%) of the day's [energy intake](#) was provided by the two school meals and that these contributed 40% of vegetables and 77% of milk (Cullen and Chen, 2017). Evaluation of the Healthy Start programme in England suggests that food vouchers can provide an important nutritional safety net and potentially improve nutrition for pregnant women and young children living on low incomes (McFadden et al., 2014).

Addressing harmful behaviours, including poor diet and lack of physical activity, obesity and smoking, which are more prevalent among the lower socio-economic groups, is important to reduce health inequalities that block social mobility. Many governments are intensifying their efforts to promote a culture of healthy eating and active living (OECD, 2017a). A large majority of them have adopted initiatives aimed at school-age children, including changes in the school environment, notably regarding food and drink, as well as improvements in facilities for physical activity. The second-most common group of interventions involves the public health function of health systems. These interventions are primarily based on the development and dissemination of nutrition guidelines and health promotion messages to a wide variety of population groups through numerous channels, as well as promotion of active transport and active leisure.

Which policies are more likely to have a greater impact on lower socio-economic groups and reduce social disparities in health behaviour? OECD (2010a) shows that physician/dietician counselling has the largest effect, followed by food-advertising and food-labelling regulations and fiscal measures, while mass media campaigns and worksite interventions reduce health inequality the least. Education campaigns alone are less effective in lower than in higher socio-economic groups and are thus likely to increase inequalities. Where information strategies are used, easy-to-understand interpretative labelling, such as pictograms/pictures or traffic-light labelling – compared with detailed numerical nutritional information on food labels – is more likely to reach the most disadvantaged groups (OECD, 2017a). Restrictions on the advertising of potentially unhealthy products to children have also found support in many countries. This is the case for instance in Chile, Iceland, Ireland and Mexico, among others, for the ban on the advertising of foods and beverages on TV during the time children are the main audience, or in public transport in Australia and other public places in Norway. Primary care counselling of patients at risk due to their unhealthy lifestyles can be one of the most effective ways of changing behaviours and curbing obesity, but capacity is constrained in some countries as it is costly and time-intensive (OECD, 2010a).

Early intervention and prevention programmes for early childhood behavioural problems can help break the cycle of the intergenerational transmission of mental health problems. Effective interventions include support for maternal health during the perinatal period, parenting support programmes and specialist parent support programmes for high-risk groups (Shuey and Kankaras, forthcoming). Home visits, support and psychotherapy during the perinatal period are effective for decreasing the risk of perinatal depression. Several countries such as Australia, Israel, New Zealand, England and Japan include routine screening for depression for women during the perinatal period. Parenting programmes help reduce the risk of children's poor emotional development. In addition, school-based interventions to promote pupils' social and emotional development included focus on mental health within the school curriculum: Australia, for instance, has the KidsMatter programme that teaches children skills for good social and emotional development.

Early intervention can also have an impact on mental health and self-control (Tremblay, 2000). Early family/parent training is an effective intervention for reducing behavioural problems among young children and reducing delinquency and crime in later adolescence and adulthood (Piquero et al., 2009). In Chicago, the programme *Becoming a Man* is aimed at helping youth to slow down and reflect on their automatic thoughts and behaviours. The programme was found to reduce local arrests, reduce violent-crime arrest and improve school engagement (Heller et al., 2017).

6.1.2. Work and family balance

Policies for work and family balance can reduce household income shocks, enabling rewarding careers for parents (and mothers in particular), and promote intergenerational mobility. Women often miss out on crucial labour-market opportunities during the early stages of their careers, as this period coincides with the arrival of children in the household (OECD, forthcoming). Policies can limit the loss of labour-market opportunities by taking measures that facilitate employment and make work financially attractive, even when combined with care commitments. Given that women carry out a disproportionate share of unpaid work across OECD countries, which limits women's labour-force options, public policies supporting the participation of both men and women in the labour market on an equal footing are critical (OECD, forthcoming, 2017b, 2012, 2014a).

The difficulty of combining work and family responsibilities often results in women working part-time or dropping out of the labour force altogether. Withdrawing from the labour market at childbirth can have long-lasting effects on women's careers (Kleven et al., 2018), especially in case of long parental leaves. A range of policies is necessary to remove this obstacle. In many countries, governments and businesses have implemented family-friendly policies – parental leave, childcare, out-of-school-hours care, flexible working arrangements, etc. – to help parents with children. France and the Nordic countries, for example, provide a continuum of publicly provided reconciliation support for parents during the early years of their child's life, and they have been able to combine high female employment with high fertility rates, carrying a demographic dividend with them into the future. Norway and the United Kingdom have expanded or introduced free childcare hours. Norway for instance phased in 20 weekly hours of free childcare for 3-5 year-olds from low-income families.

Lower levels of employment and income because of the inability to combine work and care can be detrimental for upward mobility, and policies to encourage a good balance of work and family life are particularly important to help improve outcomes for poor children. This starts in infancy. While the evidence on the relationship between paid leave and child outcomes is mixed, much research has found that paid leave is associated with lower infant mortality and a lower likelihood of low-weight birth (Adema et al., 2015). There is also some evidence that additional leave in the early weeks and months following birth is linked to improved child development, particularly for less advantaged children (Ruhm and Waldfogel, 2012).

Evidence from several OECD countries suggests that the provision of father-specific leave may have considerable effects on fathers' behaviours, which can be beneficial both to balance the impact of childbirth on women's and men's earnings careers but also to improve children's cognitive and social outcomes. In addition to rebalancing the roles within households, extended time at home during early infancy is associated with fathers' greater involvement with their children, which has positive downstream effects for

children’s cognitive and emotional development (Cabrera et al., 2007; Lamb, 2010; OECD, 2012; Sandstrom and Huerta, 2013) as well as physical health benefits for the child (World Health Organization, 2007).

Low-income families might have more difficulties in combining work and family life because of irregular or non-standard work, thereby harming mobility prospects. A challenge for closing gaps concerns the eligibility for intermittent, irregular and self-employed workers. Most leave policies require a record of regular employment and earnings for the employee to qualify, which may risk disadvantaging low-income families (Waldfogel and Stewart, 2017). A priority for policies in this area is to ensure that the lowest-income families are eligible for and receive adequate paid leave. In addition, less-skilled workers are less likely to have employer provision of additional job-protected leave such as for caring for sick children or relatives (Cancian et al., 2010). They are also less likely to have workplace flexibility with their scheduled hours or location than do more highly-skilled workers. This has been found to be one of the reasons why low-skilled mothers in the United Kingdom tend to drop out of the labour market after a second child, while participation is not reduced for high- and intermediate-skilled women (Hupkau and Leturcq, 2017).

It is also important to ensure that working mothers do not fall off the ladder to management-level positions and to break the glass ceiling that women still face. To increase women’s representation in decision-making positions, several countries have introduced mandatory quotas, target-setting, disclosure initiatives and monitoring processes. Since 2013, nine countries – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Israel and Norway – have introduced compulsory gender quotas for publicly listed companies and state-owned enterprises’ board membership. Since 2011, the United Kingdom’s voluntary business-led initiative has encouraged big firms to increase gender diversity, with successful results: the share of women on boards increased from 13% in 2010 to 27% in 2016 (OECD, 2017b).

6.1.3. Early education and childcare policies

Sticky floors and sticky ceilings emerge from an early age. Disadvantaged families under-invest in early childhood because of liquidity constraints and information failures, while better-off families are able to invest more in the human capital development of their young children. The empirical literature suggests that early investment in human capital matters most for opportunities and outcomes in later life (Currie, 2009; Shuey and Kankarras, forthcoming). Moreover, the literature evidences the positive returns of investing early in access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services with regards to the formation of skills and capabilities, as well as health outcomes (Heckman 1999, 2007; Heckman and Masterov, 2007; Cunha and Heckman, 2007; Duncan and Magnuson, 2003, 2004; Shuey and Kankaras, forthcoming). Investments in human capital have dynamic complementarities, implying that learning begets learning (Carneiro and Heckman, 2003). Many studies have found positive effects of childcare programmes on children’s performance and outcomes in young adulthood, particularly for relatively disadvantaged children (Shuey and Kankarras, forthcoming; Berlinski et al., 2008; Havnes and Mogstad, 2011; Ruhm and Waldfogel, 2012; Van Huizen and Plantenga, 2015).

Good-quality affordable childcare is instrumental in reducing the early gaps in speech and other cognitive skills, thereby fostering the upward mobility of children starting with disadvantages. For these children, the impact of childcare policies depends on the quality

of these services (Esping-Andersen et al., 2012; Kamerman, 2000; Vandebroucke and Vleminckx, 2011; Melhuish, 2016). Low staff-to-child ratios and small group sizes are an example of standards that ensure good-quality childcare. In the United States, the childcare programme Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP) was found to boost the cognitive ability of low-income children much more than of higher-income children, suggesting that either a universal or an income-based targeted programme could essentially eliminate income-based gaps in IQ at age three (Duncan and Sojourner, 2013). Similarly, the expansion of subsidised child care in Norway in 1975 resulted in a positive impact on educational attainment that was driven largely by children of low-income parents (Havnes and Mogstad, 2015). In France, attending pre-school (*école maternelle*) from the age of two improves cognitive and noncognitive skills at age six, and both literacy and numeracy from the third to the ninth grades (Filatriau et al., 2013). It is also associated with a small but positive effect on the chances of not repeating the second grade of primary school (*CE2* – at age eight), especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Caille, 2001; Goux and Maurin, 2010).

Children with a disadvantaged background are less likely to be enrolled in formal childcare and early schooling (OECD, 2016a; OECD, 2017c). Barriers to access to early childhood education and care include affordability, care hours and the proximity of services (OECD, 2017c). Petitclerc et al. (2017) have shown that higher participation rates in early education and care are encouraged by universal ECEC subsidies, and that countries with universal subsidies and income-adjusted out-of-pocket fees achieve a better enrolment of low-income children.

Evaluation studies suggest that in France the expansion of preschool was associated with reduced socio-economic inequalities (Dumas and Lefranc, 2010). In addition to the cognitive impact and education scores, other longer-term impacts have been found for programmes in the United States such as Early Head Start, Perry Preschool Project and Abecedarian Project, namely lower drug use and welfare dependency, delayed childbearing, improved educational attainment and improved employment. These findings are supplemented from quasi-experimental studies, which also confirm the long-term educational benefits of programmes such as Head Start, covering children from low socio-economic areas from the age of three (Currie, 2011).

Improving access to high-quality preschool programs is essential for low-income children, since education is a major contributor to intergenerational income mobility. Attendance in preschool can make a difference in later educational and learning outcomes. PISA results show that those school systems that perform the best and provide equitable learning opportunities to all students are also those that provide more inclusive access to pre-primary education (OECD, 2017c). For example, Estonia, Iceland, Hong Kong-China, Japan and Korea have below-average gaps in performance by socio-economic background.

Beyond early childcare and preschool, what happens at home can make a difference for children's cognitive and non-cognitive skills. This underlines the importance of early childhood home education programmes that aim to improve the parenting skills and children's socio-emotional skills among disadvantaged groups. Economically advantaged parents display more optimal parenting behaviours across a range of domains, including more authoritative parenting, more sensitive and responsive mother-child interactions, greater language stimulation and better parent management (Kalil, 2014). Programmes such as the Thirty Million Words project in the United States increased conversations and resulted in increased language development (Leffel and Suskind, 2013). The Perry

Preschool Program also shows how personality traits can be changed in ways that produce beneficial lifetime outcomes. Participants were taught social skills, and home visits promoted parent-child interactions. The Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP) showed that a home-based enrichment intervention had numerous sustained effects in terms of school attainment, higher primary school grades and vocabulary scores, more favourable attitudes towards school, and better family and social adjustment (Kagitcibasi et al., 2001). In the Scottish Pilot programme for two-year-olds, parents in the programme showed improved parenting capacity compared to parents in the control group (Woolfson and King, 2008).

Targeting parents has a major advantage: the benefits can be long-lasting. However, parenting skills are difficult to change, because parents do not follow the programme for a long time or do not adhere to programme prescriptions. Thus programmes targeting parenting skills should be carefully designed and tailored to parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds. According to Clarke and Younas (2017), the most successful parenting interventions include programmes with three types of focus: 1) equipping parents with a greater understanding of child development, such as Children in Focus in Sweden which includes home visits and focus groups and role-playing techniques; 2) developing parental skills to detect delays and increase school readiness of children such as Parents as Teachers in Australia and New Zealand; and 3) providing assistance to parents to improve co-operation and reduce tension within the family, such as Parenting Shops in Belgium. In addition, governments in several countries are starting to implement universal interventions and services that reduce the stigma associated with parental support, encourage more parental engagement and are likely to help identify problems early and target support. These have been implemented through community centres such as SPIL in the Netherlands, Parenting Shops in Belgium and Familienzentren in Germany.

6.1.4. Accompanying families in life transitions

Divorce and partnership dissolution have a significant impact on incomes - in particular for women - and divorce is often a “trigger event” leading to poverty, which can have an impact persisting several years (Chapter 3). Women with high education appear in this regards as a population at risk, raising concerns for the career mobility of divorced women and the loss of human potential for the economy as a whole. Family benefits and taxes play a critical role in cushioning the impact of divorce on ex-partners. However, the empirical evidence tends to suggest that the most direct channel remains participation in the labour market.

The payment of child support by the non-custodial parent is a legal obligation in most OECD countries. Back in 1994, only 43% of European single parents received child maintenance payments. By 2000, this figure had risen to 50%, and by 2004, to 64%. This rise in payment rates can be linked to the introduction of legal processes to enforce the payment of child maintenance (Beaumont and Mason, 2014).

Non-payment (or delayed payment) of alimony is still frequent. For France, it has been estimated that 30% to 40% of alimonies were not at all or only partially paid (Haut Conseil de la Famille, 2014). National responses to the non-payment of child maintenance by the non-custodial parent can range from enforced payment, salary deductions, seizure of assets and bank accounts and, in some countries, imprisonment. Child support can be guaranteed in some countries by the state (in Austria, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Sweden); by local authorities (in the Czech

Republic, Denmark and Finland); by special funds (in Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland and Portugal); or by a special administrative agency (in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France). In 2017, France introduced the Aripa, a public agency in charge of recovering unpaid alimony from the first unpaid month. Australia has a Child Support Agency (CSA) since 2006 to ensure that child support is paid in full and on time. Evaluation of child support compliance just prior to, one year after and three years after the child support has nevertheless shown little impact on compliance behaviour.

6.1.5. Providing families with additional resources: Addressing the detrimental consequences of child poverty

Evidence from several studies using randomised controlled trials, quasi-experimental approaches or analysis of longitudinal data suggests that parental income *in itself* matters for children’s outcomes and mobility prospects. Children from lower-income households have worse outcomes at later ages in a range of domains such as: scoring lower on tests of cognitive skill in early childhood, being more likely to drop out of school and less likely to attain tertiary education, having more behavioural problems and being more likely to be poor or have lower income themselves.

Poverty is associated with a cluster of disadvantages that may be detrimental to children, such as low levels of parental education and living with a single parent. It is possible that the inequalities between children from rich and poor families are due to unmeasured factors that simultaneously explain parents’ income and their children’s outcomes, such as the living environment or cultural stimulation. However, evidence shows that “money *in itself* matters for children's outcomes” (Cooper and Stewart, 2017). A majority of studies suggest that poorer children have worse outcomes because they live in poorer families (Duncan et al., 2012). Low income affects opportunities for children through two pathways. First, having low income limits investment in goods and services that promote healthy child development, such as good quality housing, healthy food and good-quality education. Second, low income and a lack of resources can be stressful for parents and impact parenting behaviour negatively. For example, mothers who are suffering from depression can lack the emotional resources needed for responsive and nurturing parenting behaviours (Cooper and Stewart, 2017).

Box 6.1. Social spending and intergenerational mobility

Literature on the links between (social) expenditures and intergenerational mobility remains scarce, but available evidence suggests a positive impact of higher spending on mobility. For the United States, greater intergenerational mobility in high-spending states compared to low-spending states has been found by Mayer and Lopoo (2008), and the difference in mobility between advantaged and disadvantaged children is smaller in high-spending compared to low-spending states. Becker et al. (2010) found that higher intergenerational mobility is associated with higher public expenditures on education per student. Ferreira et al. (2013) looked at the impact of public education expenditures per student in primary and secondary school in Latin America and found that they have helped to reduce the schooling gap between rich and poor children.

Additional expenditure on the child has a significant impact on the development and well-being of children from lower-income households (McEwen and Stewart, 2014). For cognitive outcomes, early childhood matters most, while for behavioural outcomes, income in later childhood appears to be more important. The duration of low income is important: while short-term experiences of low income and unstable income, which are frequent especially at the bottom of the income distribution (Chapter 2), are associated

with negative outcomes for children, longer durations of poverty matter more for outcomes in later life (Cooper and Stewart, 2013).

Both direct cash transfers such as child benefits/allowances and refundable tax credits are effective forms of income support. Kirkegaard (2015) argued nevertheless that tax breaks for social spending tend by nature to benefit more those with higher incomes. Chetty et al. (2015) found that both the level and the progressivity of local tax expenditures (as a percentage of average gross income) are correlated with higher levels of intergenerational mobility, even after controlling for local demographic characteristics. Tax components that are associated with higher mobility include mortgage interest deductions, state income taxes and state earned income tax credit.

Evidence on the relative effectiveness of income transfers and direct intervention programmes from random-assignment experiments suggest that a USD 1 000 increase in annual income increases young children's school achievement and cognitive outcomes by between 5% to 27% of a standard deviation and slightly more for social and behavioural outcomes, for a set of OECD countries (Cooper and Stewart, 2013, 2017). For example, the Minnesota Family Investment Programme, implemented in the mid-1990s in the US and allowing lone-mother families to keep more of their welfare payments as earnings increase, had significant beneficial effects on a series of behaviours (Gennetian and Miller, 2002). Hoynes et al. (2015) found that an increase in annual income via the Earned Income Tax Credit (of USD 1 000) results in a 2-3% reduction of the incidence of low birthweight, an effect similar to other interventions such as increasing educational expenditures. Providing additional money to parents can therefore contribute to reducing the differences in outcomes between low-income children and others, but might not be enough to close the gap.

6.2. Which education policies can best foster social mobility?

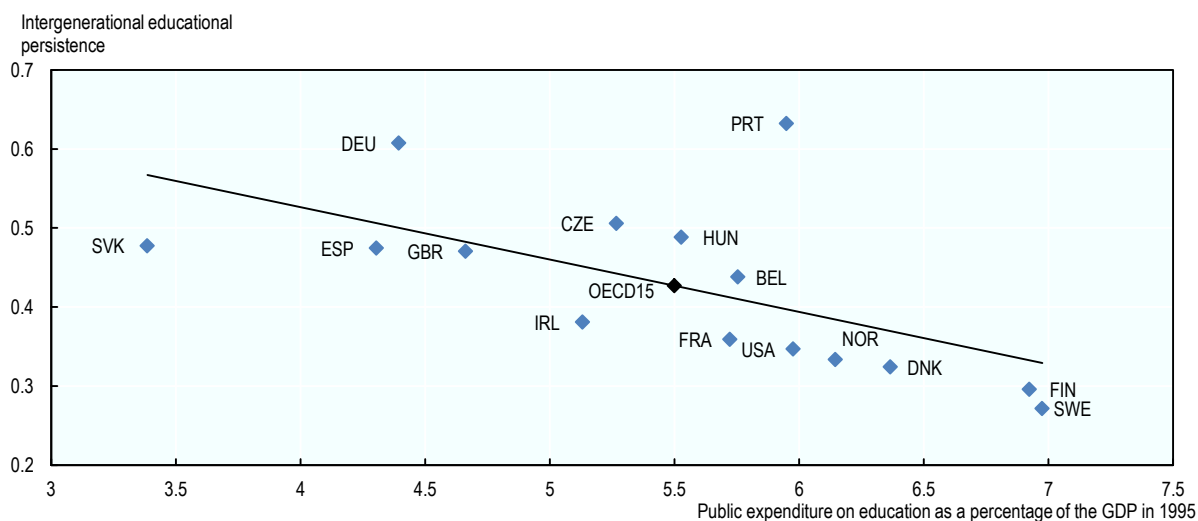
Chapter 5 highlighted sticky ceilings in educational attainment. Just 7% of people with higher-educated parents attain only lower-secondary education or less, compared with 42% of those with lower-educated parents. Moreover, sticky floors are not easing with time: over the past two decades, education mobility from the lower and middle levels to the upper level has been slowing down. This is a matter of concern, as low education and low earnings are often associated with greater labour market and income insecurity and contribute to remaining stuck at the bottom of the income distribution (Chapter 2).

To break the cycle of disadvantage and promote social mobility, early intervention is key. Overall, a strategy based on a greater investment in children that targets those from lower socio-economic backgrounds holds the promise of breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage because of its effects in levelling the playfield in terms of child development. Such a strategy will also help guarantee smoother and more sustainable lifetime income mobility for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Across OECD countries, countries which in the past spent more on education tend to have higher intergenerational educational mobility. As shown in Figure 6.1, the correlation between the number of years of education across parents and children (a proxy for education persistence) is significantly lower in countries where public spending on education was higher in 1995. It seems thus that public investment in education has a positive influence on educational mobility in the long term. Other cross-country findings support this association. Becker et al. (2010) found that lower intergenerational earnings

elasticity is associated with higher public expenditures on education per student. Finally, Ferreira et al. (2013) looked at the impact of public education expenditures per student in primary and secondary school in Latin America and found that they have indeed helped to reduce the schooling gap between rich and poor children.

Figure 6.1. Educational mobility is higher in countries where public spending on education was higher



Note: Persistence is defined as the regression coefficient between parental and children's years of schooling at age 30-55 (see Chapter 5).

Source: OECD National Accounts Data and OECD calculations based on the ESS for European countries and the CNEF for Germany and the United States.

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6.2.1. Levelling the playing field for school-age children

At least part of the reason why poorer children fall behind their richer peers in terms of educational outcomes is because they go to different schools (see Chapter 5, Section 3). Evidence from the United Kingdom shows that there is less divergence in performance between pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds who attend the same schools and that schools (or the sorting of pupils into schools) play an important role in explaining why the test scores of richer and poorer children diverge over time (Crawford et al., 2016). Given that the separation of children into different schools based on income and conferring additional advantages is likely to persist, public authorities need to make a concerted effort to support low-performing schools or schools in marginalised communities to reduce this double disadvantage.

In general, schools with more socio-economically disadvantaged students tend to have less or lower-quality resources than schools with more advantaged students. Indeed, disadvantaged schools tend to have smaller classrooms, and they are also more likely to suffer from shortages of or inadequacies in educational materials and physical infrastructure (OECD, 2014b). In some countries such as Estonia, Finland, Germany, Korea and Slovenia, there is an effective policy towards disadvantaged schools, and principals in such schools tended to report that their schools had adequate educational

resources as much as, if not more than, principals in advantaged schools reported (OECD, 2015a).

The way money is allocated to schools does matter for equity (OECD, 2013a). Formula funding combining both horizontal equity – schools with similar characteristics are funded at the same level – and vertical equity – schools with higher needs receive higher resources – allows to account for students’ educational needs relating to socio-economic disadvantage and learning difficulties. It can be used for example to provide further help for pupils such as additional teaching time, specialised learning materials and in some cases smaller classes. Formula funding was adopted in the Netherlands for all primary schools in 1985: schools with substantial numbers of disadvantaged students received more funds. In Australia, the National Plan for School Improvement “Better Schools” is a needs-based school funding model that has provided additional Commonwealth resources to schools since 2014. A school’s funding is calculated according to the needs of every student enrolled³ (OECD, 2016b). In Canada, immigrant students benefit from greater educational resources, such as supplementary classes (OECD, 2015a). In Chile, a Preferential School Subsidy (*Subvención Escolar Preferencial*) favours schools with larger proportions of vulnerable students (OECD, 2015i).

Developing a more supportive learning environment also comes through recruiting and training teachers and fostering effective learning strategies. Teacher quality is particularly important to support the long-term success of children in disadvantaged areas: students assigned to high value-added teachers (measured by how much they improved children’s test scores on average) are more likely to attend higher-ranked colleges, earn higher salaries and live in higher socio-economic status neighbourhoods (Chetty et al., 2014). For a majority of countries, a larger proportion of more experienced teachers teach in less challenging schools than in more challenging schools. Some countries have put in place proactive approaches to reverse this trend. In Finland, teachers are entitled to a large degree of autonomy to adapt the pace of teaching to the pace of learning (English, 2014). In Japan and Korea, teachers and principals are often reassigned to different schools so that the most capable professionals are more equally distributed.

Flexible schooling and adapting teaching methods and programme contents to the needs of disadvantaged students can help improve achievement. In the United States, “charter schools” are public schools that enjoy greater leeway to manage staff, adapt curricula and organise teaching time. Charter schools often target students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They usually provide better resources (smaller class sizes and/or more hours of teaching), complementary services and better trained teachers for at-risk youth. A substantial body of research finds that charter schools can exert a significant, lasting impact on educational attainment and the later employment of disadvantaged youth (OECD, 2016c).

Getting the best teachers to teach in disadvantaged schools requires higher pay or bonuses, as suggested by some experiments in the United States (Talent for Transfer initiative) where this helped to fill vacancies with the highest-performing teachers and retain them. Results from France show, however, that bonuses may need to be sizeable because the incentive driven by the bonus (at 1.5% of the mean wage) was not sufficient to attract teachers (Prost, 2013).

Improving teacher quality requires improving the support teachers receive in disadvantaged schools, where the quality often lags behind that of their peers who teach in relatively lower-needs schools. According to the OECD TALIS 2013 data,

improvement in teacher support implies (1) support for continued professional development; (2) autonomy – the decision-making power teachers have over aspects of their teaching; and (3) peer networks – the role teachers play in regulating their own standards, including measures of peer socialisation, guidance and feedback. Investments in teacher professional knowledge and peer networks may be able to reduce the high teacher attrition rates common in high-needs schools (Imazeki and Goe, 2009). Education systems can further support teachers – including by requiring formal teacher education programmes that expose teachers to pedagogy and provide opportunities to practice teaching in order to enter the profession, as well as supporting induction and mentoring programmes. Other policy interventions include supporting teachers in conducting classroom-based individual or collaborative research and encouraging their participation in networks of other teachers for information exchange (OECD, 2016d). These measures may be particularly beneficial in schools with high proportions of students who suffer from socio-economic disadvantage and in secondary schools. Chile, for example, introduced a New System of Teacher Professional Development in 2016, entailing increased non-teaching time for class preparation, and salary increases for teachers and bonuses for teachers working in socio-economically disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2018a).

Inequalities in extra-curricular programme attendance reinforce differences in non-cognitive skills. How students spend their time outside of the school matters for outcomes and social mobility. Children’s participation in extra-curricular activities, which typically require parental investment of time and money, changed over the last decades in ways that favoured more advantaged youth (Snellman et al., 2015). Students from higher income families spend more hours receiving tutoring and being involved in extra-curricular activities. Governments may need to provide additional resources for free-of-charge tutoring in disadvantaged schools and programmes to develop social and emotional skills. Empirical evidence confirms the positive effects of participating in extra-curricular activities on schooling outcomes and career prospects, especially for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds (Heckman, 2008). The provision of extra-curricular activities in Latvia is a policy example in this direction. The institutionalised system of interest-education, jointly funded by the state and the municipalities, offers attractive opportunities for young people to engage in sports, take music classes or do handicraft and other practical activities that can contribute to building social and professional skills (OECD, 2015h).

6.2.2. Eliminating obstacles for mobility in secondary education

Several policy measures can contribute to equity in secondary education and alleviate inequalities among students based on social backgrounds. These include eliminating grade repetition, avoiding early tracking and deferring student selection to upper secondary; managing school choice to avoid segregation and increased inequities; making funding strategies responsive to students’ and schools’ needs; and designing equivalent upper secondary education pathways to ensure completion (OECD, 2013a).

Students with low socio-economic backgrounds, poorly educated parents or immigrant backgrounds are significantly more likely to repeat classes than others, and grade repetition implies further widening the achievement gap between those who are left behind and their peers. Strategies to reduce grade repetition include: preventing repetition by addressing learning gaps during the school year; automatic promotion or limiting repetition to the subject or modules failed with targeted support; and raising awareness to change the cultural support for repetition. In Finland’s upper secondary schools, modular

curriculum units are used instead of grades so that students can build their own learning schedules from a menu of courses offered in their school and a student may repeat only those courses that were not passed satisfactorily. Similarly, in Canada, New Zealand and the United States, retention is usually restricted to the specific classes that the student failed (OECD, 2012). To support these strategies, complementary policies need to reinforce the capacities of schools and teachers to respond appropriately to students' learning needs, and to provide early, regular and timely support.

Designing a school system that is fair and inclusive includes limiting early tracking, because the early streaming of students based on their ability seems to considerably reduce mobility. Many countries sort students into different pathways according to their performance, but the timing and extent of streaming varies across OECD countries. Countries like Sweden or Spain do not track students during compulsory education, while others have tracking at age 10/11 (OECD, 2012). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be taken out of mainstream education and follow a vocational or less academic track. They are disproportionately placed in the least academically oriented tracks or groups early on, which widens initial inequities (Spinath and Spinath, 2005). For example, students with an immigrant background, when tracked at an early stage, may be locked into a lower educational environment before they have had a chance to develop the linguistic, social and cultural skills to attain their maximum potential (OECD, 2010b). In Austria, Germany and the Netherlands, higher proportions of immigrant students are observed in the lower tracks of compulsory education and in vocational and training education (OECD, 2010b). There is evidence that the abolition of early tracking and the introduction of comprehensive school systems helped to promote intergenerational mobility in Nordic countries and the United Kingdom, primarily by benefiting low-income families (Nolan et al., 2010; Blanden et al., 2005). For instance, the abolition of the old two-track school system with a uniform nine-year comprehensive school in Finland was found to increase intergenerational income mobility by 23% (Pekkarinen et al., 2009). In contexts where there is reluctance to delay early tracking, suppressing lower-level tracks or groups can mitigate its negative effects. Limiting the number of subjects or the duration of ability grouping, increasing opportunities to change tracks or classrooms and providing high curricular standards for students in the different tracks can lessen the negative effects of early tracking, streaming and grouping by ability.

Policies to improve the quality and design of upper secondary education can make it more relevant for students and raise completion rates. To this end there are different policy options: making academic and vocational tracks equivalent by improving the quality of vocational education and training, allowing transitions from academic to vocational studies and removing dead ends; and reinforcing guidance and counselling for students and designing targeted measures to prevent dropping out, such as additional pathways to obtain an upper secondary qualification or incentives to stay in school until completion.

6.2.3. Preventing early drop-out

Combating early school leaving is essential to address educational inequalities and mobility barriers. Finland has reformed its education system in this direction since 2006. Children are followed on a regular and long-standing basis by the school staff. Those at risk of dropping out are directed in special classes (2nd tier, *Jopo*) and followed by a dedicated teacher in an individualised manner (English, 2014). The students not yet succeeding with this setting are directed to a third tier. In Spain, the 2013 Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) aimed at reducing early school

dropouts and improving educational outcomes by providing for new external student assessments and granting greater autonomy to schools (Fernandez and Immervoll, 2017). The Netherlands rose the compulsory school attendance age as a way of fighting early school leaving. The introduction of a “qualification obligation” demands pupils to remain at school until they are 18 years old unless they obtain a basic qualification before (OECD, 2014c).

Low performance and the risks of dropping out need to be tackled early by identifying the low performers at the beginning of the school year and providing targeted support throughout the year, maintaining high expectations for all, reducing grade repetition, delaying academic selection and involving parents throughout the school year. Denmark’s *Youth Guidance Services* are an example of a prevention-oriented approach to early school leaving. Guidance counsellors develop educational plans with students and their parents while monitoring student’s educational transitions and their school attendance record (OECD, 2015j).

If poor school performance and absenteeism are caused, or aggravated, by non-educational factors, family-related, income or housing problems, for instance, they need to be addressed. Specialised support staff such as trained psychologists or social workers in schools can help to quickly identify and address the challenges. Depending on young persons’ needs, social workers or other support staff might help address family problems, resolve a difficult housing situation or put a young person in touch with health services. In Norway, for instance, schools have the freedom to exempt teachers from some of their teaching duties so that they can attend to students at risk of dropping out and absenteeism. In a similar vein, in Belgium, Flanders has adopted the *interne leerlingenbegeleiding* (internal care structure), that functions within schools to provide extra care to pupils in need and affected by non-educational factors (OECD, 2015j).

Another strategy to counter early school drop-out entails setting up special centres for the case management of early school leavers. Austria’s *Youth Coaches*, Australia’s *Youth Connections* programme, Flanders’s *Centra voor Leerlingenbegeleiding* (CLBs), and the regional Register and Co-ordination Centres in the Netherlands, aim to support (potential) early school leavers and help them getting back to school or having a swift transition to work (OECD, 2015j).

6.2.4. Strengthen the link between school and home to avoid the transmission of disadvantage within families

Mentoring programmes can also help fill the gaps for youth who may lack guidance and positive role models at home (OECD, 2016c). A range of successful schemes combine after-school activities for underprivileged youth with a mentoring component. Social and emotional learning school-based programmes have also been shown to improve both behavioural and academic outcomes (Sawhill et al., 2012). A number of studies have identified the positive impact of mentoring on health, self-esteem, risky behaviour and the well-being of adolescents, provided that the relationship lasted at least a year (Grossman and Rhodes, 2002). The impact of mentoring largely depends on the quality and strength of the relationship between the young person and the mentor, as well as on the appropriate targeting of at-risk youth (Dubois et al., 2002; Rhodes 2008).

Examples of mentoring programmes include the “Big Brothers Big Sisters” network in the United States, which for more than 100 years has matched adult volunteers (“Bigs”) and children (“Littles”). In Toronto, the Pathways to Education programme provides after-school tutoring, mentoring and financial assistance and has helped to

reduce drop-out rates (OECD, 2016c). In Portugal, the Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion programme (EPIS) consists of one-to-one or small-group meetings between trained professionals (often psychologists or specialists in educational sciences) and 13-15 year-old students, in particular those most at risk of failing their year and/or dropping out. The programme is tailored to each participant's individual non-cognitive skills deficit using individual techniques (motivational discussions, self-control, problem-solving techniques) and group techniques (study methods, social competences training, management of criticism, anxiety self-control). Overall, the programme was successful and cost-effectively decreased grade retention by 10 percentage points (Martins, 2010).

Other studies have also highlighted that certain forms of parental behaviour help improve outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Parental involvement, for example, reading with children when they are young, engaging in discussions that promote critical thinking and setting a good example, are found to be strongly related to cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes of children (Borgonovi and Montt, 2012). Country-specific longitudinal studies suggest that parental participation in learning activities at home and aspirations about children's education are positively associated with children's educational performance once socio-economic background is taken into account (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

This shows that teachers, schools and governments have an opportunity to increase parental involvement. Approaches range from parent training programmes to initiatives to enhance home-school links and programmes involving family or community education. Epstein's National Programme of Parent/School Partnerships (Kreider, 2000) showed that the best outcomes were obtained when parental involvement planning was integrated fully into school development plans, and when the plans also involved teachers and community members. A recent evaluation in France showed that directed parent discussion groups were an effective policy tool for increasing parental involvement and resulted in an increased awareness of school structure and improved student behaviour and positively impacted learning (Avvisati et al., 2010).

6.2.5. Higher education is a pivotal moment for ensuring equal opportunities in working lives

Education has expanded in many OECD countries, but this has not always favoured relative upward mobility, especially into higher education. For individuals with less educated parents or from lower-income households, the chances of access to and completion of higher education remain lower than for those from more affluent backgrounds (see Chapter 5). Given the increasing importance of tertiary education for skills needed in the labour market and for earnings, a lack of access to higher education can have negative consequences for longer-run earnings trajectories and for social mobility. Differences in degree outcomes contribute to the reduced likelihood of moving into a professional job and the lower average earnings of graduates from poorer families. In the United States, for instance, the most competitive colleges are attended almost entirely by students from higher-socio-economic status households who out-populate the poorest students by a margin of fourteen to one (Carnevale et al., 2010). This is also observed in other countries where higher education systems have large differences between elite and standard universities. Besides the United States, the United Kingdom and France display substantial differences in the tightness of their selection process and in their per-student expenditures between the two types of university, and are thereby highly dual, which is not the case in the Nordic countries (Brezis and Hellier, 2017).

To address the under-representation of students from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds in higher education, especially in more selective or prestigious universities, requires outreach policy actions in upper secondary schooling. With little information and few resources, some youth prefer to attend shorter post-secondary courses or go to less demanding schools because of the quicker path to entry-level jobs but with lower labour-market prospects. Information, advice and guidance play a central role in shaping students' choices, and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have less effective guidance coming from their parents, networks and schools in terms of higher education pathways. Contextual admissions by universities avoid situations where high-potential candidates with a disadvantaged background do not pass the initial screening (OECD, 2017d; Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2016).

Mentoring or tutoring whereby students of a given university pair with secondary school students to provide information to know what assessors are looking for in the admission process helps develop interpersonal skills and raise aspirations. The French Programme “*Pourquoi Pas Moi*” initiated by the ESSEC Business School and now available in 130 top universities, representing 34% of the *grandes écoles* (*Cordées de la Réussite*, ONPV, 2016), offers high school students a mentoring programme and workshops. The evaluation shows that 90% of those students pursue tertiary education compared with the average of 75%, and participants are twice as likely to enter a top school (everything else being equal, Accenture, 2012). A similar initiative in the US, the College Coach Program, implemented in twelve Chicago public high schools, helped students go through the college application process and found that they were 13% more likely than those without coaches to enrol in college and were 24% more likely to attend a non-selective four-year college than a two-year college (Rosenbaum et al., 2015). Upscaling such programmes remains a challenge, as it reaches only a small share of students in upper secondary in France, e.g. around 2% (M.E.S.R.I., 2017).

Policies to address socio-economic inequalities and barriers to upward mobility for disadvantaged groups should also include additional measures for encouraging recruitment, such as differential admissions policies. One possibility is class-based affirmative action or contextual admission as a way to curb intergenerational economic disadvantage. The idea behind the use of contextual data in university admissions is that it is fair to consider contextual factors as well as formal educational achievement, given the variation in learners' opportunities and circumstances. Contextual admissions policies typically involve the use of additional information about students' background characteristics such as the overall performance of their school and socio-economic markers that are linked with students' academic achievement (Boliver et al., 2015). Such policies remain highly controversial though.

Several countries have introduced or are considering such differential admissions policies for low-economic groups or disadvantaged demographic groups. A decade ago Brazil introduced affirmative action quotas by race but also for low-income students and public school graduates. In the United States and South Africa, there has been a debate to move from a race-based affirmative action to a class-based one. There is a range of concerns about the effectiveness of affirmative action (Cahuc et al., 2014). From a theoretical point of view, affirmative action might result in lower investment from the targeted groups and be overall detrimental (Coate and Loury, 1993). From an empirical point of view, the extent to which affirmative action benefits its target population is unclear. A study from the University of Colorado has demonstrated that class-based affirmative action policy led to increased socio-economic diversity and slightly increased racial diversity (Gaertner and Hart, 2013), but another study at a more selective

institution, UCLA, showed that minority representation declined (Sander, 1997). The evaluation of Israel's class-based affirmative action programme has shown that it was effective, as it has expanded access for academically borderline applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds and has led to higher rates of admission and enrolment overall (Alon and Malamud, 2014). Sander (2004) shows that black law students in the United States benefitting from affirmative actions were more likely to fall into the lowest performing tail of the distribution, with a higher dropout risk. Arcidiacono et al. (2012) found that affirmative action might bias the choice of majors and be detrimental to students who would have chosen more demanding paths in the absence of affirmative action.

Some proposals call for replacing affirmative action by “percent plans” in order to achieve diversity goals (Arcidiano and Lovenheim 2016). Percent plans guarantee admission to students who are in the top X percent of their high school class – thereby expanding access to low-income minority students. Texas and California have implemented plans guaranteeing all students in the top 10 percent of their high school class automatic admission to university.

The effectiveness of contextual admissions also requires the use of accurate and appropriate indicators that can be used by universities to understand previous differences, without compromising student achievement. Common indicators include individual-level, neighbourhood-level and school-level measures of relative disadvantage. This can be supplemented by teachers' evaluations. In France, the University Sciences Po has a special pathway (*Convention d'Education Prioritaire*) for students from disadvantaged schools (*Zone Education Prioritaire*) whereby the requirement of a written exam is waived but selection requires an information jury at school. Since its introduction in 2001, more than 1 700 students have benefited from this admissions process, and their success rate seems similar to other students, although some of them seem to take longer to finish their studies (Tiberj, 2011).

In addition to contextual admissions, diversifying entry routes for the promotion of more disadvantaged students to the best schools is another option to promote social mobility. Preparatory courses or foundation year programmes and summer schools are one way for students who do not have the required levels of prior attainment to acquire sufficient knowledge and skills and find a route into selective universities. France has also developed *parcours passerelles* for those doing short tertiary courses or coming from less selective schools to enter longer courses. In addition, top universities are providing other diplomas to bring people into higher education.

Better opportunities for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds can also be fostered by a transition from a decentralised to a centralised admission system to universities. Experience from Chile shows that the enlarged pool of colleges in the centralised admission system since 2012 has been welfare-improving, particularly for students facing high applications costs (Espinoza et al., 2017). Students are selected on the basis of a score that combines school grades and performance on a nationwide test (*Prueba de Selección Universitaria*). As a result of the transition, students of low socio-economic status are able to enrol in higher quality schools, and the premium of being rich was reduced by half. In terms of feasibility, sizeable application costs and low heterogeneity in college quality may lead to a voluntary transition of the universities to a centralised matching system. A centralised system could be adopted more readily in a market with high search costs, such as countries with high inequality.

Social mobility in higher education needs policy interventions that go well beyond the first day of university. In particular, providing greater support for students from poorer backgrounds while they are at university is also important to ensure that they are able to stay and complete their degrees (Crawford et al., 2016). For some, obstacles are related to the workload, while for others they are related to the combination of work and study. Student services, counselling and tutoring might be targeted to prevent dropping out, particularly during or toward the end of the first year. The First Generation Programme at the University in Colorado Boulder, for instance, helps first-generation students to transition from college to university and to navigate through the range of academic and social resources (Boulder, 2018).

Finally, diversity in higher education is related to funding issues as well, and individuals from a disadvantaged background need certainty in what they can expect to receive in terms of financial aid prior to applying. The policy aim of student grants is to step in and eliminate family income or wealth as a deterrent to access to tertiary education and success there. Several studies have documented the impact of student aid on matriculation decisions and suggest that aid programmes significantly increase enrolment, to the tune of around 1-3 percentage points per USD 1 000 (Kane 1995; Dynarski, 2000, 2003; Seftor and Turner, 2002; for the United States; Nielsen et al., 2010 for Denmark; Dearden et al., 2014, for the United Kingdom). There is also more recent evidence that financial aid leads to increases in annual rates of completion and higher course scores (Murphy and Wyness, 2016; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2016). High tuition fees may also deter low-income students from attending, though low or no tuition fees are also likely to benefit the rich disproportionately. Tuition fees that can be implemented on a sliding scale based on family/individual income, with families/individuals below a certain income threshold exempted from having to pay tuition fees, seems a promising way forward. While loans are an option, it is important to avoid high levels of repayment default, debt and risk. Dynarski and Kreiman (2013) suggest, for example, loans for which student-loan payments will automatically rise and fall with a borrower's earnings.

6.3. Which labour-market policies can best foster social mobility?

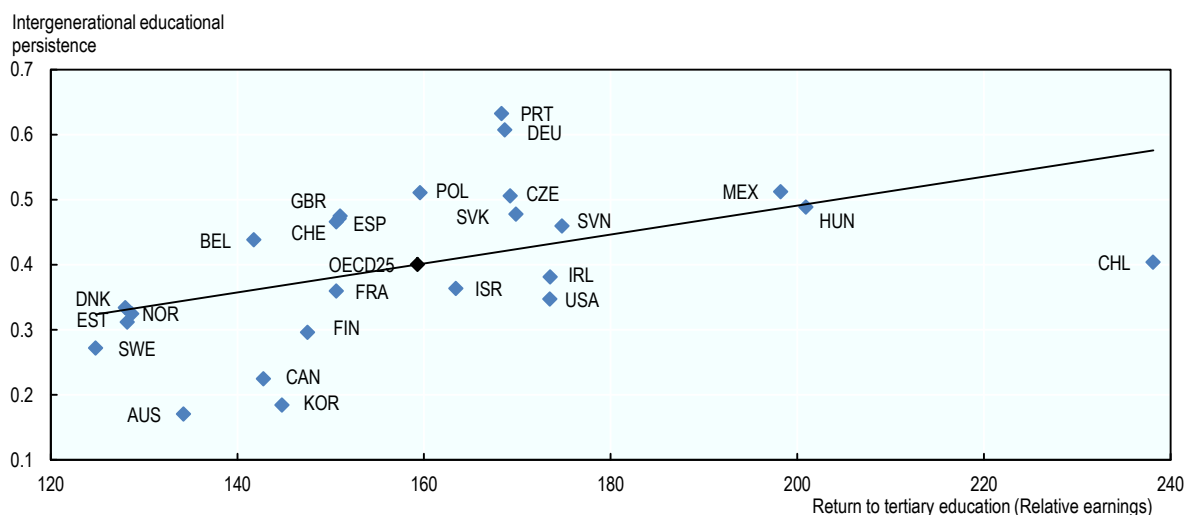
Individuals' labour-market attainment is the main driver of families' upward income mobility (Chapter 3). Those in more precarious forms of employment are less likely to move up the earnings and income ladder and are less equipped to face adverse labour-market trigger events, such as job loss. In addition, labour-market attainment is largely determined by parental background. One out of two children whose parents are managers themselves, but only one out of four among those whose parents are manual workers (Chapter 4).

While a high-quality education and training system is key to give individuals the best possible start in the labour market, labour-market policies can make a substantial difference for earnings and occupational mobility throughout the career. First, low-skilled adults who did not get the benefit of educational opportunities risk getting trapped if their skills remain weak or deteriorate over time, and so need targeted training. Second, even high-skilled youth from disadvantaged backgrounds will benefit from additional policy interventions to enter certain occupations and obtain good jobs. Third, well-functioning labour markets can help to limit not only the occurrence of unemployment spells, but also their scarring effects. Fourth, earnings mobility throughout the working-life cycle is affected by overall job quantity and quality, and therefore is likely to be influenced by labour-market institutions such as employment protection legislation and active

labour-market policies. Finally, trigger events drive income mobility all across the income distribution, and in particular in the middle, and well-designed labour-market policies can support sustainable mobility paths for middle-income earners.

Labour-market policies are also relevant for earnings and income mobility across generations: according to Solon (2004), one of the most important determinants of social mobility is the rate of return to human capital, since this gives better-off parents a greater incentive to invest in their children's human capital. Cross-country evidence shows that higher returns to schooling are associated with lower intergenerational mobility (Corak, 2013). Figure 6.2 shows a strong relationship between the returns to education (relative earnings) and educational mobility. Countries where the relative earnings of individuals with a tertiary education are higher are generally those which also have a higher level of intergenerational educational persistence, i.e. lower mobility. These countries include for example Germany, Hungary, Portugal and Mexico. By contrast, Australia, Canada and Korea exhibit both low levels of persistence and low returns to tertiary education.

Figure 6.2. Educational mobility is lower in countries where returns to tertiary education are higher



Note: Persistence is defined as the regression coefficient between parental and children's years of schooling at age 30-55 (see Chapter 4). Returns to tertiary education are defined as relative earnings with reference to upper secondary education for all earners aged 25-64 in 2015 or latest year available.

Source: OECD *Education at a glance (2015)* and OECD calculations based on the CNEF for Australia, Germany, Korea and the United States, CASEN for Chile, the ESS for European countries and ENIGH for Mexico.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933754861>

6.3.1. Granting young people the right start

Missing the boat at the beginning of one's career can have long-lasting detrimental consequences. Some countries, however, manage better to rebalance opportunities (Chapter 3). More must be done to help disadvantaged youth make a better start in the labour market to avoid poor careers driven by intermittent spells of low-paid work and unemployment at early stages. Youth from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have left the education system early and without the necessary skills. As a result, they have a higher probability to be neither in employment nor in education or training

(NEET): NEETs are 80% more likely than other young people to have parents with less than upper-secondary schooling and twice as likely to have parents who do not work (OECD, 2016c). The *OECD Action Plan for Youth* recommends a set of measures including second-chance programmes and encouraging employers to expand quality apprenticeships or internship programmes that can help disadvantaged youth who did not pursue their education further.

Early school leavers typically find it very hard to return to school, as the educational, social or personal factors that caused the initial drop-out often persist and remain an obstacle. Second-chance programmes offer a flexible learning environment that is well adapted to early school leavers’ needs and helps them back into education by providing intensive support during a period of several months up to one year, with a follow-up if needed. These programmes focus on both cognitive skills and non-cognitive skills by combining catch-up classes in literacy and numeracy skills with vocational classes, intensive counselling, health support and career guidance, with strong links to local employers and stakeholders. Simple work experience or community work components – in catering or elderly care, for example – can help them re-gain their work rhythm (OECD, 2016c). Examples of such programmes include the US Job Corps⁴ and YouthBuild, which function as comprehensive pre-apprenticeships, the *École de la Deuxième Chance* in France and the Swedish Folk High Schools, which provide young people aged 18 and over with a mixture of intensive counselling, coaching in social and life skills, and formal education.

Many successful interventions for disadvantaged students seek to improve non-cognitive traits, some of which are transmitted by the social background. Such non-cognitive skills, such as conscientiousness and emotional stability (“locus of control” and self-esteem) are positively related to labour-market performance (Brunello and Schlotter, 2011). There is evidence that non-cognitive skills are as malleable as cognition and can be influenced by education. Personality traits can be changed by experience and specialised interventions, including for teenagers and young adults. After-school support, mentoring, work experience and second-chance programmes can thus all help to influence non-cognitive skills (OECD, 2016c).

The school-to-work transition is a keystone in promoting intergenerational mobility and the prospects for young people’s future labour-market trajectory. Apprenticeship training, i.e. combining work and study within a firm-based approach, can be effective in smoothing the school-to-work transition (see for example Acemoglu and Pischke, 1998, for Germany; Fersterer and Winter-Ebmer, 2003, for Austria; McIntosh, 2004, for the United Kingdom; and Abriacet al., 2009, for France). In order to improve social mobility, apprenticeships need to focus more on attracting and retaining youth “at risk” for whom securing internship programmes might be harder (UK Social Mobility Commission, 2014). Successful apprenticeship programmes need to be designed in a way that they encourage the participation of different age groups, disadvantaged youth and women, and cover multiple sectors and occupations. They must include a strong training component and be well integrated in the formal schooling system. Importantly, it has to be ensured that they are not misused as a form of cheap labour. Pre-apprenticeship programmes can prepare more disadvantaged young people, who may struggle to be admitted to apprenticeships, by helping them to brush up on patchy literacy or numeracy skills, build motivation, familiarise themselves with the work routine, and even give them short spells of work experience. Such pre-vocational programmes exist in Germany, where they last up to one year, and in Australia, where they focus on particular occupations or a range of

fields, and typically involve classroom-based vocational education and training (VET) courses and work placements.

A number of OECD countries have introduced financial incentives to incentivise employers to create apprenticeship places (OECD, 2016c). Such measures include wage subsidies, tax credits and/or social security rebates and sub-minimum wages for youth. In the United Kingdom, the National Apprenticeship Service offers apprenticeship grants of GBP 1 500 to employers with up to 1 000 employees who recruit 16-24 year-olds. In Germany, a training allowance is agreed upon by the social partners, which varies according to the apprentice's age and experience with the firm. In Denmark, all companies make a yearly contribution of nearly EUR 400 per employee in the Employer's refund for apprenticeship Fund (AER). The AER then compensates companies every 24 months for each apprentice hired (OECD, 2016c).

6.3.2. Addressing occupational barriers for disadvantaged groups

Even when students from disadvantaged backgrounds have similar educational attainments as their peers, they face difficulties in obtaining good jobs and miss the resulting opportunities. There are a number of intricate phenomena behind this invisible barrier, which can be grouped along two dimensions: lack of information and discrimination. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds might lack the informal behavioural codes prevailing in recruitment processes (Vance, 2016). Employers might exercise discrimination, either consciously or unconsciously.

Improving the school-to-work transition for disadvantaged youth is an important avenue to ensure upward mobility over the life course and prevent the transmission of disadvantage from one generation to the next. Improving career advice, mentoring and the links between education and employers can help to provide better information to more disadvantaged students about the steps required to build a career, especially in the most selective professions (Marcenaro Gutierrez et al., 2014). The United Kingdom has recently set up the Careers and Enterprise Company, an employer-led organisation established by the government to prepare students for the workplace; it hopes to provide young people with direct support from businesses to boost social mobility.

Unpaid internships can become a barrier to social mobility. Low-income students cannot afford to work for free and might end up choosing summer jobs or paid internships in sectors where they do not gain the skills to climb up the career ladder. The BBC has for example banned unpaid internships as one human resources management measure to proactively support social mobility. Initiatives from social mobility organisations such as the Sutton Trust and the Social Mobility Foundation in the United Kingdom run a number of programmes designed to encourage young people from low-income backgrounds to take up internships in top firms. In the United States, the Year Up programme offers post-secondary education in association with companies to disadvantaged young people who leave school with at least a secondary graduation diploma but do not have the necessary skills to find good jobs. Roder and Elliott (2014) found that three years after the end of the programme the participants had 30% higher annual revenues, mainly due to higher hourly wages.⁵

Internships often rely on informal networks and “who you know” mechanisms, excluding the least well-off young people (Social Mobility Commission, 2016). Joining professional clubs, women’s networks and the like offer great chances to develop social networks and learn of new job opportunities and resources that can help those who come from a lower socio-economic background to mitigate the absence of parental connections.

In France, the social network *Pote Emploi* aims to connect young successful people from a disadvantaged background with their younger peers and provide access to a network, including opportunities for internships.

Young people from a disadvantaged background often face strong barriers at the recruitment stage, in particular conscious or unconscious discrimination by employers, who often tend to recruit candidates with whom they identify themselves (Heath et al., 2013; Bertrand et al., 2017; Dovidio et al., 2016; Pager and Western, 2012). Anonymous resumes are one of the practices intended to benefit the hiring and retention of individuals from a lower socio-economic background. However, evidence remains inconclusive about their effectiveness in terms of call-back rates (Krauser et al., 2012; Behaghel et al., 2015). In practice, anonymous resumes might nevertheless not be fully anonymous, as informal signals can always be detected: residential neighbourhood, schools attended or listed language skills (Krauser et al., 2012). Class references can be hinted at in a resume such as hobbies or extra-curricular activities with lower financial barriers to entry (Rivera and Tilcsik, 2016). Finally, even with anonymous job applications, candidates' identities are signalled during interviews (Rivera and Tilcsik, 2016).

Measures to avoid discriminations linked to social background, which limit opportunities, include for example communication campaigns, in particular aimed at enterprises and human resources managers, so that the recruitment processes are made less subjective. The Company MasterCard launched an InternsWanted campaign, where candidates are invited to submit a “creative submission” profiling their idea to promote a part of the company vision including blogs, videos, or designs.

Public services can act as a role model in guaranteeing non-discrimination (Lipsky, 1980). Access to rewarding careers in the public service for young people with a migrant background or for young women can be a fruitful angle to improve social mobility and recruitment practices (OECD, 2017d). In the United Kingdom, the government has implemented the Civil Service Fast Stream Programme to attract some of the country's most talented graduates for training to develop a career; participants are selected for their potential and not background to become future members of the senior civil service. In France, students from a disadvantaged social background receive scholarships to support their preparation for the competitive exam to enter the National School of Public Administration (ENA). In Norway, public employers have the obligation to invite one qualified applicant with an immigrant background and a person with a disability to an interview, and there is the possibility of choosing the second-best candidate for the job if the applicant comes from an immigrant background. Many countries – Ireland, the Netherlands and New Zealand are examples – train interviewing board members on diversity issues that should be considered during the interview process, and integrate the interview boards in such a way that they themselves reflect diversity. Finland implemented a project called Female Managers Career Advancement in the State Administration (2008-09), which includes the training of supervisors to recognise women's management ability and encourage women to participate in management training.

Other policy measures aim to make access to the liberal professions fairer, for instance by offering financial support to start a new business or introducing programmes to help new liberal professionals to develop a network of customers (Aina and Nicoletti, 2014). Overly tight occupational licensing can damage social mobility by allowing those with resources and connections to benefit from the higher incomes flowing from some of these occupations, in part by preventing others from competing with them (Rodrigue and

Reeves, 2015). Entrepreneurial skills are also often transmitted informally from one generation to the next (Aghion et al., 2017). The EU has launched the EU Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan that foresees interventions to remove administrative barriers and support entrepreneurship in crucial phases of the business-life cycle, with a focus on entrepreneurial education and training. Recent suggestions under consideration in this field in the United States include subjecting new licensing proposals to cost-benefit analysis and reclassifying certain occupations that are licensed – in the US, for about 30% of occupations the government establishes qualifications required to practice a trade or profession – to a system of certification or no regulation (Kleiner, 2015).

6.3.3. Reducing the impact of labour-market shocks and helping people back to work

Preventing people from remaining stuck at the bottom of the income distribution and reducing the risks for those in the middle to slide down in case of labour-market shocks requires policies which both address unemployment and inactivity spells and foster labour-market and wage mobility. This section focusses on policy tools to address recurrent unemployment spells over the working career. This can be achieved by limiting time out-of-work, facilitating good-quality returns to employment and helping displaced workers back into work quickly.

6.3.3.1. Never too early to anticipate

Mechanisms anticipating labour-market shocks, such as forecasting economic and labour-market trends and forward-looking management of skills and jobs, can potentially prevent some mass layoffs and plant closures in the first place, whilst improving the way firms adapt to change. In Canada, the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) provides funds to employers, social partners and communities to enable them to proactively develop plans and strategies for dealing with labour force issues and meeting human resource requirements (OECD, 2015c).

Co-ordination of collective-bargaining arrangements across sectors or firms can also facilitate adjustments in wages and working time so that layoffs and income shocks can be avoided. In some countries (e.g. Sweden), working-time reductions are uncompensated so that they result in proportional reductions in earnings, while in others they may be partially compensated through the use of short-time work schemes (OECD, 2017e). These schemes have been widely used in OECD countries following the 2008 crisis, for example in Austria, Belgium, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg and Japan. Such programmes significantly contributed to stabilise permanent employment and reduce unemployment by helping firms to avoid unnecessary layoffs, i.e. the permanent dismissal during a business downturn of workers whose jobs would have been viable in the longer run (Cahuc and Carcillo, 2011; OECD, 2016e).⁶

Effective active labour-market policies are instrumental in integrating jobseekers into good-quality employment and preventing unemployment spells from hampering future upward mobility. Activation policies need to find a proper balance between a careful focus on the jobseekers most in need – which is often widely done in OECD countries – and workers who are closer to employment or in need of less intense support – so that the exclusion from employment does not turn permanent.

6.3.3.2. *Early activation in case of labour-market shocks*

Early activation in case of unemployment prevents the risk of scarring on the long run. In Denmark, warning pools are funds that can be used to establish a temporary employment service in a workplace (OECD, 2016f). Caseworkers from the local job centre deliver job-search assistance and help workers build a job strategy. Counselling services are provided during the notice period, preparing workers for their displacement. Training, starting shortly after the displacement, can be considered. In Ontario, the Rapid Re-employment and Training Service (RRTS) provides an example of immediate response to large-scale layoffs. It connects individuals with the public employment services and helps them regain employment by taking into account long-term retention issues (OECD, forthcoming). In Sweden, the Job Security Councils (JSCs) provide an example of re-employment services for displaced workers, including early intervention. JSCs are probably a key reason why nearly 90% of workers are re-employed within a year of being laid-off (OECD, forthcoming).

6.3.3.3. *Accompanying intensively hard-to-place workers*

Profiling tools play a key role for giving hard-to-place unemployed better opportunities to participate in the labour market and to move up, and they are now used in many countries (OECD, 2015e). In Austria, for example, the public employment service applies a three-zone concept, with first-tier service just for information, a service zone for registration and basic services, and a counselling zone where clients who are still unemployed after three months receive intensive case-management services. In Germany, clients are segmented into six different profiles using a software-guided assessment of their “distance to the labour market”. Each profile is linked to a specific service strategy to be followed by the caseworker, although qualitative research has found that direct links between profiling results and goals set in the action plans are rather weak (OECD, 2015e).

Intensive counselling interviews during the unemployment spell are instrumental to detect opportunities to increase or update jobseekers’ skills, review resumes, provide advice on job-search strategies or interview techniques and refer jobseekers to open vacancies. In an experiment in Denmark, early and frequent meetings with unemployed workers increased employment over the next two years by up to five weeks (Maibom Pedersen et al., 2012). Positive impacts on exits to employment have also been found for France, suggesting in particular that intensive counselling can improve the quality of job matches (Behaghel et al., 2014). A recent trial in Nevada in the United States shows that a first meeting of jobseekers with counsellors expedited re-employment and helped participants to get relatively higher-paying jobs (OECD, 2015e).

6.3.4. *Making transitions pay on the labour market*

Both unemployment spells, but also non-standard forms of employment – although granting a foot in the labour market – can be barriers to upward social mobility (Chapter 3). Policies aimed at promoting social mobility and equal opportunities need to consider the quality of employment and the bridges between the different labour statuses on the labour market – in other words, making transitions happen, and making them pay (Schmid, 2016).

Temporary or part-time jobs and self-employment now account for about one-third of total employment in OECD countries. These forms of non-standard employment are often associated with lower job quality: lower hourly wages, less job security and less social

protection (OECD, 2015a). In addition, they may not be covered by collective bargaining arrangements and/or some labour regulations (including working time, minimum wage). Workers with these jobs also tend to receive less training and suffer more job strain (OECD 2015a). Moreover, transitions towards standard employment are generally scarce, resulting in gaps widening with the passage of time. The challenge for policy is to reduce differences in treatment across different forms of work while, at the same time, encouraging job creation and the use of employment arrangements. This entails, to the extent possible, equitable treatment between regular employees and those in other forms of work in terms of tax and transfer regulations.

In Italy, the *Jobs Act* has introduced a new open-ended contract since 2015. This new contract increases employment protection with job tenure, aiming at simplifying and streamlining dismissal rules while reducing labour-market dualism. Existing temporary contracts were transformed into open-ended ones by 2016, unless collective agreements set flexibility criteria for the use of temporary contracts (OECD, 2015f). In Japan, where the gap between regular and non-regular workers is particularly marked (non-regular work is even referred to as *Hiseiki*, meaning “*not legitimate*” in Japanese), measures for “Equal pay for Equal work” are being developed.⁷ The package includes a legal framework ensuring fair and equal treatment of workers regardless of their status, in particular fixed-term workers or part-time workers, with respect to evaluation, working conditions and pay level. In Slovenia, the new Employment Relations Act (2013) made notice periods more dependent on service duration and somewhat strengthened the position of temporary contracts.

Social protection for non-standard workers needs to be strengthened. This could be achieved by aligning benefit rules across different contractual arrangements; adapting existing social insurance schemes to extend them to previously excluded categories of workers; complementing social insurance with non-contributory schemes; and/or making social protection portable (i.e. linking entitlements to individuals rather than jobs). Under the New Employment Relations Act in Slovenia, unemployment insurance contributions are no longer paid for the first two years after hiring a worker on an open-ended contract, while they were increased for fixed-term contracts.⁸ In Japan, pensions and health insurance are progressively being extended to cover part-time workers in the framework of the “Equal Pay for Equal Work” programme.

Addressing the coverage gap of non-standard workers by collective bargaining arrangements will also help the upward mobility prospects of workers. This may require adjusting other rules and practices for collective bargaining, such as competition regulations which, in some countries, prevent independent workers from bargaining collectively (as in a recent case that opposed unions and employers in the arts-information-media sector in the Netherlands). Some new initiatives include non-standard workers setting up new unions or associations (such as the Freelancers Union in the United States or platform workers groups emerging in Europe) and/or integration into “traditional” unions (such as the German IG Metall with the FairCrowdWork or the German independent service union ver.di, among others). Another new development is the use of social media to help workers to organise and effectively express individual and collective grievances (OECD 2017e).

Promoting career mobility for middle-skilled workers can also be achieved by improving and diversifying recruitment processes. This implies making employers aware of unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion processes and developing new recruitment methods (see Box 6.2). This involves acknowledging the unconscious bias

that results in a tendency for people often to promote the candidates of the same sex and with the same profile (McGinn and Milkman, 2013).

Women (in particular mothers) face concrete barriers in career progression that could be better addressed by policies. This can be achieved through awareness-raising, for example, about the social networking gap of women with children who still often dedicate more time than men to care constraints (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010). This can also translate into incentivising firms to rethink their time management approaches or consider developing role models (Skaggs et al., 2012). Paid parental leave, good-quality and affordable childcare, workplace flexibility measures, and more generally policies that aim at facilitating a good work-life balance have a major role to play to foster women's mobility in the workplace. Following the 2013 OECD Gender Recommendation, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have recently widened the right to request flexible work to all workers, thereby lessening the risk of discrimination against parents (in particular mothers) who ask for this right.

Box 6.2. Developing innovative recruitment methods to foster social mobility

Recruiters tend, consciously or unconsciously, to recruit people with the same profile as them, widening inequalities on the labour market. For example, people often tend to promote the same-sex same-profile candidates (McGinn and Milkman, 2013). This results in significant barriers at the recruitment stage for many. For example, in France, candidates from disadvantaged areas are 2.7 times less likely to get an interview after application than their better-off peers. The unemployment rate of high-educated people living in deprived areas is almost three times higher than the national average for high-educated people (ONPV, 2016). In the United Kingdom, a wide-scale study on applicants to large accounting firms has shown that candidates from low-income backgrounds have a lower success rate compared to those from higher-income backgrounds (5.5% vs 4.5%, Bridge Group, 2017)

Making employers aware of unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion processes can be a first step towards better patterns of social mobility, both over the life course, by making careers more fluid, and intergenerationally, by giving more opportunities to young people from a disadvantaged background. Some organisations, such as Access Accountancy, are commissioned by firms (in this case, the largest accounting firms) to improve access to the profession and social mobility. In France, a communication campaign about the barriers in hiring faced by minorities has been launched, and firms engaged in improving their recruitment processes are flagged with a label *Recruteurs de la Diversité*. Measures aiming at subsidising the recruitment of young people from disadvantaged areas over two to three years after hiring are also under consideration.

New ideas around the recruitment processes are emerging. Firms are rethinking their recruiting in order to broaden the set of applicants' profiles and the value added for businesses and social cohesion. For example, online tests as a screening tool might be carefully considered, as they might filter out applicants from low-income backgrounds, with little indication about the applicant's future performance (Bridge Group, 2017). Such methods could for example translate into recruitment processes based on personality rather than resumes for some positions. Algorithms aiming at measuring the competencies and skills of candidates by other means than a resume (e.g. JP Morgan), such as simulation-based recruitment methods (e.g. Crédit Agricole), video introduction or interviewing, online recruitments, and even virtual reality recruitments are among the new methods under exploration. Such alternative recruitment methods are encouraged by the government through awards and communication campaigns.

6.3.5. Lifelong learning to build capacity throughout the lifetime

In order to ensure upward mobility opportunities throughout the life-course, workers need to be provided with lifelong learning opportunities. Developing, maintaining and upgrading skills at all ages reduces the risk of becoming trapped in low-quality jobs and joblessness. Training contributes to upward intra-generational earnings mobility by

fostering wage growth (Blanden et al, 2012; Mincer, 1988; Parent, 1999; Pavlopoulos et al., 2009; Gerards, 2011; Higuchi, 2013). Lifelong learning policies do however not necessarily increase intergenerational mobility for low-skilled workers. Children coming from managerial and professional backgrounds seem to benefit most from further education (Bukodi, 2017).

Specifically, policies aiming at improving training opportunities should focus on 1) increasing and promoting the benefits of adult learning; 2) helping individuals and firms overcome any financial and non-financial constraints they might face; 3) helping individuals to make good vocational education and training choices by providing high-quality information, advice and guidance; and 4) fostering stronger business-education partnerships which ensure that training programmes are well aligned with the needs of employers. Such efforts should focus in particular on the low-skilled as well as SMEs. In the United Kingdom, SMEs are exempt from paying the apprenticeship levy but still enjoy subsidies to cover the classroom part of apprenticeship training. In 2015, Portugal introduced the training subsidy *Cheque Formação* targeted at both employees and job seekers (Duell and Thévenot, 2017). In 2016, Chile launched *Impulsa Personas*, a tax credit allocated to firms for workers' on-the-job training (OECD, 2018a).

Training policies aiming at removing sticky floors in societies and supporting the less educated should target those with low skills. PIAAC results have confirmed a lower incidence of training among the low-skilled. Moreover, the returns to training are unevenly distributed, with lower returns for low-educated workers (Pavlopoulos et al., 2009; Hidalgo et al., 2014). Proven approaches to target the low-skilled encompass basic skills teaching, e-learning, and contextualisation and embedding, especially in the workplace (Windisch, 2015). Social partners in the United Kingdom have set up a training fund (Union Learning Fund), which actively recruits the participation of low-skilled workers in training activities. In Germany, workers without qualifications and workers who have spent at least four years in a job unrelated to their initial training may receive funds from the government to retrain in an area with good labour-market prospects (OECD, 2017f). In Portugal, *Qualifica*, launched in 2016, focusses on lifelong learning for the less-educated (Duell and Thévenot, 2017; OECD 2017g). In France, the validation of prior experience (*Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*) is a scheme that certifies professional or personal skills without a need for candidates to attend formal classes. In addition, social partners in France have developed the CléA certificate, which certifies basic skills with the aim of helping unemployed individuals without qualifications find a job and workers progress in their careers (OECD, 2017f).

Structural changes of labour markets make lifelong learning essential and require new approaches to update skills in order to sustain career and wage growth for workers in mid-career, especially those who lack skills that are critical in today's labour market, such as ICT skills. Compared to workers who can only perform the most basic computer functions, those with more advanced ICT skills are paid 27% more, on average (OECD, 2016h). Future skills challenges will require a significant upscaling of adult learning opportunities as well as the development of new tools for incentivising skills investments.

Existing infrastructures for lifelong learning may need to be geared up, including by exploiting the opportunities afforded by new technologies, which allow access to courses to be scaled up massively at only a fraction of the cost of traditional courses. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) and open educational resources (OERs) offer promising opportunities for the low-skilled, who might be attracted by the unconventional approach to learning. New certification methods have begun to appear. OpenBadge is for instance a

certification tool that can be used to track the lifelong learning journey of participants. A number of technology companies such as Microsoft, CISCO, HP, Samsung, Apple, and Google offer certificates that MOOC participants can earn directly online.

A prominent challenge posed by the rise in non-standard forms of work pertains to the portability of training rights between employers, for instance, by creating and subsidising personal training accounts or promoting lifelong training rights. Such accounts provide individuals with a training subsidy that gives them more responsibility and control, allowing for a better match between individual needs and appropriate training (OECD, 2017h). Individual learning accounts that can be used to finance the direct costs of learning exist in Austria (Individual Learning accounts), Canada (Learn\$ave), Belgium-Flanders (Individual Learning and Development Accounts), the United States (Individual Development Accounts), the United Kingdom – Wales (Individual Learning Accounts), the Netherlands (Experiment with Learning Accounts), Spain – Basque region (Ikastekin Txekinbide) and France (*Compte Personnel d'Activité*). Examples from the Nordic countries, where adult learning is more prominent, highlight the importance of the combination of attractive financial incentives for learners and employers, and a greater willingness to collaborate with unions on such initiatives (OECD, 2017h).

Addressing skills mismatches is also important, because about one-third of workers in OECD countries are not having a job matching their skills (OECD, 2013b), while a majority of them are under-skilled. Having the right skills for a job has long-lasting effects on wages and employment throughout workers' careers, reducing the chances of upward mobility. Mismatches between the level and field of qualifications possessed by workers and those required in their job are pervasive, affecting one-third of workers (OECD, 2016i). Employers need to work with education and training institutions to ensure the provision of relevant skills, provide on-the-job training to facilitate the upgrading and adaptation of skills, and adopt forms of work organisation that make the most of existing skills. Local and national partnerships should be facilitated to reduce policy silos and bring social partners together with training organisations and other intermediaries to design strategies that seek to improve the adaptability of workplaces. In Estonia, the OSKA forecasting system has been implemented to predict employers' future skills demands and improve the co-ordination among stakeholders, including public employment services, employer bodies, trade unions and government ministries (Browne, 2017a).

The relevance of skills formation can also be improved by having in place robust systems and tools for assessing and anticipating skills needs. For instance, Canada carries out analyses of current skills needs along with medium- to long-run forecasts to identify future skills needs and imbalances and tailor immediate policy intervention (e.g. identify migration opportunities or develop short-term worker training schemes) as well as long-term policy orientations (e.g. develop apprenticeship programmes in certain fields). Combining foresight and forecast exercises may help to improve the quality of forward-looking exercises. Foresight exercises rely upon consultations with stakeholders and experts to build scenarios about how the supply and demand dynamics of skills might change in the future. Australia's Work and Productivity Agency conducts foresight exercises which form the basis for economic modelling of the supply and demand for qualifications. Data on skills needs should also be widely disseminated, both to policy makers and to individuals making human capital investment decisions. For example, Italy's Eduscopio website is a good example of a career guidance website that communicates information about skills needs in the labour market to prospective students in a way that is interactive and easy-to-use.

6.4. Which tax and transfers system designs can best foster social mobility?

While taxes and transfers are a direct instrument to redistribute income across individuals, they are also key policy tools to support social mobility. They are instrumental in smoothing income shocks due to changes in labour markets and family situations (Chapter 3) and in reinforcing earnings mobility across generations (Chapter 4). Mechanisms supporting family economic security (minimum wage, earned income tax credit, unemployment insurance, assistance to families in need) impact not only on family incomes but also on other well-being dimensions, for example, health (Spencer and Komro, 2017), and in particular, on children's and infants' health (Hoynes et al., 2015; Wicks-Lim and Arno, 2017; Markowitz et al., 2017).

6.4.1. *Wealth taxation, savings and access to credit to foster social mobility*

Policies that affect saving behaviour and wealth accumulation can be an important tool for enhancing social mobility. Wealth can act as a buffer against income shocks and hence help cushioning the impact of adverse life events. It moreover influences intergenerational mobility, as parents often use their fortunes to support their children by investing in their education or health or by transmitting part of their wealth to their children before or after the end of their lives (Chapter 4).

However, wealth is much more unequally distributed than income – the level of wealth inequality is twice the level of income inequality on average (OECD, 2015a). Wealth deprivation often goes hand in hand with income poverty: 68% of those living in the bottom income quintile are also asset-poor (Balestra and Tonkin, forthcoming). Half of young people are asset-poor, meaning that they cannot rely on the buffering impact on their own wealth in the event of economic hardship. This is likely to be one of the drivers of the “sticky floors” discussed in Chapter 1. These inequalities are transmitted or further reinforced across generations as high-income households are more likely to receive gifts or inheritances than those at the bottom of the income distribution. This likely explains “sticky ceilings”.

Since gifts and inheritances play an important role in wealth accumulation, and because wealth is particularly concentrated at the top, the taxation of such transfers will affect social mobility. Taxation commonly take the form of estate taxes imposed on the wealth left by the decedent, inheritance taxes imposed on the wealth received by the beneficiary, or gift taxes imposed on *inter vivos* transfers. From an intergenerational social mobility perspective, how much an heir inherits matters more than how much a person leaves behind (Kopczuk, 2013a). Therefore, inheritance taxes are preferable to estate taxes as they are levied on the recipient of the estate rather than on the deceased donor.

Twenty-six out of the 35 OECD countries had taxes on wealth transfers in 2017 (OECD, 2018b). Due to their distribution across income groups, inheritance and gift taxes are generally highly progressive (Förster et al., 2014). However, revenues from inheritance and gifts taxes have been very low and declining over time, reflecting the fact that tax bases are narrowed by exemptions and deductions, and tax rates are often low. Avoidance opportunities are also widely available. On average across the OECD, revenues from taxes on wealth transfers have declined from 1.1% of total taxation in 1965 to 0.4% today (OECD, 2018b). First avenues to rebalance opportunities would therefore be to limit avoidance, design progressive tax systems with adequate rates and reduce exemptions. Japan, for instance, reformed the taxation of inheritances and *inter vivos* gifts

in 2015. The tax-free allowance of the inheritance tax was reduced by 40% for certain population groups. While the reform has not yet been formally evaluated, an ex-ante evaluation has pointed to limited behavioural responses to this reform, since in Japan precautionary saving rather than bequest motives are often the main driver for wealth accumulation (Niimi, 2016).

Encouraging savings behaviour can be an important element in promoting upward mobility, especially among the poorest who are more likely to face unexpected income changes, and who are often asset-poor. Research has suggested that children of low-income, high-saving parents are more likely to experience upward income mobility (Cramer et al., 2009). Kast and Pomeranz (2014) found that reducing barriers to saving through access to free savings accounts in Chile decreases participants' short-term debt by about 20%, and that participants prefer borrowing less when a free formal savings account is available. Saving opportunities permit households to smooth temporary income gains, for example in the form of end-of-year bonuses or five-Friday months extra paychecks, and can thus help them to build up liquid assets to better cope with income dips. The 2018 OECD report *Taxation of Household Savings* documents opportunities for equity-enhancing improvements in the design of taxes on household savings, such as turning tax deductions for private pension savings into tax credits (OECD, 2018c).

6.4.2. Design tax systems that account for personal income shocks

Tax policies not only redistribute incomes between households or individuals but also contribute to smooth income volatility among the same households over time. Blundell (2014) found that taxes and transfers in the United States play a significant role in mitigating the impact of a permanent income loss on consumption, together with family labour supply and access to credit. Bibi et al. (2013) found that Canada's tax system significantly limits the income-equalising impact of income mobility throughout individual lives, and that it also considerably lowers the cost of unforeseen personal income changes income.

In some cases, however, tax systems – at least in their current design – contribute to amplifying income disparities over the life cycle because of the time lag between earnings and taxation. For example, taxation of annual income tends to disproportionately burden lower-income families who are more likely to face large ups and downs over the years, and thus pay higher taxes than they would have paid with a stable equivalent income. Measures smoothing taxes or tax credits over multiple years can help smoothen such income fluctuations (Batchelder, 2003). In Australia, the Average Taxable Income allows authors, artists and athletes to average their income over a multiple years after they start their professional activity in order to adjust taxes on the basis of their long term incomes (Australian Government, 2017b).

6.4.3. Effective transfers as a means to foster social mobility

It is crucial for mobile societies to ensure that people experiencing economic hardship can quickly recover from income shocks. The design of social transfer programmes such as unemployment insurance or in-work benefits, together with family benefits, can shape the persistence of income shocks and thereby impact income mobility. For example, the design of redistribution policies can condition the duration for which people are eligible for a given benefit. In this respect, an effective combination of last-resort income-support schemes with well-designed in-work benefits is likely to avoid long-term benefit dependency and to support upward mobility and returns to employment.

To prevent downward income mobility among working-age people, a first best policy is to strengthen pathways to employment and an individual's own capacity by equipping people to face the risks of negative income shocks. Policy options will depend on the social and economic circumstances of a particular country. In Mexico, for example, conditional cash transfers (Prospera programme) as well as a food programme and health and weather insurance aids are crucial to prevent income shocks leading to extreme poverty spells (De la Fuente et al., 2017). In Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, earnings shocks have been found to have an impact on children dropping out of school, advocating for a greater role of insurance mechanisms to cushion these shocks (Cerutti et al., 2018).

Unemployment insurance reduces earnings volatility, especially at the bottom of the earnings distribution where unemployment spells are more frequent (Chapter 3, Hacker et al. 2014) and decreases downward mobility by preventing further social exclusion. The redistributive impact of unemployment insurance may be particularly significant when measured in terms of life-time earnings (OECD, 2015d). Increasing the coverage of unemployment insurance where it is low is a promising avenue for promoting worker security, provided that systems are designed to preserve incentives to work. This added security is especially important for non-standard workers and those most excluded from the labour market, such as the long-term unemployed, and particularly in countries where both benefit coverage and generosity are low. Recent evidence suggests that the coverage of unemployment benefits has been decreasing during and after the economic crisis (OECD, forthcoming).

Several countries tried recently to reverse the tendency. In Italy, the minimum contribution requirements for unemployment benefits has been shortened and maximum durations were extended in 2015, widening the coverage of unemployment insurance (Pacífico, 2017a). France reduced the minimum requirements to four months, and entitlement is based on the number of days actually worked (Unedic, 2017). In Lithuania, the 2012 reform eased access to unemployment benefits, for example by reducing the employment conditions that a worker must meet to get the benefit, although the strictness of eligibility criteria remains high in international comparison (Pacífico, 2017b). Spain introduced a programme to support, for up to six months, jobseekers undertaking professional qualification programmes who have exhausted their regular unemployment benefits (Fernandez and Immervoll, 2017). In Korea, the self-employed have gained the opportunity to opt in for employment insurance coverage on a voluntary basis since 2012. In practice, however, very few of them do (OECD, 2018d). Like Korea, several OECD countries including Germany have introduced voluntary affiliation for self-employed persons over the past few years. Greece and Slovenia have recently introduced mandatory affiliation.

Transfer programs that are conditioned on low assets and low income will tend to benefit the chronically low-income, affecting long-run inequality more than volatility and mobility risk. However, the strongly means-tested nature of social benefits in some countries is often related to the recurrence of poverty and income volatility among the most precarious, and might create work disincentives. To alleviate such barriers to employment, Ireland has introduced new criteria for the child-care allowances for both working and non-working families, strengthening financial work incentives for out-of-work parents, particularly for lone parents and those whose partner earns relatively little (Browne, 2017b). A new form of social housing support (Housing Assistance Payment), which depends only on income and not hours worked, has also been introduced to replace the previous system, where benefits were completely withdrawn when any

family member worked more than 30 hours a week for those with a long-term, defined housing need.

Well-designed, permanent in-work benefits or earned income tax credits can be effective to make work pay and induce the right incentives for low-pay workers to climb up the earnings ladder, while at the same time supporting living standards of low-income families. However, as these schemes can exert downward pressure on wages, binding wage floors can increase the effectiveness of these schemes by providing a minimum level below which wages cannot fall – as long as they are set at an appropriate level. These usually take the form of a statutory minimum wage or wage floors collectively agreed by the social partners. In France, for example, the Activity Premium (*Prime d'Activité*) is conditioned by a binding wage floor (1.2 times the minimum wage) and household resources. First evaluations show a positive impact on poverty reduction and a mitigated impact on employment, as many recipients were employed, but in part-time jobs, and had unstable employment trajectories (DGCS, 2017).

The case for public social insurance in supporting families' incomes is strong, because lack of investment in children can have long-term negative (and potentially irreversible) consequences for their opportunities. In the United States, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has been credited with reductions in in-work poverty and improving the health of children in recipient families through three channels: family income, maternal employment and health insurance coverage patterns (Hoynes et al., 2015; Reagan and Duchovny, 2016). In the Netherlands, taxpayers with earned incomes and children below 12 are entitled to an income dependant combination rebate. Well-targeted and designed in-kind services need, however, to complement cash transfers for fostering social mobility (see Section 6.2.4). For instance, conditional cash transfers combined with regular health checks have also shown good results in terms of health and educational outcomes of children in Mexico, Chile and some non-OECD countries (OECD, 2015b).

6.4.4. *New social protection measures for tomorrow's social mobility*

Changes in work and employment patterns triggered by digitalisation, globalisation and demographic change often imply greater unpredictability of incomes, which can hamper opportunities (Schmid, 2016). First, people are facing more transitions between employment and unemployment, and between different jobs and forms of employment, and have therefore more earnings shocks or risks than they did in the past. Second, new forms of employment blur the lines between employment and self-employment, leaving workers often without adequate social protection (OECD, 2016i). In most OECD countries, the self-employed are covered only for the most basic benefits. While job changes may contribute to increasing earnings mobility, there is also a risk of earnings downgrading, particularly in some countries when changing from permanent to temporary jobs, and this holds whether changes are voluntary or part of a displacement.

To some extent, it is possible to address this concern by extending or adapting existing social security schemes. Some countries are currently reshaping social protection schemes to provide better coverage to the self-employed. In Finland, for instance, the self-employed are covered by unemployment benefits (see Box 6.3). This is also the case in Austria and Spain, but this is on a voluntary basis for unemployment benefits. In Germany, the artists' insurance scheme is designed to cope with the absence of employer social contributions. In Sweden, the self-employed have access to voluntary unemployment insurance but must cease their business activity for five years to be eligible for unemployment benefits. The drawbacks to cover non-standard workers in

standard social protection systems is that the self-employed tend to have more fluctuating earnings, which can lead to problems with the collection of contributions. Another potential problem concerning contributions arises if the employer cannot be easily identified (as is the case for platform workers) or does not exist, and self-employed individuals cannot afford to pay both employers and employees contributions.

With the numbers of individual work and task contracts growing and collective agreements becoming less relevant, social protection arrangements may also become more individualised – in the same way as they are already developing for training (see Section 6.3.5). Such accounts could help to better take income variability into account, and therefore better adapt to individual labour-market transitions. Several countries have experimented with individual activity accounts models, such as the Dutch life-cycle accounts. In the United States, multi-employer plans allow mobile workers to earn and retain their benefits even as they move between employers. However, in terms of social protection, collecting entitlements at the individual level undermines the idea of risk-sharing that is fundamental to any insurance. In addition, myopia may lead individuals to spend their entitlements too early, leaving them poor in old age. The experience of the Dutch Life Course Savings Scheme shows that many choose to use their funds to retire early instead of using them for training or caring.

Individual activity accounts can help support more sustainable mobility patterns, but still more innovative solutions are needed. They can solve the problem of the transferability of social rights (unemployment, parental, pensions and health) when workers move from one employment status to another, limiting losses in protection. But it is unlikely that fully individualised systems can provide enough protection, both in situations of need and more long-term over the life cycle. Therefore, a balance needs to be reached between how much individual savings and how much redistribution should take place in such systems and how benefits can best be financed to establish socially meaningful and financially sustainable models for all workers.

Untying social protection from the employment relationship – that is, defining individual entitlements to tax-financed benefits – would remove coverage gaps as well as the necessity of tracking entitlements across jobs and over the life cycle. Some benefits – such as health insurance and maternity/parental leave – are already universal in a number of OECD countries. With regard to income replacement programmes, such as unemployment or disability benefits, the issue is more complex and depends on whether these payments are means-tested or unconditional. Targeting income replacement payments to low-income households through means-testing remains nevertheless challenging for tracking self-employment incomes, which are often highly volatile.

A more radical solution currently discussed in some OECD countries would be to introduce a universal basic income (OECD, 2017i). Several countries have started or are planning basic income pilots (e.g. Finland, the Netherlands, Canada), under the assumption that basic income might be an important policy innovation for redistributing the gains from automation and globalisation, building a buffer against shocks and systemic risks, and generating positive labour-supply incentives among poor people. Simulations suggest however that it is unlikely that such scheme could provide effective protection to all individuals without significantly raising fiscal pressure or making some people worse off; Browne and Immervoll (2017) suggest that a budget-neutral basic income would not be distributionally neutral, as it would increase the income level of small income groups who are currently not receiving any, or very low, social benefits,

while those receiving earnings-related benefits or several means-tested benefits would see a decline in their standard of living.⁹

A possible solution could be to develop intermediate forms of support that adopt key aspects of a comprehensive basic income while avoiding some of its drawbacks. One option is to have a basic income at levels below guaranteed minimum income standards, while leaving parts of the existing benefits; however, in that case the basic income would no longer provide significant protection and a solution to coverage problems. A gradual move towards greater universality may also be desirable in countries where poorer population groups receive relatively small shares of overall benefit expenditures. Another alternative would be to keep mild eligibility conditions in place or have durations of basic income payments capped. A further option could be to introduce it gradually to different groups, such as future cohorts of young adults (Browne and Immervoll, 2017).

Box 6.3. Income volatility and new forms of employment: the case of freelance journalists in Finland

The self-employed have aroused wide attention recently in policy debates, especially because of the growing interest in new forms of employment (see OECD Labour Ministerial, 2016j). Current expectations are that self-employment will grow in coming decades and that its nature is going to change. At the same time, self-employed people are a diverse population, with a majority of self-employed at the lower part of the income distribution, but also relatively more self-employed concentrated at the very top of the income distribution. They are characterised by high risk levels and greater income volatility, because of interrupted spells of work and periods with no earnings (Luoma-Halkola, 2016; Jensen and Shore, 2008; Farrell and Greig, 2016).

The case of freelance journalists is an interesting example. The transformation of the media industry has arguably led to a decrease in standard employment relationships and an increase in entrepreneurship among journalists globally (Nies and Pedersini, 2003; Walters, Warren and Dobbie, 2006). Media workers have been depicted as risk-bearing, flexible and able to balance between various projects (de Peuter, 2014; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Gollmitzer, 2014; Cohen, 2015). Case studies among this group illustrate how income risk is managed by freelance journalists in Finland (Luoma Halkola, 2016). Support received from the welfare state is used either on a regular and long-term basis to supplement low income or occasionally to manage month(s) with no income. Unemployment benefits, which are extended to the self-employed in Finland, in particular appear as a challenging tool, because freelance journalists often cross the frontier between self-employment and typical forms of employment. Unemployment benefit is used for example in the beginning of self-employment spells, and benefits gained from previous employment help as a buffer during the transition, but are not available after a longer spell of self-employment.

6.5. Which local development policies help to reduce segregation and improve mobility?

Spatial segregation fuels high inequalities and undermines social mobility. There is a particular risk of segregation in large cities – the larger the city, the greater the average household disposable income and people’s living standards, but also the more unequal it is in terms of income and wealth. Urban sprawl further increases this risk. Social mobility requires inclusive policies to reduce regional divides and persistent inequalities between neighbourhoods in cities. Identifying effective policies to break spatial segregation is particularly important to allow greater opportunities for all.

Spatial segregation reinforces sticky floors and sticky ceilings. In the United States, the post code has been found to be a significant predictor of children’s future outcomes in life, but every year a child is exposed to a better environment improves their chances of

success later in life (Chetty and Hendren, 2016). In Chile, the intergenerational earnings mobility across regions varies from a factor of one to three (OECD, 2015i).

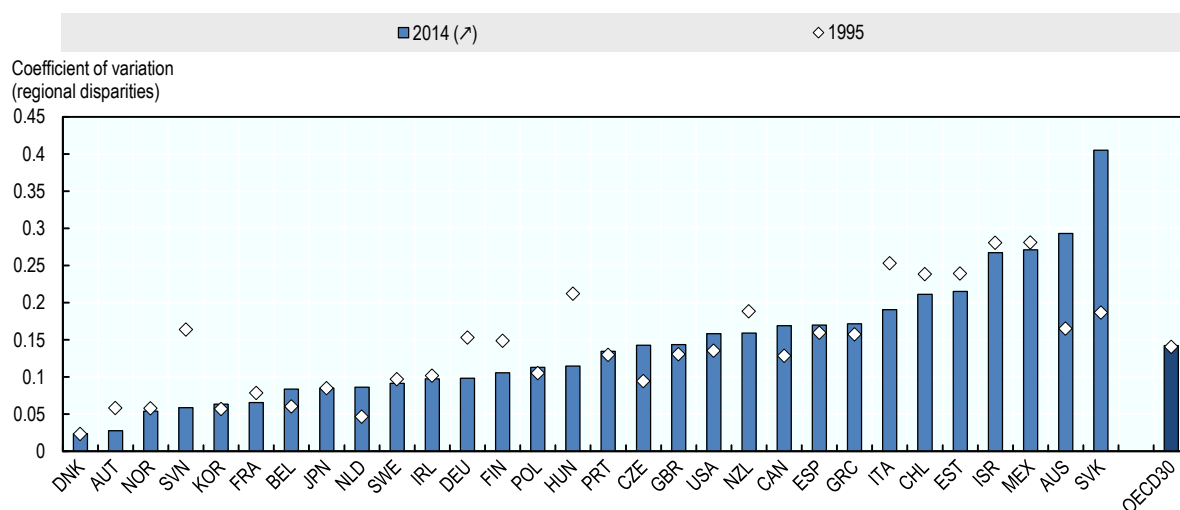
Labour-market opportunities are also quite different depending on the living area. Local labour-market concentration has been found to be pervasive and detrimental to job-to-job mobility (Azar et al., 2017, 2018). In the same line, health outcomes, with all their consequences on labour-market and income mobility, differ by geographical location – the most striking example being the difference in life expectancy by localities – for instance, the life expectancies of the poorest Americans are six years higher in New York than in Detroit. For the richest Americans, the regional difference is less than one year (Bosworth et al., 2016).

6.5.1. How important is spatial segregation?

Territorial disparities in income inequality and employment have increased in half of the OECD countries over the past two decades (Figure 6.3). Further, employment growth in many OECD countries was highly concentrated in specific regions, reinforcing inter-regional inequalities: on average, 40% of overall employment creation in OECD economies during 1999-2012 was generated in just 10% of their regions (OECD, 2015g). Because cities attract many people, including people looking for opportunity and upward mobility prospects, they feature higher inequality. In most OECD countries, income inequality is higher, on average, in cities than in their respective countries.

Highly segregated cities can also breed sticky floors and sticky ceilings (Prieto and Brain, 2017; van Ham et al., 2012). In metropolitan spaces, people are increasingly over-concentrated along specific socio-economic lines, such as income, economic status or education. In addition, rising trends of segregation might also increase the spatial mismatches between affordable housing for low-income households and the jobs they can find (McKenzie, 2016). Spatial segregation and rising income inequality are closely linked to the concentration of poverty, which significantly hampers mobility within urban areas. In the United States, the share of the population living either in the poorest or in the most affluent neighbourhoods has more than doubled since 1970, while that of people living in middle-income areas of cities has dropped significantly (Reardon and Bischoff, 2011). *ON N*

Figure 6.3. Regional disparities in household disposable income have increased in half of the OECD countries

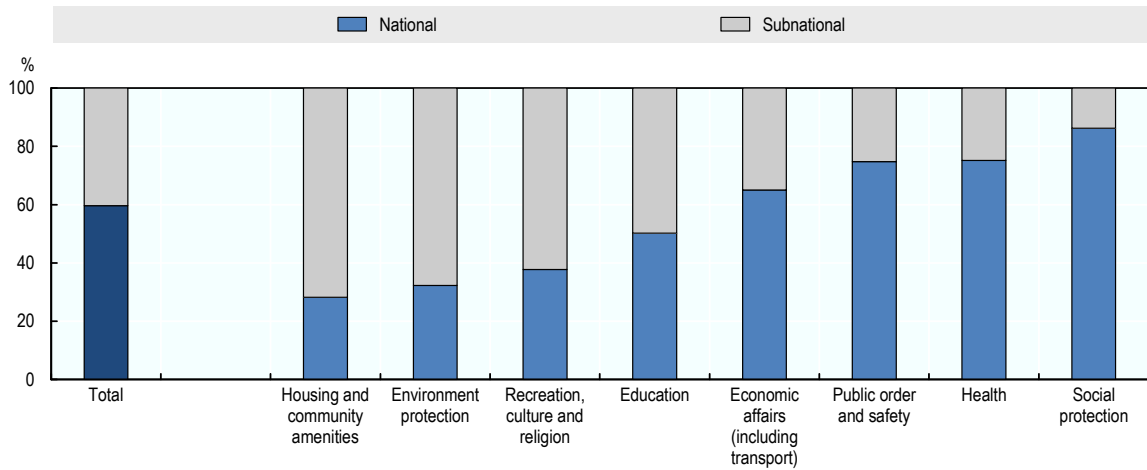


Note: First available year: Chile, Ireland, Israel, and Slovak Republic 1996; United Kingdom 1997; New Zealand 1998; Slovenia 1999; Austria, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Portugal, and Sweden 2000; Japan 2001; Estonia and Mexico 2008; Korea and Poland 2010; and Norway 2011. Last available year: Mexico, Turkey and the United States 2014; Australia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Korea, New Zealand, and United Kingdom 2013; Chile, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic and Sweden 2012; and Belgium, Israel, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain 2011.

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Larger cities, particularly sprawling ones, have both higher income levels and higher levels of income inequality, which can hamper social mobility. Chetty et al. (2014b) report a negative correlation between commute times – their proxy for sprawl – and upward mobility in the United States. Recent research in the United States also finds that upward mobility is significantly higher in compact areas than sprawling ones, because more compact areas have a direct effect on improving job accessibility; and when compactness doubles, the likelihood of upward mobility increases by about 41% (Ewing et al., 2016).

In terms of governance, good co-operation between local and national governments and rules is key to removing sticky floors. There is an important role for sub-national governments to help address the challenges of urban segregation. Subnational governments cover 40% of total public expenditure, on average across the OECD, with prominent weights in housing, environment, culture and education (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4. Public spending by regional and local government is substantial

Note: Data refer to the unweighted average of 28 OECD countries (not including Australia, Canada, Mexico, Chile, New Zealand and Turkey), except for environment protection, which is based on 27 OECD countries (not including Australia, Canada, Mexico, Chile, New Zealand, Turkey and the United States).

Source: OECD Subnational government Structure and Finance Database, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/05fb4b56-en>.

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6.5.2. Urban planning policies

People living in disadvantaged, economically depressed areas have less access to quality housing and experience a lower quality of the surrounding environment. This dampens opportunities to prosper and undermines mobility. As a policy response, governments need to promote urban planning policies that support a human and social capital infrastructure and guarantee equal access to public services, namely quality education, employment opportunities and health services.

6.5.2.1. Access to education

Residential segregation in cities is closely linked with socio-economic segregation in schools (Chapter 5). Strong inequalities within cities in terms of access to quality education both reflect and reinforce socio-economic inequalities in cities, with long-lasting consequences on the residents' mobility prospects. Inequalities persist in many cities and can perpetuate the vicious circle of residential segregation and socio-economic segregation in schools. A variety of policies can help to reduce spatial segregation in terms of education and improve social mobility.

Providing full parental school choice can result in segregating students by ability and socio-economic background and generate greater inequities across education systems. Less-educated families face more difficulties gauging the information required to make informed school choice decisions. Local authorities are particularly well-positioned to encourage disadvantaged parents to exercise school choice by providing them first-hand information (OECD, 2012). To further limit a process of segregation, enhancing equity considerations in school choice schemes is a widely used policy option in OECD countries: controlled school choice schemes and school voucher programmes, for

example, can help low-income children pursue quality education and expand opportunities.

Controlled choice programmes (or flexible enrolment plans) introduce mechanisms that ensure that children are allocated to schools more equitably (e.g. in terms of parental socio-economic status, ethnic origin, etc.). In the event of oversubscription to some schools, this type of scheme prevents disadvantaged students from getting crowded out. For example, Rotterdam offers a system of double waiting lists, which allow oversubscribed schools to give preference to children who would enrich their ethnic and socio-economic mix (OECD, 2016k). If admissions policies are established by a central independent authority, schools have fewer opportunities to select students using criteria that benefit better-off children. For instance, in Chile, an educational reform introduced in 2009 has forbidden schools from receiving public funding to select students based on their socio-economic background or prior educational attainment at primary school.

Fundamental differences are also observed in the quality of education across regions. In the OECD area, 15-year-old students in urban schools outperform those in rural areas on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test by more than 20 points on average, which is the equivalent of almost one year of education. Options to improve opportunities for students living in areas with limited access to higher education could include mobility assistance programmes for students, a geographically wider offer of study programmes or increased co-operation between the academies in regions with a high offer and those in the surrounding regions (Dherbécourt, 2015). Some countries, like Chile and the Netherlands, for example, provide more funding to schools that accept low-performing students to offset the additional costs to educate them through progressive voucher schemes or weighted student funding (“virtual vouchers”).

6.5.2.2. Skills and labour-market opportunities

Expanding the prospects for upward mobility requires making urban labour markets more inclusive. They need to provide jobs for a wide spectrum of skills, qualifications and backgrounds. Cities differ widely in their labour-force composition, and policy efforts therefore need to focus on attracting and retaining workers for different types of jobs – from cutting-edge jobs in the digital economy to more traditional manufacturing jobs.

Strategies to attract workers for a certain type of job include preparing and training the workforce of that neighbourhood for that type of job. For example, the city of Lulea in Sweden has combined a set of infrastructure reforms, education initiatives and efficient branding of its natural environmental characteristics to attract Facebook, which is expected to create 2 200 new jobs in the city (Eudes, 2016). Meanwhile, New York City’s recently announced Industrial Action Plan aims to revitalise manufacturing industries in the city’s outer boroughs to tackle the displacement of worker communities and provide a dynamic entry into the innovative field of robotics thanks to its FutureWorks incubator (OECD, 2016i).

Projects targeted at the working poor are also important to enhance social mobility and provide opportunities to those who, being in employment, still are deprived of actual opportunities to improve their overall situation. Examples can be found in Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and Saint John in Canada, where comprehensive, community-based programmes have set out to tackle in-work poverty. The city government of Calgary has proposed to establish a Social Business Centre and Community Investment Fund to support the development of co-operatives and social enterprises, and is working on

establishing inclusive business practices, including targeted support for vulnerable workers (e.g. through childcare, transport and housing support), progressive hiring practices to ensure diversity, opportunities for workers with disabilities, and transparent performance reporting (CPRI, 2013).

Place-based tax breaks and enterprise zones constitute local hiring or employment support programmes aimed at creating more job opportunities in local areas and/or pushing wages upward. They are often oriented towards deprived areas (Neumark and Simpson, 2014). Briant et al. (2015) have found that in France, the impact of enterprise zones differed in accordance with the surrounding geography. In remote areas, enterprise zones had a positive impact in pushing wages up, while in areas with high unemployment, there were significant deadweight losses following the rebalancing of local equilibria. Givord et al. (2017) found that, after a positive short-term impact, the positive results are off-set by more frequent business shutdowns. In Italy, financial incentives for firms in Lombardy have been found to have little impact on employment growth (Porro and Salis, 2017).

6.5.2.3. Access to affordable quality health care

A person's place of residence shapes much more of their life than their mere income. Life expectancies, for example, differ by almost 20 years across neighbourhoods in Baltimore (Baltimore City Health Department, 2018) and London (Cheshire, 2012). Quality health care and the policies needed to ensure access to it constitute one of the most important dimensions, independent of a person's place of residence.

Across regions, the number of doctors per capita varies widely. A common feature in many countries is the concentration of physicians in capital cities¹⁰ and urban regions in general, reflecting the concentration of specialised services such as surgery, reflecting physicians' preferences to practice in urban settings. There are large differences in the density of doctors between predominantly urban and rural regions in France, Australia and Canada, although the definition of urban and rural regions varies across countries (OECD, 2015b).

A range of policy levers can influence the choice of where physicians practice, including: 1) providing financial incentives for doctors to work in underserved areas; 2) increasing the enrolment in medical education programmes of students from specific social or geographic backgrounds; 3) regulating the choice of practice location of doctors; and 4) re-organising health service delivery to improve the working conditions of doctors in underserved areas (OECD, 2015b). In France, the "Health Territory Pact" was launched in 2012 to promote the recruitment and retention of doctors and other health workers in underserved areas. In particular, it promoted tele-medicine and created new multi-disciplinary medical offices that enable physicians and other health professionals to work in the same location (OECD, 2015b).

6.5.3. Inclusive urban environment

To improve equality of opportunity and social mobility, it is essential to design and implement policy packages that exploit the complementarities between different policy areas. Policies for improving the supply of affordable housing, for example, need to be closely connected with transport planning, service provision and labour-market interventions at all levels of government. An example of a strategic and practical partnership in this sense can be found in the New York and Connecticut Sustainable

Communities Consortium, which offered a platform for the co-ordination of housing and transport policy (OECD, 2016k).

6.5.3.1. Housing policies

The intergenerational transmission of inequalities has become more pronounced with regard to housing, since parental support has become increasingly important for allowing young adults to become homeowners or to acquire secure housing in general (Druta and Ronald, 2017; Forrest and Hirayama, 2009; Helderma and Mulder, 2007). Longitudinal data for Amsterdam and Rotterdam show that spatial segregation based on parental wealth is strong. Parental wealth has notable spatial consequences, as it both deepens existing socio-spatial divides and establishes new ones. The influence of parental wealth on socio-spatial divides is stronger in Amsterdam than in Rotterdam, suggesting that especially in the high-demand Amsterdam housing context, young adults may need to draw on parental resources to outcompete other households and/or to acquire housing in expensive areas (Hochstenbach, 2018).

Access to good-quality affordable housing is important for achieving equality of opportunity and social inclusion. A major challenge for housing policy is to tackle the concentration of low-income families in areas where cheap housing is available but education and labour-market conditions are poor. Two major approaches have been taken towards increasing mobility in cities. First, policies may focus on improving the situation in disadvantaged areas. According to the results of the 2016 OECD Regional Outlook Survey (OECD, 2016l), the targets of these policies are often predominantly what are deemed to be particularly “problematic” cities or neighbourhoods. Second, initiatives may focus on helping lower-income households to move to higher-income neighbourhoods. The four main types of housing policy instruments that the OECD QuASH (Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing) surveyed at national level are homeownership subsidies, housing allowances, social rental housing and rental support and regulations.

Support for homeownership receives considerable public backing (with reported spending up to 2.3% of GDP) (Salvi del Pero et al., 2016). Some categories of homeownership support are reserved to low-income households (e.g. grants and financial assistance) and are expected to help improve the access of disadvantaged groups to homeownership. However, a major pitfall of homeownership support in cities and regions is that it tends to discourage residential and labour mobility and to incentivise urban sprawl (Henley et al., 1994; OECD, 2016k).

Well-targeted housing allowances can help low-income households to stay inside the cities and promote mixed-income urban neighbourhoods. If well designed and targeted to the needs of different socio-economic groups, they are less likely to harm residential and labour mobility. One example is the Moving to Opportunity programme and Section 8 vouchers in the United States, which offers housing vouchers to randomly selected households in five U.S. cities (Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York) living in high-poverty housing projects to move to an area where the rent is beyond what they would normally be able to afford. While preliminary evaluations of this programme found that it did not affect adults’ economic outcomes (although it had some positive benefits on their physical and mental health), recent evidence suggests that such policies to encourage residential mobility and social mix may yield the highest benefits for young children. Chetty, Hendren and Katz (2017) found that children who moved before the age of 13 are more likely to attend college and have on average 31% higher

earnings as adults. Moreover, as adults, the children often live in better neighbourhoods and are less likely to become single parents, suggesting that the benefits of such social mobility policies have the potential to persist across generations (Brookings, 2016).

Nevertheless, housing allowances also have limitations, as they cannot guarantee good housing quality and may adversely affect rent prices (Salvi de Pero et al., 2016). Evidence has shown in several countries that housing allowances can result in sizeable rent rises, such as in Finland (Kangasharju, 2010; Virén, 2011), France (Fack, 2005; LaFerrère and Le Blanc, 2004), the United Kingdom (Gibbons and Manning, 2006) and the United States (Susin, 2002). Another issue of housing voucher programmes, in particular, is that, while the aim is to help households move from low-income areas to more prosperous locations, most families chose to stay close to their original location or move to an area with similar characteristics.

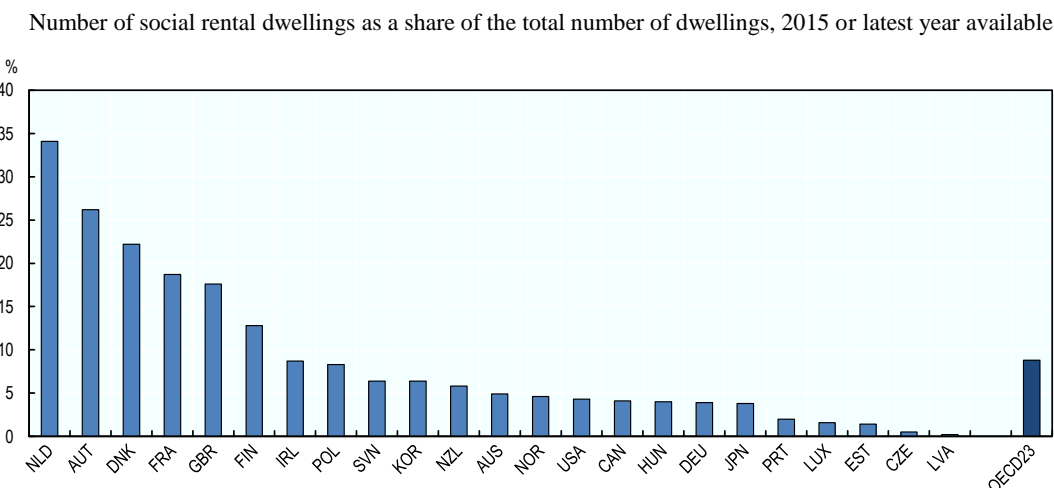
Inclusionary zoning policies require developers to build a specified share of affordable housing units within otherwise market-rate residential developments in exchange for a relaxation of regulations on development or other incentives. This policy aims to increase the supply of housing affordable to lower-income households while encouraging the spatial inclusion of low-income households in higher-opportunity areas. In practice, though, thresholds for qualifying income levels are set relatively high and can thus exclude the lowest-income households through competition. Examples for inclusive zoning policies to ensure social mix can be found in several US states, as well as Germany and Sweden (Granath Hansson, 2017).

Compared with housing allowances and inclusionary zoning, social rental housing may complicate the integration of poorer and wealthier households in the same neighbourhood. The majority of OECD countries provide at least some form of social rental housing (Figure 6.5). While social rental housing policies help low-income families, they may also increase segregation. In practice, social rental housing often concentrates low-income households in deprived urban neighbourhoods that offer low-quality public services and little access to job opportunities, which exacerbates urban social exclusion. National legal frameworks sometimes impose a minimum target of social housing on local authorities, but this is not always respected: for instance, in France, where the law requires a minimum of 25% of social housing in each municipality, some areas escape their obligations and pay a fine instead of meeting the target. On the other side, municipalities with a large share of low-income households and a high share of unemployment may not have the financial and organisational capacity to supply and maintain social housing. Further, this type of housing is often awarded at the municipal level. Fear of losing the entitlement to social housing might prevent people from being geographically mobile and result in spatial mismatches (Salvi del Pero et al., 2016).

The most common way to define eligibility for the allocation of a social dwelling is the use of income tests. While there is a general trend towards restricting the provision of social housing by defining stricter categories of beneficiaries, several countries have adjusted the eligibility criteria for social housing in order to avoid segregation. The maximum income is set high enough to permit income mixing in some countries including France, Austria and Germany, while it is set at significantly low levels for instance in Italy. Access criteria can also be defined according to criteria based on need (e.g. homelessness, unhealthy accommodation, over-occupation, forced cohabitation, etc.) and even criteria relating to the beneficiaries and target groups (youth, elderly or disabled persons, families with many children, mentally disabled persons, employees of certain undertakings, etc.). Criteria can also vary according to local needs and gaps in local

housing markets, for instance, the need to attract certain types of key workers or professionals, to provide housing for students and young people with the aim of revitalising areas with an ageing population, etc. In Sweden, no income ceilings are used in the allocation of dwellings from public housing companies. This is a consequence of the principle of avoiding social segregation by providing access to public dwellings to all segments of society.

Figure 6.5. Relative size of the social rental housing stock



Note: Data refer to 2011 for Canada, Hungary, Ireland and Luxembourg; 2012 for Germany; 2013 for Denmark, Estonia, Japan and Poland; and 2014 for Australia, Austria, France, Norway and the United Kingdom.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH), 2016.

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Other ways to avoid segregation include policies that help promote the development of the rental market through financial support and regulations. Around one-third of the countries reporting in QuASH use construction subsidies to promote the production of rental housing (most prominently France and the United States). Rent controls in the housing market are used in over half of the reporting countries, and other forms of support for private rental housing, such as the provision of guarantees and rent tax relief for tenants, are currently used by over one-fifth of the reporting countries.

New actors on the housing market are also emerging to bring disparate groups of society together, and this process can create opportunities for people and, ultimately, economic growth (Chetty and Hendren, 2016; Chetty et al. 2017). For example, in the United Kingdom, community land trusts (CLT)¹¹ are playing an important role in providing affordable housing for lower-income households. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier.

6.5.3.2. Transport and infrastructure policies

People in disadvantaged communities often have less well-maintained infrastructure – notably roads and less access to reliable public transport services, and they are less likely to own a private car. Differences in the quality of the infrastructure within cities are major

contributors to spatial segregation and limit social mobility. De-segregating and connecting all groups of effective transport networks thus needs to be at the core of urban transport planning. A major challenge for policy makers is to strike a balance between network coverage, affordability and financial sustainability.

Several OECD countries have implemented programmes to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of public transport infrastructure for all groups of society. The “Lisbon Door-to-Door” programme, created in 2004 by the Lisbon City Council, aims to connect populations who were displaced from the city’s expensive centre toward more affordable suburbs. Municipalities across Canada have implemented discount transit programmes that aim to lower the risk of the social exclusion of people on lower incomes. Recent OECD/ITF research suggests that targeted subsidies (as opposed to generalised ones) allow transport operators to charge fares that are close to the cost-recovery rate for most of the population, while cheaper fares are set for vulnerable groups (ITF, 2017).

Like housing policies, transport and infrastructure policies need to be integrated into broader strategies for urban regeneration. Where possible, an assessment of the combined impact of transport, housing and other investment decisions on different socio-economic groups could be conducted. Improvements of transport-related data collection and analysis can facilitate respective policy making (e.g. the Housing + Transport Affordability Index in the United States). An integrated public investment strategy can help improve people’s access to affordable, equitable and sustainable infrastructure and expand opportunities for socio-economic mobility in cities. For example, narrowly conceived urban and environmental regeneration initiatives may drive housing prices up and put pressure on the transport network, thereby pushing lower-income households out of regenerated neighbourhoods while attracting wealthier residents and high-end businesses. Urban governance systems characterised by higher administrative fragmentation are associated with a higher income segregation of households (OECD, 2016k). More effective governance to integrate policies combining key sectors such as land regulation, housing and transport at the metropolitan scale can help fight income segregation in cities.

One example of metropolitan transport co-ordination based on intergovernmental collaboration can be found in Germany. All large metropolitan areas in Germany have set up a metropolitan transport authority (*Verkehrsverbund*) that brings together all local governments located in the metropolitan area as well as the corresponding Land (or Länder if there are several of them). As illustrated in the example of Frankfurt, the creation of such metropolitan transport authorities has facilitated fare integration and the expansion of the public transport supply, which can support more inclusive economic development. Some authorities also have competencies in terms of public parking and sometimes urban spatial planning, which can help guide an integrated urban development strategy.

6.6. Conclusion

Our economies and societies are changing rapidly, becoming more fluid in some aspects, but lacking mobility in others. New social risks are emerging. Against this backdrop, addressing social mobility and offering equal opportunities to individuals requires public action in order to prevent the occurrence and the impact of social risks, and to level the playing fields for all. Such a roadmap requires interventions in a broad range of areas, encompassing health and family policies, education, the labour market, and tax and transfer policies, as well as urban planning and housing policies.

Notes

1. Liu (2016) has shown that, following this reform, after a health shock, households with access to health insurance invested more in children's human capital and reduced the use of child labor, relative to the levels that they would have done in the absence of the reform.
2. In Australia, non-take-up of the (private) insurance systems by young (and healthy) people is high, raising concerns for their economic vulnerability in the event of health issues.
3. This extra funding can be used by schools to fund smaller class sizes, more specialist literacy and numeracy teachers, dedicated equipment, greater support for students with higher needs and additional training and support for teachers (OECD, 2016g).
4. Schochet et al. (2008) found that the Job Corps induced short-term earnings gains and had beneficial long-term impacts on educational attainment but also in other areas such as health, family formation and criminal activity.
5. The programme combines six months of courses on writing emails in a professional style, time management, teamwork, problem-solving, self-presentation, interview preparation and conflict resolution and six months where young participants take up work placements. At the end of the programme, one-third of the participants are hired.
6. Such programmes need to be designed in a way that they do not curb labour reallocation inefficiently in the long run by subsidising jobs that would disappear sooner or later (Cahuc and Nevoux, 2017).
7. The Action Plan for the Realization of Work Style Reform decided by the Council for the Realization of Work Style Reform on 28 March 2017.
8. There is some evidence that the reforms stopped (and possibly managed to reverse) the downward trend in the share of open-ended contracts in new contracts.
9. Note that these results do not include behavioural responses in particular about working hours – hence the interest of the national pilots.
10. For example, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Greece, Mexico, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and the United States have a much higher density of doctors in their national capital region.
11. A community land trust is a form of community-led housing, set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets important to that community, like community enterprises, food growing or workspaces.

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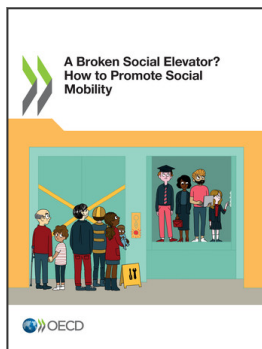
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