

# #ETU4REF

**Roundtable** Lisbon  
8-9 October 2024

**REPORT**



**"In and through education: Education Trade Unions  
support the inclusion of refugees and migrants"**

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# Introduction

The first roundtable of the ETUCE project ["In and Through Education: Education Trade Unions Supporting the Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants"](#) (ETU4REF) took place in Lisbon on 8-9 October 2024.

The project aims at further building the capacity of the education trade unions on providing specific support to their affiliates regarding the inclusion of refugees and migrants in the education system, as well as at contributing to making the teaching profession more attractive, including for refugees and migrants, and accommodating the needs of education personnel from various backgrounds with the view to represent the voice of all teachers and other education personnel in the European region.

The 1.5-day roundtable provided the opportunities to discuss the outcomes of the project research, as well as to dive into the specific country case of Portugal. Furthermore, participants shared education trade unions' actions and practices on supporting and building the capacity and knowledge of their affiliates to address the inclusion of refugees and migrants in the education systems. Taking a starting point in the presentations by ETUCE member organisations on their actions to address the inclusion of migrants and refugees in education, roundtable participants also discussed the practical recommendations for inclusion of students with migrant/refugee background in and through education; teachers with migrant/refugee background in the education sector; and inclusion of migrants/refugees in the education trade unions.

During the opening session, the **chair of ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality, Rossella Benedetti**, emphasized the significance of inclusive educational institutions as a means to counteract social exclusion and the need to improve the whole education system, not only in relation to including migrants and refugees. Speakers from Portuguese education trade unions, **Mário Nogueira (Secretary General, FENPROF)** and **Conceição Nunes (SINDEP)** highlighted Portugal's efforts and challenges in integrating migrant students and teachers, underlying the alarming rise of racism and xenophobia and the key role of teachers in confronting the hate speech.



# Key Presentation and Discussions

## Introduction to the EU policies on migration and ETUCE Project ETU4REF

*Presented by: Ekaterina Efimenko, ETUCE Coordinator*

This session provided an overview of EU policies supporting migrant inclusion, framing the project as a crucial step towards reducing disparities in educational access and integration. The speaker outlined in particular the impact of the European Action Plan on the integration and inclusion of migrants and people with a migrant background on the inclusion in education and the ETUCE policies and views related to inclusion of migrants and refugees in education, including in the context of trade union renewal.

## Presentation of the preliminary results of the project research

*Presented by: Dominique Danau, SAGO Research, project researcher*

This presentation provided an overview of the preliminary results of the project research based on the literature analysis and outcomes of the project online survey that was conducted in the period June – August 2024. A total of 51 respondents from 46 ETUCE members located in 32 European countries participated in the online survey. The research aimed to identify the key challenges and needs of the teachers and other education personnel regarding the inclusion of refugees and migrants. It also explored the actions and practices of education trade unions in building their capacity and knowledge of their affiliates to address the inclusion of refugees and migrants in education systems. Special attention was given to the situation of Ukrainian refugees in education across different countries.

The key findings highlighted by the speaker included:

- According to 48% of ETUCE members surveyed, the inclusion of migrants/refugees in education has gained more prominence on their agenda over the past four years, while for 46%, it has remained a consistent priority. Looking ahead, 56% of respondents anticipate that this issue will become even more important in the coming years.
- Policies focused on the attrition, recruitment, and retention of teachers and other education staff from migrant/refugee backgrounds are lacking, according to 62% of respondents.
- Assessment systems to evaluate in particular the social, emotional, and mental health needs of newly arrived learners from migrant/refugee backgrounds are lacking, according to 34% of respondents, with an even greater gap reported for Ukrainian refugees (50%).

- Adequate initial teacher training and continuing professional development for teachers and other education personnel addressing the inclusion of migrant/refugee learners is in place according to respectively 62% and 65% of the respondents, though only implemented effectively according to respectively 20% and 24%.
- Adequate resources to implement inclusive and quality education for migrants/refugees do not exist for about 1/3rd of the respondents.

Regarding the role of education trade unions in addressing the inclusion of migrants and refugees in education, the speaker highlighted that:

- According to 66% of respondents, their union has a policy on this issue, with half having a dedicated policy and the other half embedding it within a broader framework. However, some respondents suggest that "policy" might be too strong a term, with "a position or demand" being a more accurate reflection of reality.
- These policies primarily focus on combating racism, discrimination, and far-right ideologies (79%), along with support measures for integrating migrants and refugees with teaching qualifications (64%).
- Overall, the findings indicate a comprehensive but rather uneven approach, with greater emphasis on addressing prejudice and integrating qualified professionals, while broader institutional and advocacy efforts are less part of these policies.
- Areas like fast-track accreditation for teachers with migrant or refugee backgrounds (18%), training on workers' rights (18%), and language and cultural programs to aid integration (21%) are the least addressed within education trade union policies.

## Inclusion of migrants and refugees in the education sector in Portugal

*Speakers: Ana Simões (FENPROF), Dima Mohammed (refugee perspective), Alexandre Carvalho (Portuguese Council for Refugees), Paulo Feytor Pinto (Association of Teachers for Intercultural Education)*

During this panel, speakers discussed various challenges and solutions to inclusion of migrants and refugees in the education system of Portugal, including the focus on the social dialogue, especially on the local lever, and cooperation between trade unions and civil society organisations.

The main topics discussed included:

- **Language Barriers:** Migrants often lack support in learning Portuguese, and the language is essential for successful integration.
- **The role of intercultural education:** Portuguese schools now host a more diverse student population, necessitating intercultural education to foster understanding among all students. Creation of documents on the intercultural education in the curriculum is one of the main challenges – it should be a cross-cutting issue included in all subjects. Intercultural education is not just for minorities or migrants, it's needed for all students in Portugal.



- **Crucial importance of continuous professional development for education personnel**, including Portuguese as foreign language but also on intercultural education. It should be organised during working hours and be tax deductible.
- **Teacher Shortages**: Migrant integration is hampered by limited teacher availability, especially for non-native Portuguese speakers. Education trade unions are addressing this issue by for example, organising a training session for a refugee and migrant teachers with Portuguese Council for Refugees (FENPROF).
- **Role of Local Authorities**: Seixal City Council representatives emphasized localized efforts, such as the Territorial Pact of Intercultural Dialogue, aimed at dismantling stereotypes and creating inclusive communities for migrant families.
- **Changing the mindset of the society towards seeing the migrant background as an asset**: providing opportunities for migrants and refugees to become active citizens in the host country.



## Working Group Discussions

Participants divided into working groups to discuss education trade unions' practical strategies for:

1. Inclusion of students with migrant/refugee background;
2. Inclusion of teachers with migrant/refugee background;
3. Inclusion of migrants/refugees in the education trade unions.

Regarding the first topic, the participants suggested hosting multicultural events, like "International Day," to celebrate diversity and foster understanding in the educational institutions. Integrating cultural mediators in education institutions could also bridge communication gaps. Furthermore, they highlighted that it's important to present strategies on ensuring the language education and counter-act the right-wing governments which try to drag the resources away from the support to migrants and refugees. A particular idea was promoted by education trade unions in Italy, where the union is promoting granting the citizenship to migrants who completed at least 8 years of studies in Italy. Finally, limiting the class sizes when there are migrant students in them was also suggested as a strategy for improving the inclusion.

Regarding the inclusion of teachers with migrant/refugee background, participants emphasized that migrant teachers should receive support in language acquisition and qualification recognition. Suggestions included establishing mentorship programs by education trade unions for migrant teachers.

Regarding the integration of migrants/refugees in the education trade unions, participants suggested encouraging trade unions to address migrant issues, including involving migrant teachers in union activities, gathering data on the needs and resources from the members, and organizing trainings for trade union activities. Concrete examples, such as newsletter for members in English and Dutch and training with trade union officers making sure that marginalized groups are more included, inclusive language etc. were also provided.





## Country cases and trade unions good practices on inclusion of migrants and refugees in the education sector

Education trade union representatives shared examples of the trade unions' actions on migrant inclusion in their education systems:

- **Kathrine Blyverket, UEN, Norway**, presented the work on the implementing UEN's Diversity and Integration Strategic Plan adapted in 2019, focusing on:
  - the inclusion of newly arrived refugees with teaching qualifications and teachers with a multicultural background in Union of Education Norway;
  - stepping up the effort to recruit and include teachers with a multicultural background to positions within the union;
  - accreditation of teachers with an immigrant and refugee background;
  - incorporating migrant perspectives into union policies.
- **Cuqui Vera Belmonte, FECCOO, Spain**, highlighted the work of the Red Cite, information and qualification centre for foreign workers, set up by the trade union which functions as an open window to migrant population where they can get an advice on their needs (e.g. asylum issues, legal advice, labour market advice, etc. and get closer to the union. The speaker also focused on the role that unions play in securing migrant protections amidst political challenges.
- **Mariam Mwinyimbegu, AOb, Netherlands**, presented the work of the AOb's Diversity Network, which among other things has developed a checklist for combating discrimination in the educational institutions, has been organising the celebration of various cultural holidays (e.g. Iftar), and has been doing the advocacy on the recognition of foreign qualifications of refugee and migrant teachers.

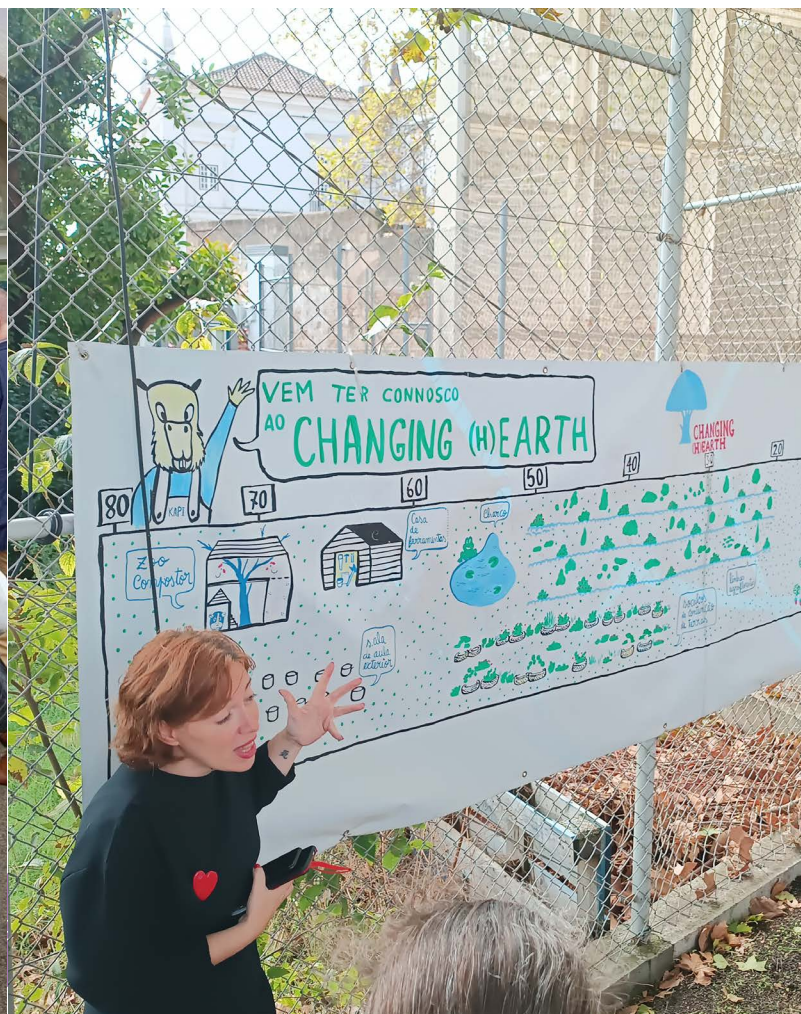




# Visit to the Basic School Gil Vicente, Lisbon

On the second day, the programme also included the visit to the highly diverse (more than 60 nationalities among students) [basic education school Gil Vicente in Lisbon](#) to learn about their practices of integrating migrant and refugee students and their families in the education and the school's life.

The school has an intercultural project ("Escola para Todos" or "School for Everyone") to support migrant and refugee students who start the school and still lack the language skills. The school also organises family encounters to strengthen community ties, and enhances the cultural integration (e.g. a movie project, "Ramadan in the School Community," created with a local community mediator, highlighting cultural practices and fostering understanding. Regarding the assistance for Portuguese as a non-mother tongue for children and adults, the school organises specific classrooms for language support. Ongoing training initiatives for teaching and non-teaching staff to improve intercultural competence and inclusivity in education also improve the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the school.





## Conclusion

The event highlighted the pressing need for comprehensive strategies to accommodate and integrate migrants into the education system. The discussions also addressed the rising xenophobia in European schools and the crucial role of teachers in promoting tolerance. Participants recommendations included among others, the need for continuous professional development for teachers in intercultural education and host-country language as a foreign language, as well as combating the segregation of migrant students in schools. Participants also emphasized the importance of investment in inclusive policies, urging governments and educational bodies to view education as an investment rather than a cost, especially for migrant and refugee integration.



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