



#ETU4REF

**IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION:
EDUCATION TRADE UNIONS
SUPPORT THE INCLUSION OF
REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

RESEARCH REPORT **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the framework of the ETUCE [“In and Through Education: Education Trade Unions Supporting the Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants”](#) (ETU4REF) project (2023-2025) a research was conducted to explore the actions and practices of education trade unions in building their capacity and knowledge of their affiliates to address the inclusion of learners and education personnel with a migrant or refugee background in education systems. 51 respondents from 46 ETUCE members located in 32 European countries participated in the survey feeding into the research, along the results of the project’s [Round Tables in Dublin \(IRL\) and Lisbon \(PT\)](#) that gathered around 120 education trade union representatives.

Over the past years, ETUCE and its member organisations have actively promoted diversity and inclusion in education by advocating for the rights of migrant and refugee learners and education personnel. Efforts have included developing action plans and policy frameworks to create inclusive learning and working environments. The [ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) (2021) provides a strategic framework for promoting inclusion and non-discrimination in education across Europe. Rooted in international frameworks and past ETUCE policies, it emphasizes concrete actions, cross-national collaboration, and good practices for education trade unions. Additionally, ETUCE and EFEE developed the joint [Quality Framework for the Effective Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees in Education](#) (2019), outlining key priorities such as fast-track inclusion, recognition of prior experience, investment in education personnel, and enhanced EU funding from the perspective of social partners in education. The framework promotes good governance, strengthened cooperation, and open dialogue to develop sustainable and effective inclusion strategies.

66% of survey respondents report that their trade union **has a policy addressing the inclusion of migrants and refugees**. Of these, half have a dedicated policy, while the other half includes it within broader policies. However, some respondents describe it as a “position” or a “series of policy requests” rather than a fully developed policy. Additionally, 8% indicate that their trade union is currently developing a policy.



The **topics most included in these education trade unions' policies** are work on combating racism, discrimination and/or far-right ideologies (81%), as well as work addressing policy and/or implementation gaps e.g. cooperation with community organisations, such as civil society and migrant groups, to address the unique needs of migrant and refugee learners and workers (56%) Support is also extended to education institutions that help integrate migrants and refugees (53%) and engaging in advocacy to represent the interests of both education personnel and students from migrant or refugee backgrounds (53%).

For the **implementation of these policies** that are developed within education trade unions to address the inclusion of migrants and refugees in education a series of instruments is used, whereby social dialogue (79%), publications (73%), opinion statements (67%) and campaigns using social media (58%) are mostly used. During the Round Tables (Lisbon, October 2024 and Dublin, January 2025) organised in the framework of the ETU4REF project, participants of education trade unions highlighted the importance of **social dialogue** for sustainable employment and quality education. Yet, the ETU4REF survey results reveal that education trade unions are often neither involved nor consulted when it comes to working conditions and support measures for teachers addressing inclusion of migrant and refugee learners. Some respondents refer to formal consultations between the government and education trade unions that are mandatory only for matters related to salaries/wages and work organisation, with other topics typically being shared for informational purposes only.

Several of the recommendations based on the research are repetitions of those from earlier ETUCE projects ([EU-CONVINCE project](#) (2018-2020) and the [Diversity in Education project](#) (2019-2021)). The fact that these recommendations continue to resurface indicates **a persistent gap between policy discussions and practical action**. It also raises **concerns about the effectiveness of existing strategies** in addressing diversity and inclusion in education, emphasizing the need for a more structured and committed approach to ensuring meaningful change.

OVERALL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Well-defined, coherent and coordinated policies across sectors.	• These policies need to be developed on the basis of social dialogue, across sectors, agencies and levels of governance (incl. e.g. addressing teacher shortages).
Sustained and adequate public resources.	• Adequate resources are key avoiding that burden is put on the shoulders of teachers, other education personnel and heads of education institutions.
Accessible initial and continuing professional development programmes.	• These programs should cover a broad set of competencies, skills, and knowledge that equip education personnel to meet the diverse learning and support needs of refugee and migrant students. Additionally, they should incorporate intercultural education competencies to help combat xenophobia and racism.
Access to mechanisms to report bullying and discrimination, as well as support and follow-up.	• Providing these protections to migrant and refugee learners and education personnel fosters a school culture of respect, equity, and diversity.
Cooperation and coordination between government agencies, education institutions, trade unions and communities.	• Collaboration enables the development of strategies to address migrant and refugee learners' challenges, such as language barriers, trauma and cultural adaptation, while supporting education personnel in delivering inclusive education.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED SPECIFICALLY TO THE INCLUSION OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE LEARNERS

Effective assessing needs of migrant and refugee learners	• Assessments need to encompass educational needs (e.g. numeracy and literacy skills, language), social needs (e.g. access to community networks), emotional and psychological needs (e.g. trauma related issues).
Support for migrant and refugee learners and their families and carers	• This support needs to include preparatory classes and accelerated learning programmes as well as psychosocial support for learners and their families and carers, through counselors, social workers and cultural coordinators.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE INCLUSION OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Collecting disaggregated data on education personnel with a migrant/refugee background.

- This is necessary to identify gaps in representation and analyse barriers faced.

Supporting migrant and refugee education personnel: recognition, inclusion and career pathways.

- Strategies are necessary for the attrition, recruitment and retention of teachers with a migrant/refugee background, guidance and support, including peer networks, systems to streamline recognition of prior qualifications and expertise.

Ongoing professional development and mentorship programmes.

- These programmes need to encompass e.g., language training, host-country pedagogy, cultural awareness, mentoring, etc.



THE ROLE THAT EDUCATION TRADE UNIONS CAN PLAY

Survey respondents provided ‘peer recommendations’—advice from one education trade union to another on their role in fostering an inclusive educational and workplace environment.

Role of education trade unions in the inclusion of migrant and refugee learners	Role of education trade unions in the inclusion of migrant and refugee education personnel	Role of education trade unions in attracting migrant and refugee education personnel into their membership
Strengthening an effective social dialogue on inclusion of migrant and refugee students and education personnel as well as investing in advocacy aiming for long-term systemic solutions, to complement social dialogue.		Installing/maintaining a contact point in the trade union , enabling to specifically addressing the needs and concerns of education personnel with a migrant/refugee background.
Contributing to monitoring and assessment of the implementation of policies to inform future evidence-based policy development.		Organising leadership and mentorship programmes and relevant topic-related trainings.
Cooperation and coalition building with various partners, allies and stakeholders across policy areas and governance levels.		Use of inclusive and accessible language and means of communication ensuring accessibility of information for all.
Actively engage with family /parents/carers contributing to improved learning outcomes.	Safeguarding the rights of education personnel with migrant/refugee background, helping them to navigate the education system and connect with professional development opportunities to contribute to the creation of a supportive work environment.	Organising training for trade union officers on ensuring inclusive workplaces and trade union environments.

Role of education trade unions in the inclusion of migrant and refugee learners	Role of education trade unions in the inclusion of migrant and refugee education personnel	Role of education trade unions in attracting migrant and refugee education personnel into their membership
	Providing a workforce representation emphasizing the importance of creating a supportive network for migrant and refugee teachers and other education personnel, ensuring they are treated fairly and have access to the resources they need to succeed in their roles and overcome challenges in the workplace.	
	Offering a platform for teachers and education personnel to voice their concerns and provide opportunities for cooperation in addressing the challenges of inclusive education.	
	Actively involve migrant and refugee education personnel in trade union activities and encouraging their engagement in leadership roles.	
	Celebrating cultural diversity through various activities.	
Campaigning and leverage (social) media to promote positive stories and change challenging narratives.		
Organising outreach and raising awareness about what education trade unions can offer.		
Making trade unions more visible within education institutions.		



