



Training Seminar Paris

22-23 May 2025

REPORT



**"European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting
inclusion of persons with special needs in education"**

(Project *InclEdu4AllNeeds*, number 101145637)



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Introduction

The first training sessions took place in Paris, France, on the 22-23 May 2025, as part of the [social dialogue project InclEdu4AllNeeds](#) - [“European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting inclusion of persons with special needs in education”](#) (2024 – 2026).

Led by ETUCE and EFEE with European Commission co-funding, this project supports the 2024-2026 of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee in Education (ESSDE) Work Programme. Contemporary global issues, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools and the ongoing war in Ukraine, have had significant consequences, particularly for students who were already disadvantaged. Committed to inclusive, high-quality education, the project promotes effective social partner collaboration to integrate persons with special needs. It assesses policies and practices, providing recommendations for all stakeholders involved in special needs education.

Project objectives:

- To evaluate the existing legislation, special programmes and measures undertaken at national, regional, local or institutional level as regards to the inclusion of persons with special needs in the education system and education policies, as well as assess the impact of the EU policies on inclusion on the national educational and employment policies, identifying challenges (e.g. special needs teachers' shortage) and potential solutions;
- To identify and promote the joint approaches, practices and strategies of social partners in education to ensure the full inclusion of persons with special needs in the education system and education and employment policies,
- To address the relevant professional needs of school leaders, teachers and other education personnel, challenges linked to working and learning conditions (including digital and sustainable education), initial and continuous professional development, recruitment and retention, and other areas;
- To support education trade unions and education employer organisations across Europe to become more pro-active in addressing the issue of the inclusion of persons with special needs in education systems with an intersectional approach and against the backdrop of the consequences of COVID-19, in their national social dialogue structures and within the European Semester consultation practices at national level;
- To update knowledge and peer learning on this topic in the ESSDE Committee;
- To draft concrete guidelines on how to promote effective inclusion of persons with special needs in the education system and education policies through joint social partner initiatives at national, regional and local level.

Project activities include:

- An **online survey** among ETUCE and EFEE national member organisations;
- **Focus groups and school visits** organised in Solingen (Germany) and Bucharest (Romania) with the participation of local social partners in education. The visits consist of school visits, interview and filming in order to look at best joint practices of social partners in the inclusion of persons with special needs in education, which are currently being implemented;
- **Two training seminars:** in Paris (France) and Lisbon (Portugal) with participants from other ETUCE and EFEE member organisations. The sessions will be used to present and discuss the research and country visits outcomes, build the knowledge and capacity of social partners on the topic, exchange good practices, and discuss the draft guidelines on how to promote effective inclusion of persons with special needs in the education system and education policies through joint social partner initiatives at national, regional and local level.
- **Final conference** in Chisinau, Moldova, where practical guidelines on how to promote effective inclusion of persons with special needs in the education system and education policies through joint social partner initiatives at national, regional and local level, will be drafted;
- **Filming a series of short videos** on the current situation persons with special needs in education systems in several European countries, as well as on the role of education social partners in addressing the issue.



Joint Training Seminar

The joint training seminar held by ETUCE and EFEE on 22-23 May 2025 brought together key stakeholders in the education sector to address one of the most pressing challenges in European education today: the effective inclusion of persons with special needs. Held under the framework of this project, this two-day seminar aimed to strengthen cooperation between education trade unions and education employers across Europe to improve inclusive practices and policies in education systems at all levels.

The seminar opened with welcoming remarks and an introduction to the [InclEdu4AllNeeds](#) project by Monika Hoang The (EFEE policy & Project Manager) and Leonardo Ebner (ETUCE Coordinator). They emphasised the importance of building inclusive education systems through joint social dialogue and practical collaboration between teachers, education employers, and authorities.

This was followed by a detailed presentation of the preliminary results of the project's research phase by Alison Milner and Emily Winchip from Aalborg University. Their findings shed light on existing gaps in support structures, teacher training, policy implementation, and collaboration between education and socio-medical services concerning students with special needs across Europe. The research underlined the lessons learned during the previous case study visits in Germany and Romania and the local practices in the implementation of inclusive education frameworks while stressing the need for harmonised, equity-focused approaches. A plenary discussion gave participants the opportunity to ask questions, share experiences, and reflect on how these research findings aligned with the realities in their own national contexts.

A panel discussion on inclusion of persons with special needs in France featured experts and practitioners: Sébastien Mounié, Senior Official for Disability and Inclusion at the French Ministry of Education; Virginie Cassand (SNES-FSU); Béatrice Laurent (UNSA-Education); Agnès Castel, National Mediator for Education; Laetitia Aresu (CFDT EFRP). They presented national strategies for inclusion, legislative frameworks, and both ministry and union-driven initiatives, along with practical challenges and successes in French schools. Speakers presented concrete examples of collaborative approaches and the complexities involved in system-wide change.



The French model of inclusion of people with disabilities is based on the recent reform that created the "school support centres" (*pôles d'appui à la scolarité*), which reinforced the collaboration between the education system and the support provided by specialised socio-medical services. However, the stigma around disabilities remains strong and the challenge today is to reorient the education system towards more inclusive practices, which also requires specific training of all professionals involved. Nevertheless, the ratio of support teachers to student is around 1 to 5-6, and the workload of the "reference teachers" (*enseignants référent-e-s*), in charge of supervising the development of students with disabilities, increased considerably in the last 20 years passing from 100 to 300-400 cases to follow by each teacher. The shortage of specialised teachers and professionals makes it highly difficult for all students with disabilities to receive appropriate and continuous support. The access to advanced training and the information about training programmes remain limited for teachers, as well as hinders coordination opportunities among the various professionals responsible to provide support for students with special needs. Challenges also exist regarding the recruitment and retention of teachers with disabilities to properly allow them to carry out their work duties.

The following sessions focused on interactive group activities to deepen participants' understanding of inclusive policy-making and practice. The discussion on national challenges and opportunities provided a platform for participants to explore systemic barriers, underling the crucial impact of financial constraints in the education and health sectors, the lack of teacher initial and continuous training, and the policy fragmentation between central and local levels. Furthermore, participants raised the issue of growing cases of aggressive behaviours that expose school leaders, teachers and students to violence and harassment in the school environment. However, attendees also identified successful approaches in their countries, such as multi-disciplinary cooperation between education and medical services.



Insufficient funding remains the main factor preventing many education systems to reach more balanced teacher-to-student ratios that would improve the inclusion levels of students with special needs and reduce the amounts of early school leavers. Regarding the recruitment of teachers with disabilities, national legislations are often quite advanced on this matter. However, the main obstacle are not the formal selection criteria, but rather the effective working conditions of future teachers that make it difficult to perform their job and thus lead to low rates of retention in the profession. Participants registered as well, a deteriorating trend in national social dialogue practices in many countries, and the detrimental effect that this has on the inclusion of people with special needs in education.

Participants were then divided into two working groups to discuss and develop practical guidelines on how joint social partner initiatives can be used to promote inclusion at the national, regional and local levels. The group work revealed the need for joint training programs for teachers and school leaders and the importance of cooperation between unions, employers, and policy makers, as well as the value of inclusive curriculum development. During the reporting from the working groups, participants insisted on the challenges posed by the ongoing shortage of teachers and education personnel, and on the need to secure appropriate funding and infrastructure support to ensuring access and participation for all students. They also highlighted how national social dialogue is often limited to formal consultation practices, but with limited practical effects due to the low level of prioritisation by national governments of public funding devoted to the education sector and particularly supporting policies for inclusion.

Among the proposals for guidelines and action steps, participants included creating inclusive learning environments through adapted curricula and assessment systems, and cooperation with external socio-medical services. The discussion emphasised the necessity of advocating for systemic recruitment of teachers accompanied by initial and continuous professional development, establishing inclusive education task forces at the national level comprising social partners, policy makers, and disabled persons' organisations. It was also suggested to create a positive narrative around inclusion policies; recognise and respect the personal development pace of each student; and to promote local social dialogue in schools. The plenary discussion provided valuable peer feedback and suggestions for refining the guidelines into usable tools for national policy making and European-level advocacy.



National social partners highlighted practices from successful joint initiatives in three countries. The Belgian case was presented by Jean-Luc Barbéry (ACOD Onderwijs) and Dominique Gevers (GO!) focusing on the functioning of secondary schools and social partners action to move away from a segregated educational system to a more inclusive model. Sheila Murphy (INTO) and Anne McHugh (ETBI), from Ireland, discussed the role of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) that advises the Ministry for Education on curriculum and assessment from early childhood and care to the end of second level, and the collaboration of social partners within the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to improve accessibility and student participation. Petros Yais (OELMEK), Lenas Loizou (OLTEK), and Paraskevi Papadopoulou Mandri (MOESY) showcased the features of the "Special Education and Training Programs" (SET) in Cyprus, touching upon the functioning of the Special Unit Programme and the Homeschooling Programme, developed by the Ministry of Education in the cooperation with unions and employers. These examples illustrated the practical impact of sustained cooperation between social partners and pointed at the crucial role of inclusive leadership, joint advocacy, and mutual trust.

The seminar concluded with remarks from Leonardo Ebner and Monika Hoang The, who reaffirmed the shared commitment of ETUCE and EFEE to inclusive education. They stressed that the outcomes of the seminar, especially the proposals for guidelines and the good practices, would contribute directly to European-level policy work and further project activities.



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