



# THE FLEMISH PARADOX OF MULTILINGUALISM

AND THE CHALLENGES IT POSES

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## Overview

- Multilingual education in Flanders
- Multilingual pupils in Flanders
- Paradox
- Next steps



## Multilingual education in Flanders



# MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION FLANDERS

## OVERVIEW

- Since 2014 → improve language knowledge
- Secondary education only
- Maximum 20% of the curriculum (language classes not included)
- School has to get official approval
- More than 10% of all secondary schools offer a CLIL trajectory

# MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN FLANDERS

## RESULTS

### Pupils

- Positive impact on target language knowledge
- No impact on proficiency in Dutch
- Positive impact wellbeing & motivation
- No results available on content knowledge

### Teachers

- Positive, but complaints about workload.

(Onderwijsinspectie 2016; Bulté, Martens & Surmont, 2020)





## Multilingual pupils in Flanders

# MULTILINGUAL PUPILS IN FLANDERS

## RESULTS

PISA results (2015; 2018)

→ overall good, but level is going down

→ Problem areas:

- Level of low achievers is increasing
- (very) large gap between high achievers and low achievers
- (very) high impact of SES on achievement
- (very) high impact of migrant status on achievement (highest of all participating countries in 2015!)
- (very) high impact of language background on achievement

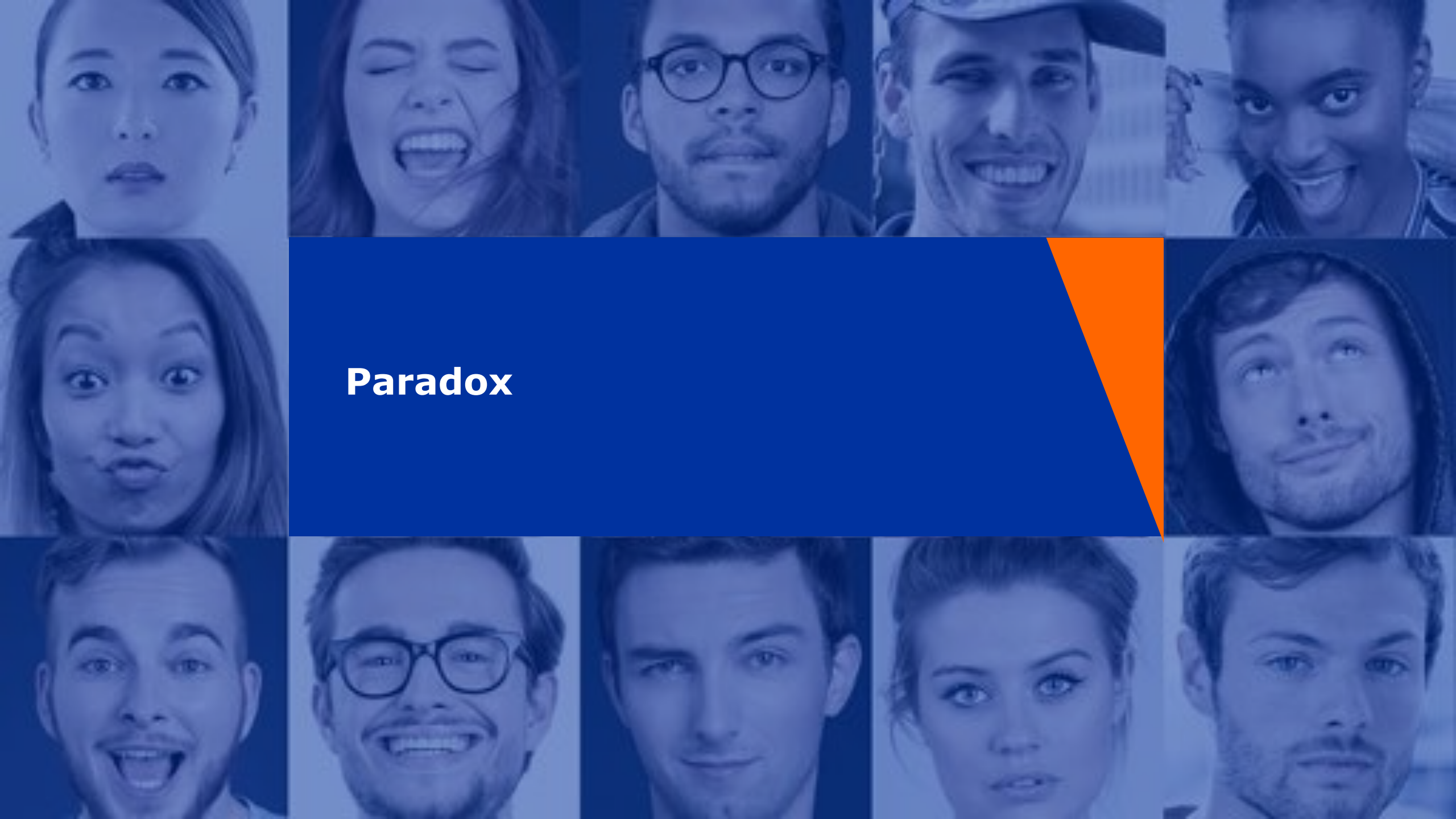


# MULTILINGUAL PUPILS IN FLANDERS

## RESULTS

- Usage of mother tongue = "obstacle in the learning process" (Agirdag et al, 2014)
- Attitudes towards mother tongues = depending on the status of the MT (Agirdag et al., 2014)
- Non-Dutch speaking pupils are less involved during classes by teacher (Consuegra, 2015)
- Lower expectations of non-Dutch speaking pupils (Agirdag, 2013)
- Non-native speakers of Dutch are faster retained (Consuegra et al, 2016)



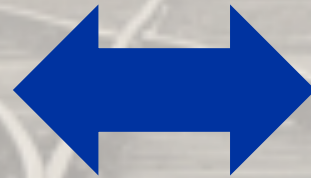


**Paradox**

# MULTILINGUALISM IN FLANDERS

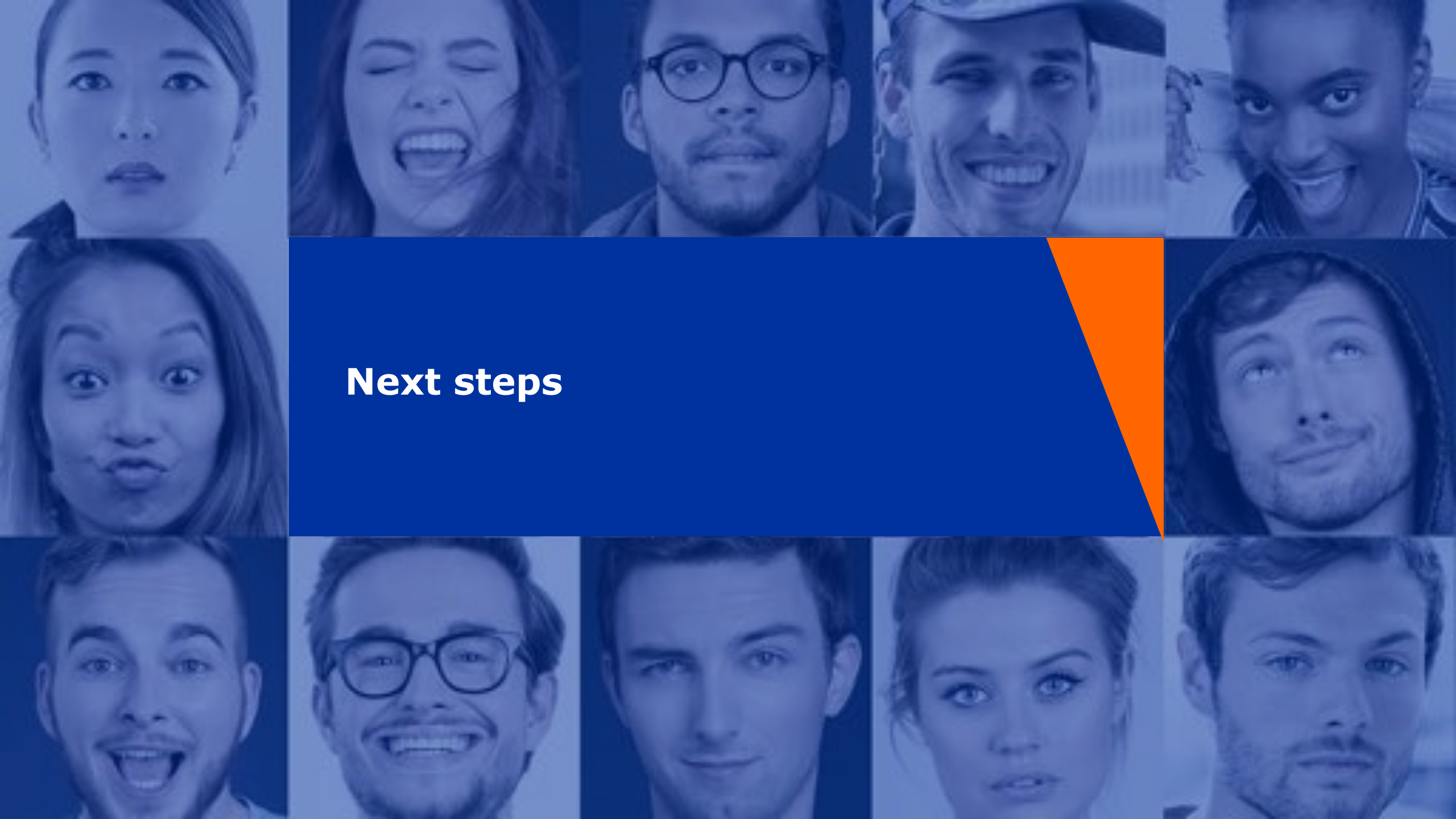
## PARADOX

Multilingual education  
= Good



Multilingual pupils  
= Problem





**Next steps**

NEXT STEPS

WHAT TO DO?



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## NEXT STEPS

### WHAT TO DO?

#### Teachers as superheroes

- Invest in professionalisation
- Integrated classroom practice
- Provide time and space to test and grow

THANK YOU!

THINKING MUST NEVER  
SUBMIT ITSELF.