



ETUCE Action Plan

on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



Contents

What is the Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and how to use it?	3
Old and new challenges	4
ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	6
What do ETUCE and its member organisations do to ensure equality and inclusion and what do they do to promote and support diversity in education, the teaching profession, and society as a whole?	7
1. Acknowledging, supporting and celebrating diversity among children, students, teachers, academics, school leaders and other education personnel	9
2. Teaching democratic citizenship and transmission of fundamental values through education	10
3. Inclusion of migrants and refugees in the education system and in the labour market	12
4. Inclusion of ethnic minorities and indigenous people in the education system and in the labour market	14
5. Ensuring gender equality in education, the teaching profession and society as a whole	16
6. Achieving equality for LGBTI students, teachers and education personnel to create safe, secure and inclusive learning environments for all	18
7. Inclusion of students and education personnel with disabilities and special needs into the education system and labour market	19
ANNEXES	21



What is the Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and how to use it?

Today increasingly complex and diverse societies require more efforts to tackle all kinds of discrimination in order to enhance equality and diversity as an added value. These efforts are especially important in education as it is a basic human right and a public good which should be accessible to everyone regardless of the student's gender, sexual orientation, abilities and educational needs, economic status, ethnic origin, language, religion, and migratory and citizenship status. It is also crucial that teachers, academics and other education personnel are treated according to principles of equal opportunities, enhanced diversity and supported inclusion, in their everyday work.



Old and new challenges

Despite the overall progress in addressing inequalities in 21st century society, the lack of public funding for inclusive education persists and many equality issues and challenges still remain to be addressed in the national and European social dialogue agendas in the education sector. Education trade unions continue to face numerous lingering issues as well as many new challenges, namely an ageing European population and teaching force, brain drain, budget cuts in education, growing privatisation in the education sector, increasing attacks on trade union rights (among other actors by the governments) and the declining membership of trade unions. Furthermore, the spread of nationalism and populism, as well as right-wing and conservative political discourses and the intensification of poverty and social exclusion in a number of European countries attack the equality and inclusion agenda in our societies. These trends not only jeopardise inclusive and equitable education, they influence education trade unions to give a lesser priority to their work on equality. Moreover, while a growing number of governments view education as a means to solve economic problems and supply the labour market, the education trade union movement understands education from a holistic perspective that aims to develop tolerant, open-minded and critically thinking citizens with an inherent respect for human rights. Another major issue to address in this context is the progressive digitalisation of society, which on the one hand can have many positive outcomes and on the other can become a source of exclusion and discrimination and potentially deepen inequalities within society, if not managed correctly within a well thought through framework, that provides for all.

The recent health, social and economic crisis caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus exposed and amplified these inequalities and challenges even more. With governments struggling to find appropriate measures to prevent its spreading, the pandemic crisis deepened the gaps between people from different socio-economic backgrounds, cities

and rural areas, people of migrant and non-migrant backgrounds, women and men, different age groups, etc., affecting the most vulnerable groups the hardest.

With most countries in Europe having closed education institutions and keeping child care facilities open only for children of essential workers, teachers, academics and other education personnel are forced to work from home, in many cases without a strategic and coordinated approach to distance learning, thereby threatening quality and inclusiveness of education. While teachers were working hard to provide quality education in these exceptional circumstances, the crisis showed that the distance learning approach by itself is not appropriate to guarantee equal access to education, when there is a lack of access to the internet, computers and other digital and communication tools needed for remote teaching and learning. Additionally, the need for a supportive environment for learning at home and the essential social aspect of teaching become evident.

Amongst the most affected groups are women who are more likely to face a significant increase in unpaid care work, juggling at the same time their working life and struggling to find a work-life balance, alongside the expansion of precarious employment schemes; also during the COVID-19 outbreak, sadly an increase in gender-based violence and harassment was detected.

The pandemic measures also particularly affected people who already live in difficult conditions with limited access to hygiene, health care and education services, such as migrants and asylum-seekers, Roma communities, people with low socio-economic income, people in rural areas, etc.

In addition to the threat of COVID-19 itself, people with disabilities faced disrupted health services and social support, a lack of information and suffer severely from the absence of regular education.

In response to these old and new challenges, this Action Plan seeks to provide a strategic response from ETUCE and its member organisations.



ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Following the Resolution on [Setting the priorities to develop the ETUCE Action Plan for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion](#), that was adopted by the ETUCE Special Conference in Athens on 27-28 November 2018, and in the light of [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), [Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education](#), [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), and other international and European instruments for inclusion, the ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion aims to present **a comprehensive and sustainable strategy for ensuring equality, inclusion and non-discrimination in education and society that can be implemented by all ETUCE member organisations and is based on concrete actions**. It also aims to facilitate a cross-national exchange of information and good practices on how education trade unions can contribute to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in the teaching profession and wider society across Europe.

The Action Plan is built on previous ETUCE policies regarding equality and non-discrimination (e.g. [ETUCE Action Plan on Gender Equality](#)), recommendations and guidelines of the ETUCE equality structures, and relevant projects' outcomes. It also takes into account the work done on these topics by Education International and the European Trade Union Confederation.

The Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion covers the following priorities:

1. Celebrating diversity among children, students, teachers, academics, school leaders and other education personnel
2. Teaching for democratic citizenship and the transmission of fundamental values through education
3. Inclusion of migrants and refugees in the education system, in the labour market and in society as a whole
4. Inclusion of ethnic minorities and indigenous people in the education system, the labour market and in society as a whole
5. Ensuring gender equality in education, the teaching profession and society as a whole
6. Achieving equality for LGBTI students and education personnel with the view to creating safe, secure and inclusive learning and working environments for all
7. Inclusion of students and education personnel with disabilities and special needs in the education system, the labour market and society as a whole

The ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion **does not provide a master plan for every country**. Instead it should be understood as a supporting policy tool to be assessed and adjusted to meet the conditions at national/union level as regards these topics in education, teaching profession, and wider society.

The **implementation** of the ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion requires a strong commitment to address equality and inclusion in a holistic manner mainstreaming it into all education trade unions' fields of work, and a **regular monitoring** of the activities undertaken to make this commitment a reality at national, regional and local level. At European level, ETUCE monitors the implementation of the Action Plan through the work of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality, ETUCE Committee and Status of Women Committee.



What do ETUCE and its member organisations do to ensure equality and inclusion and what do they do to promote and support diversity in education, the teaching profession, and society as a whole?

Education trade unions play a crucial role in promoting and supporting diversity, equality and inclusion and can have a significant impact through trade union actions, research, campaigns, publications, the provision of training courses and cooperation and alliance building with other partners and stakeholders.

ETUCE supports its member organisations by providing them with concrete tools and measures to address various issues of equality, inclusion and non-discrimination in the education sector and wider society (e.g. ETUCE Online Database of Good Practices), preparing them to address these challenges in social dialogue on an institutional, national and European level, as well as by raising awareness on the need to include the discussion on equality and inclusion in social dialogue within the education sector. Find below some concrete examples (the list is non-exhaustive):

Topics	Resolutions	Statements	Projects	Action Plans/ Recommendations
General: Equality and Inclusion	Reinforcing Equalities within Education and Education Trade Unions In A Fast Changing World (2016) Setting the priorities to develop the ETUCE Action Plan for Equality (2018)	Joint ETUCE/EFEE Statement on Multiculturalism, Democratic Citizenship and Social Inclusion in Education 'Quo Vadis Europa, Quo Vadis Education' (2019) ETUCE statement on digitisation, employability and inclusiveness (2017)	ETUCE Project ' Education Trade Unions and Inclusive Schools: Embracing Diversity in Education ' (2019-2021)	
Democratic values	Education for Democracy (2016) Resolution on Tackling Extremism (2012)	ETUCE-EFEE-ESHA Joint Statement on Citizenship Education & EU Common Values (2018)	Joint ETUCE-EFEE-ESHA project ' EU CONVINCe - EU Common Values Inclusive Education ' (2018-2020)	
Inclusion of migrants and refugees	Education Trade Unions on the Refugee Situation in Europe: Promoting Education as the Key to Integration and Inclusion (2016)	ETUCE's views on Public consultation on "EU funds in the area of migration" (2018) Refugees & Education: Human Rights for All (2015)	European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education (2017- 2019)	ETUCE-EFEE Joint Practical Guidelines on how to promote effective integration of migrant and refugee learners in the education and socio-economic environment of the host countries through joint social partner initiatives at national, regional and local level (2019)
Inclusion of ethnic minorities and indigenous people		ETUCE contribution to the EU Anti-discrimination policy: special focus on ethnic and racial origin grounds (2006)	Developing non-discriminatory quality education for Roma children (2004 - 2006) 'EU CONVINCe - EU Common Values Inclusive Education' (2018-2020)	
Gender equality		ETUCE's views on Public consultation regarding the current situation of gender equality in the EU and priorities for the next five years (2019)	'Empowering education trade unions to address gender equality in the teaching profession through social dialogue' (2018-2019)	ETUCE Action Plan on Gender Equality (2020) ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality Recommendations on Social Dialogue and Equal opportunities (2015)
Equality for LGBTI students, teachers, academics and other education personnel		Joint ETUCE-ETUC-ILGA Statement against Homophobic bullying (2012)		ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality Recommendations on Securing Diversity in Education (2017)
Inclusion of students and adults with special needs		ETUCE's views on the public consultation on the implementation of the European disability strategy 2010-2020 (2019)		ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality Recommendations on Mainstreaming Diversity and Tackling Inequalities (2014)

1. Acknowledging, supporting and celebrating diversity among children, students, teachers, academics, school leaders and other education personnel

Challenges

- Globalisation, socio-economic inequalities, increased mobility and migration lead to an increasingly diverse population;
- Technological progress and digitalisation contribute to a wide-spread standardisation in society with a one-size-fits-all approach. It is important to recall that high quality education requires an individual approach adapted to the individual students' needs;
- Growing individualisation and the exclusion of individuals within our society exacerbate the loss of the true collective as opposed to a digital collective;
- Education institutions, teachers, academics and other education personnel are confronted with a variety of challenges linked to increasing diversity among learners and education personnel (e.g. personal identity conflicts; the lack of the sense of belonging; direct and indirect discrimination, etc.);
- Diversity is being considered as a challenge, not as an added value;
- Deeply rooted socially constructed stereotypes on different grounds continue to persist in our daily lives, publicity, media and policies, affecting people's life choices, limiting their freedom and leading to direct or indirect discrimination;
- Conflicts arise at education institutions linked to the fact that some students wish to wear clothes according to their religion (e.g. headscarves).

Strategy to address the issues

An encompassing definition of diversity should be embraced by education systems, taking into consideration the age, gender, religion, sexual orientation and ethnic and linguistic background of teachers, academics and other education personnel and students. Education institutions should promote this diversity, support and celebrate it in order to create inclusive working and learning environments.

ETUCE and its Member Organisations commit to:

- Demanding more sustainable investment in the public education system so that education institutions have enough personnel, including teachers and support personnel, and materials to create an inclusive learning and teaching environment;
- Negotiating with the governments, employers in education and education authorities on how to make the teaching profession more attractive and deal with the teacher shortage;
- Promoting inclusion in education by underlining the importance of compulsory schooling and implementing compulsory schooling legislation;
- Embracing the values of inclusion and providing training courses on tolerance and diversity for their affiliates;
- Ensuring that equality, empathy and tolerance are taught from an early age;
- Promoting the organisation of fora to foster discussions about diversity amongst teachers, academics and other education personnel;
- Promoting the organisation of events in educational institutions which celebrate diversity, including international holidays, coupled with fora which offer teachers a platform to discuss issues concerning diversity amongst students and teachers;
- Encouraging and supporting education institutions to embrace all types of diversity regardless of an institution's ethos.

2. Teaching democratic citizenship and transmission of fundamental values through education

Challenges

- The spread of dangerous ideas and fake news has fuelled the rise of populist movements with the help of social networking platforms;
- It is challenging to change public opinion on matters such as extremism and xenophobia;
- Support and training for education personnel on the topic of democratic citizenship and human rights education are either absent or inefficient;
- As economic crises deepen in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a danger that there will be a further rise of right-wing populism in Europe;
- Right-wing populist narratives can creep from the public debate into the playground, the classroom and lecture halls. As students' exposure to social media grows and populist narratives spread on such platforms, populist views such as hostility towards migrant and refugee students are increasingly likely to make their way into education discourse;
- Clear guidelines and supportive policy frameworks on teaching democratic citizenship are absent or fragmented and sporadic in many education systems;
- The curricula do not provide sufficient time and space for teaching and practicing democratic citizenship and human rights;
- Democratic citizenship education lacks coherence as well as robust assessment systems and clear competences on the topic;

- Centralisation of the school leadership limits the intellectual autonomy of teachers, academics and other education personnel and leaves little freedom on how to teach;
- Teachers, school leaders, academics and other education personnel can find themselves under attack or pressure from governments, education authorities, community, or parents for supporting students to develop their freedom of expression and to think and act independently and without prejudice while providing education without prejudice towards political, religious or other influences;
- Values linked to culture, tradition, and religion of the country and/or region are imposed on students without a critical-thinking approach and disregarding students' own backgrounds and views.

Strategy to address the issues

In the view of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 and of the [Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination through education](#), education trade unions aim to influence the positive change towards a more democratic and inclusive society built on fundamental values and human rights through proactively introducing these topics in education, convincing the politicians about the importance of these topics in society as a whole, and raising awareness on these topics among trade union members.

ETUCE and its Member Organisations commit to:

- Promoting democratic citizenship education both in the curricula and teacher initial and continuous professional development, including:
 - curricula based on students' rights and representing different cultures,
 - the importance of understanding the history processes and the ability to analyse the history in a critical way,
 - ensuring the implementation of democratic citizenship programmes;

- Support member organisations in resisting far-right attacks on the rights of teachers, students and young people;
- Negotiating with the governments for more professional autonomy of teachers and academic freedom to think critically, creating an open and safe learning environment for education personnel and students to express the diversity of opinions, including scientific controversy;
- Assist education trade unions across Europe to raise awareness of the growth of populist rhetoric in the classroom and wider school community;
- Building internal trade union systems and mechanisms for their members to confront and react in an appropriate manner to expressions of racism, xenophobia and sexism in their professional lives;
- Support research and grow understanding of how this rhetoric is emerging, including online targeting of young people;
- Work to build responses to populist and extremist rhetoric, both in direct interventions and in terms of wider education support;
- Lobbying for free of charge initial and continuous teacher training on democratic citizenship and inclusive education which equips teachers, academics and other education personnel with the relevant and updated skills and competences for managing a diverse classroom and promoting mutual respect, cross-cultural understanding, and intercultural dialogue;
- Providing training and raising trade union members' awareness on democratic citizenship, peace education, shared values, and on how to react in an appropriate manner when they are faced with prejudices, racism, and xenophobia;
- Demanding that teachers, academics and other education personnel are given enough time and space within their working hours to teach and organise practicing of democratic citizenship and fundamental values and that they are supported in this work and it is included in their working time;

- Ensuring that teachers' voices are taken into account during the discussions on the programmes and curricula on democratic citizenship education and teaching about fundamental values and human rights as well as on all other subject matters linked to education (e.g. school infrastructure, the organisation of classrooms, etc);
- Raising awareness on the danger of teaching 'morals' and 'values' as unchanged concepts instead of teaching students to think critically;
- Collaborating with organisations in the local community and civil society (e.g. social workers, NGOs, etc.), as well as with other trade unions in order to provide support on teaching and practicing democratic citizenship and values-based education.



3. Inclusion of migrants and refugees in the education system and in the labour market

Challenges

- While there are legal regulations protecting and supporting ethnic minorities, some national migrant and refugee policies are discriminatory (e.g. national legislation in some countries preventing the inclusion of migrants in the education system). Education systems lack resources to deal with migrants and refugees in an effective and inclusive manner, including public funding to support migrant and refugee students;
- Teachers, academics, and other education personnel do not receive adequate cultural training on how to deal with migrant students and their families;
- In many countries, there are ongoing political debates on whether migrant students should have special classes or if they should be integrated into ordinary classes as quickly as possible;
- The needs of migrants and refugees in education are not addressed by the social partners in social dialogue;
- Attitudes of local communities and parents often make it challenging to manage the inclusion of migrant students and to discuss the topic of migration in the classroom;
- Education personnel working with migrant students are faced with linguistic barriers and shortages of education support personnel;
- Education personnel and education trade unions are left alone to deal with special and/or extreme situations regarding the inclusion of migrant students in education, e.g. missing official documents, , high fluctuation rates, and overcrowded communities that cannot accommodate the number of migrant and refugee students in the local education institutions;

- Migrant teachers, academics, and other education personnel face many obstacles, including the lack of defined pathways to enter into the local teaching profession.

Strategy to address the issues

Host countries should understand migration as a source of strength and richness. This can be achieved through the introduction of fair legislation, increased investment in teacher training, the revision of curricula, awareness raising campaigns on the benefits of diversity aimed at civil society and the calling into question of neoliberal ideas.

ETUCE and its Member Organisations commit to :

- Implementing the ETUCE-EFEE [Joint Practical Guidelines on how to promote effective integration of migrant and refugee learners in the education and socio-economic environment of the host countries through joint social partner initiatives at national, regional and local level](#);
- Lobbying their governments together with social partners in education to design and implement a [Quality Framework for Effective Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees in Education](#);
- At national level, in partnership with non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders, lobbying their governments for a fair legislative framework which is inclusive to refugees and migrants;
- In cooperation with other stakeholders in the education sector, lobbying for more funding to be allocated to projects of social partners in Europe which deal with the inclusion of migrants and refugees;
- Pushing for increased investment in continuous professional development for education personnel as more training courses are required so that teachers, academics and other education personnel are better equipped to deal with the needs of migrant and refugee students in the classroom;

- Ensuring the involvement of teachers in the development of pedagogical materials on democratic values as well as of teachers and education trade unions in the creation of tools which promote the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the education system;
- Ensuring that both migrant students and parents are catered for, including provision of classes in migrant students' native languages and provision of documents for parents in a variety of languages as well as access to interpreters if necessary;
- Negotiating for the provision of qualified teachers, academics and other education personnel from a migrant background with fasttrack programmes with a view to qualifying them to work in the education systems of their host countries as quickly as possible;
- Negotiating with education authorities for a better mechanism of recognition of skills and competences of students in formal and informal education;
- Collaborating with non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and the government, education employers and education authorities with a view to organising public awareness campaigns on xenophobia and racism.



4. Inclusion of ethnic minorities and indigenous people in the education system and in the labour market

Challenges

- Existing prejudices, stereotypes, racism and xenophobia threaten the inclusion of ethnic minorities and indigenous people in the education system and in the labour market, and lead to direct and indirect discrimination;
- School and class segregation regarding ethnic minorities and indigenous people still exist in a number of European countries;
- Economic challenges, such as a risk of living in segregated areas or in poverty, tend to increase the chances of students from ethnic minority backgrounds leaving school before finishing upper secondary or vocational education;
- Education personnel and school leadership face significant pressure from populist governments and political organisations;
- Indirect forms of financial pressure are applied to ethnic minorities and indigenous people when despite obligatory education for all students, governments attempt to narrow access to education by refusing the undocumented students the right to enter education;
- Education trade unions report the lack of resources to work on this topic;
- The absence of information about people of all cultures and religions in textbooks, teaching materials and curricula makes stereotypes flourish. Representation of cultural diversity should be critical of discrimination;
- Exclusive curricula do not emphasise important historical periods, such as, for example, colonialism;

- Education institutions with a majority of students from ethnic minorities and indigenous communities experience a significant shortage of teachers and other education personnel;
- In many countries, there is an ongoing debate on whether schooling in the language of ethnic minority or indigenous people is a form of segregation;
- Migrant and ethnic minority or indigenous students do not have many opportunities to communicate with other students outside the education institution.

Strategy to address the issues

Education trade unions aspire to ensure that ethnic minorities are fully included in all aspects of the education system and the labour market, and support education personnel to continue working on inclusion despite the pressure.

ETUCE and its Member Organisations commit to:

- Racism and racial injustice is a global and systematic problem for many Black and other minority ethnic people and their communities;
- Ensuring that textbooks, teaching materials and curricula are revised to include the representation of the cultures of ethnic minorities and indigenous people. Representation of cultural diversity should be critical of discrimination;
- The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement has energised a momentum and awareness for anti-racism and actions for racial justice across the global trade union movement and civil societies;
- Lobbying for textbooks, teaching materials and curricula to be offered in the mother tongue of ethnic minorities and indigenous people, as well as for provision of an option to learn and be tested during exams in mother tongue language;

- Organising campaigns which educate against prejudices and stereotypes about ethnic minorities, tackle racism and xenophobia and provide an accurate perspective of these important groups of people in society;
- Ensuring that initial and continuous teacher training is offered to teachers, academics and other education personnel on how to address diverse learning needs and cultures of students;
- Ensuring that sufficient professional support is provided for teachers, academics and other education personnel working in the areas with many students from migrant and ethnic minority background;
- Promoting the organisation of workshops and training seminars with the view to offering education trade unionists the opportunity to learn how to effectively promote citizenship education and common values of respect for all including ethnic minorities and indigenous people;
- Raising awareness on the importance of the education system as part of the wider social support system, including social support for students after class;
- Demanding that teachers, academics and other education personnel are given enough time and space within their working hours to provide additional assistance to some students (e.g. linguistic assistance, cultural assistance) and that they are supported in this work and it is included in their working time;
- Raising awareness of education trade union members on European, national and regional non-discrimination, equality and inclusion legislation in order to combat social prejudices, populist and xenophobic discourses;
- Negotiating with government, education authorities, employers in education to ensure that curricula which can influence how we read and learn about history, are decolonised and free of ethnocentric one-sided views;
- Encourage affiliates to engage with members from Black and other minority ethnic groups or heritage to ensure that their identities and experiences are reflected in anti-racist programmes.



5. Ensuring gender equality in education, the teaching profession and society as a whole

Challenges

- Gender segregation in study fields leads to a higher concentration of boys in areas related to ICT and STEM subjects, whereas girls tend to choose language, history and social science classes;
- Deeply rooted gender stereotypes in our daily lives, publicity and media, continue to persist in relation to perceptions of women's and men's role in the household, caring responsibilities, the labour market and public life;
- Horizontal gender segregation in the teaching profession leads to men being mainly employed in better-paid, higher-status positions (e.g. in tertiary education), and women mostly working in early childhood and primary education;
- Women are still under-represented in leadership and decision-making positions in education institutions;
- A high percentage of women in the education sector work in part-time employment and on short-term contracts;
- Work-life balance challenges for education personnel include, in addition to common social problems (such as unequal distribution of caring responsibilities) workload issues and work-related stress, continuous professional development taking place outside of working hours, and the impact of digitalisation on work in the education sector;
- Gender pay and pension gaps are still present in the education sector despite teachers' salaries being fixed and based on state salary grids;

- Gender-based violence and harassment in education institutions have a damaging effect on the learning environment of students and the working environment of teachers, academics and other education personnel;
- Gender stereotypes and gender roles imposed through the socialisation process contribute to under-performance and early school drop-out of boys. Girls and women are unable to benefit from their good academic performance when making the transition to training and employment;
- Parents' perceptions of the teaching profession and social obstacles make it more difficult for men to work in early childhood and primary education.

Strategy to address the issues

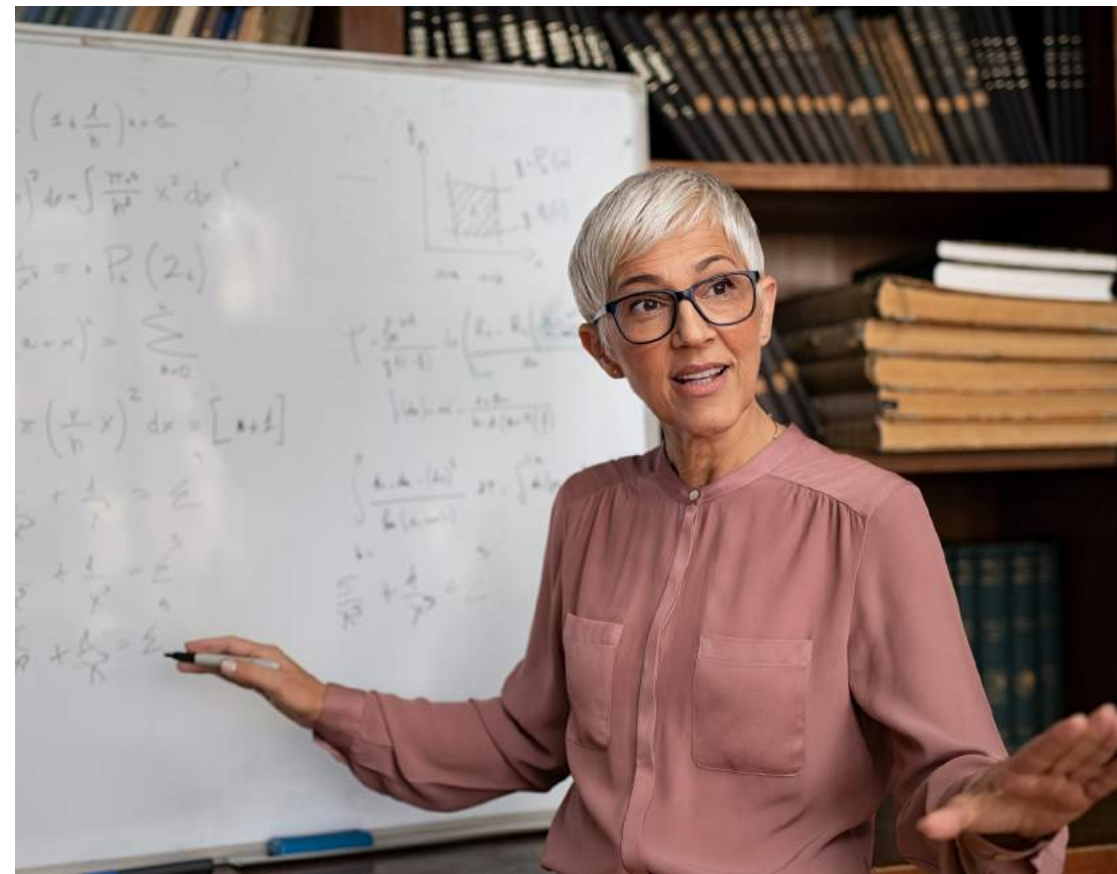
Education trade unions have a vital role to play in helping to address gender stereotypes, influencing (further) education and career choices, as well as in addressing gender disparities within the teaching profession and in education trade unions themselves. They need to mainstream a gender dimension in all aspects of their work, including social dialogue actions and collective bargaining, and promote better implementation of the [Beijing Platform for Action](#).

ETUCE and its Member Organisations commit to:

- Implementing and monitoring the implementation of the [ETUCE Action Plan on Gender Equality](#);
- Following the recommendations of the Council of Europe [Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism](#), working with governments and education authorities to review curricula, textbooks, teaching materials, administrative practices and leisure time activities at all levels of education, with the view to tackling gender stereotypes in education and career choices;

- Demanding the provision of sufficient and sustainable initial and continuous professional development and up-to-date teaching materials and tools for education personnel and school leaders, on gender equality, recognition of gender stereotypes, and organising gender-sensitive classrooms, teaching, and research;
- In order to combat horizontal segregation, campaigning to raise the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession, promoting the value and complexity of teaching in early childhood education and primary education and lobbying for the introduction of gender equality-oriented measures in VET, higher education and research;
- Providing training and mentoring for aspiring leaders, as well as promoting various structural and statutory measures and incentives to ensure the effective participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making in the education sector and within education trade unions;
- Strengthening the visibility of women in their union structure and working towards facilitating their participation at high-levels in their unions via various incentives, i.e. flexible working hours, adaptable time schedule of meetings, childcare facilities, etc;
- Promoting the implementation of the [EU Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers](#) and raising awareness about the interconnection between work-life balance arrangements and other gender equality issues (e.g. gender pay gap), and promoting working time models, which cater for education personnel at different stages of their lives, and job-sharing arrangement for headship roles;
- Demanding the provision of affordable and accessible public child and elderly care;
- Negotiating for the right to disconnect to be included in collective agreements;
- Addressing the gender pay gap in the teaching profession through collective bargaining, lobbying for higher salaries and better working conditions in the education sector, and for the creation of specific tools such as workplace equality plans;

- Lobbying for ratification and implementation of the [ILO Convention and Recommendation on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work](#), as well as the Council of Europe [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) in all countries in the European region;
- Working with governments and education authorities to address the treatment and prevention of various forms of gender-based violence, bullying and harassment in educational institutions (e.g. through legislation), as well as working towards recognising these issues in collective bargaining;
- Promoting the introduction of provisions on protecting teachers, academics and other education personnel from gender-based violence at the workplace and providing guidance and legal support for victims of gender-based violence.



6. Achieving equality for LGBTI students, teachers and education personnel to create safe, secure and inclusive learning environments for all

Challenges

- Policies, prejudices, bullying and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity against LGBTI students, teachers and education personnel persist inside and outside of school;
- In some European countries and regions, there is a lack of appropriate legal frameworks to protect the rights of LGBTI persons;
- Some schools do not respect LGBTI rights;
- In a number of European countries and regions, there exist challenges linked to giving classes on sexuality education and emotional well-being;
- Education institutions report insufficient awareness of LGBTI language and terminology;
- Parents and other actors oppose teaching about diversity concerning gender identities and sexual orientation;
- Teachers, academics and other education personnel are not comfortable about expressing their sexual orientation at work and fear discrimination given their LGBTI identity;
- Many education trade unions experience difficulties to open the debate on LGBTI issues;
- Some education trade unions do not have appropriate structures to address and progress LGBTI issues.

Strategy to address the issues

Education trade unions should reflect the diversity of society. They should also actively promote the positive inclusion of LGBTI students, teachers, academics and other education personnel within education institutions and society in general. They should also lead in condemning LGBTI prejudices, bullying and discrimination, promote and support measures to achieve LGBTI visibility and inclusion in the education system.

ETUCE and its Member Organisations commit to:

- Campaigning, lobbying and promoting increased knowledge on LGBTI non-discrimination and equality and raising awareness on existing stereotypes;
- Following the ETUCE-ETUC-ILGA [Joint Declaration to combat homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools, in workplaces and in society](#), raising awareness and combatting homophobic and transphobic bullying in education institutions, towards LGBTI students and teachers, academics and other educational personnel;
- Equipping teachers, academics and other education personnel with the skills to develop an LGBTI inclusive education and demanding that initial teacher training and continuous professional development raise awareness on LGBTI-friendly policies and inclusive education institutions;
- Calling for greater accountability of education employers to ensure a safe, secure and healthy working environment for LGBTI teachers, academics and other education personnel;
- Lobbying education authorities to include sexual diversity in national legislation and to apply it in education curricula;
- Contributing with other stakeholders to building a dialogue with those opposing teaching about diversity in gender identities and sexual orientations;
- Encouraging and supporting LGBTI teachers, academics and other education personnel to join and actively participate in union work.

7. Inclusion of students and education personnel with disabilities and special needs into the education system and labour market

Challenges

- Students with special needs and disabilities are taught in inadequate conditions;
- Teachers, academics, and other education personnel with special needs and disabilities are not provided with reasonable accommodation in their workplaces;
- Education systems experience a shortage of specialised teachers, academics, and other education personnel to cater for the needs of students with special needs and disabilities;
- Scarcity of public funds prevents the creation of inclusive learning and teaching environments for students and education personnel with special needs and disabilities;
- Big class/group sizes make it challenging to give students with special needs and disabilities the attention they require;
- Balancing the rights of all learners in an inclusive and rights respecting way is very challenging for education systems;
- Teachers, academics and other education personnel report inadequate initial and continuous professional development opportunities with regard to special needs education;
- Even though digital tools and ICT can be helpful tools to assist special needs education, privatisation and commercialisation of these tools can be dangerous for inclusive and equitable education when they are not used for the benefit of the learners and education personnel but for the profit of private companies;

- Families of persons with special needs and disabilities are not provided with sufficient and sustainable support.

Strategy to address the issues

In the light of the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), education trade unions recognise that in order to support inclusion of students and education personnel with special needs and disabilities in the education system, labour market and society, adequate public investments and training paths are needed. These should be agreed through social dialogue or collective bargaining. Furthermore, education trade unions have a vital role to promote a new positive approach regarding the concept of disability and special needs.

ETUCE and its Member Organisations commit to:

- Training their own officers to mainstream disability and special needs issues in negotiations with education employers in education, education authorities and governments;
- Gathering evidence on the impact that budget cuts have had on inclusive education for people with special needs and disabilities and using it to campaign for increased funding;
- Advocating to include this topic in social dialogue in education;
- Lobbying governments to ensure comprehensive initial and continuous teacher training on disability and special needs issues;
- Monitoring the impact of digital business and technological approaches on inclusive education;
- Lobbying for the introduction of legal provisions regarding class/group sizes (depending on number of students with special needs) and monitoring their implementation;

- Demanding adequate funding and infrastructure for the inclusion of students and education personnel with special needs and disabilities in the education system and labour market;
- Raising awareness on the crucial need for teachers qualified in special needs education as well as specialised support personnel in the classrooms.



ANNEXES

Glossary/Definition of terms

Inclusive education

Inclusive education aims to allow all learners to achieve their full potential by providing good quality education to all in mainstream settings with special attention to learners at risk of exclusion and underachievement by actively seeking to support them and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners, including through individualised approaches, targeted support and cooperation with the families and local communities.

Definition proposed by the European Commission's Education and Training 2020 Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination

Democratic citizenship education

"Education for democratic citizenship" means education, training, dissemination, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and moulding their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law.

Council of Europe, [Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#)

Equality vs Equity

In the context of societal systems, equality and equity refer to similar but slightly different concepts. Equality generally refers to equal opportunity and the same levels of support for all segments of society. Equity goes a step further and refers offering varying levels of support depending upon need to achieve greater fairness of outcomes.

[Diffen](#) Glossary

Mainstreaming a gender perspective

The process of assessing the gender implications of any planned action, including legislation, policies and/or programmes in order for women and men to benefit equally, and to achieve the goal of gender equality.

ETUCE, [Gender Equality Action Plan](#)

Gender vs Sex

Gender (for the purposes of this Action Plan) refers to the differences and commonalities between women and men which are set by convention and other social, economic, political and cultural forces. While "sex" refers to biological differences, the term "gender" focuses on roles, relations, power dynamics and inequalities that are socially created.

ETUCE, [Gender Equality Action Plan](#)

Migrant

An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common law understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students.

International Organisation for Migration, [Key Migration Terms](#)

Refugee

A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

[Convention relating to the Status of Refugees \(1951\) 189 UNTS 137](#)) Art. 1A(2)

Asylum seeker

An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every recognized refugee is initially an asylum seeker.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Master Glossary of Terms \(2006\)](#)

Ethnic minorities

The term 'ethnic minority' refers to both citizens (nationals) and non-citizens (non-nationals) who consider themselves as having, or are considered by others to have, identifiable group characteristics with respect to, for example, shared language, religion and cultural practices.

Fundamental Rights Agency, [EU-MIDIS European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey](#)

Indigenous people

Those who are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country or a geographical region to which the country belong, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status retain some or all of their own social, economic cultural and political institutions. Social, cultural and economic conditions of Indigenous Peoples distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and their status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations.

Education International, [Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 1995](#)

Fundamental values

The European Union's fundamental values are respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.

<https://europarlamenti.info/en/values-and-objectives/values/>

Sexuality education

Learning about the cognitive, emotional, social, interactive and physical aspects of sexuality. Sexuality education starts early in childhood and progresses through adolescence and adulthood. For children and young people, it aims at supporting and protecting sexual development. It gradually equips and empowers children and young people with information, skills and positive values to understand and enjoy their sexuality, have safe and fulfilling relationships and take responsibility for their own and other people's sexual health and well-being.

World Health Organisation, [Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe, 2010](#)

LGBTI

Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people. This is the acronym that [Education International](#) and ETUCE use to reflect our advocacy priorities; our members may use different formulations to more accurately describe their own work, for example LGBT+, LGBTQI, etc.

Special educational needs (including gifted students)

Despite the universally accepted importance of supporting students with special educational needs, there is no common agreement in Europe of what constitutes special needs in education. UNESCO defines students with special educational needs as students whose learning difficulties hinder their ability to benefit from the general education system without support or accommodation to their needs.

UNESCO, [International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011](#)

Many countries also include the concept of 'gifted students' in the definition, while the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - in its [Recommendation 1248 \(1994\)](#) - declared that gifted students are a group with special needs. Various national definitions can be found in [Eurydice report 'Specific Educational Measures to Promote all Forms of Giftedness at School in Europe'](#) (2006).

Disability

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

[UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006](#)

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is defined as the understanding that people's identities and social positions are uniquely shaped by several factors at the same time, creating unique experiences and perspectives. These factors include, among others race, sexuality, gender identity, disability, age, class, nationality, and faith.

[UN Women](#)

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