



TUTOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The educational landscape in Europe is undergoing profound transformation, driven by **socio-economic shifts, technological change, and growing cultural diversity**. Migration, mobility, and demographic transition are enriching classrooms with new perspectives and experiences, while also creating complex pedagogical challenges that require **locally grounded solutions**. These challenges are compounded by **structural inequalities** and **systemic discrimination**, which continue to restrict opportunities for learners from marginalised groups including migrants, ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ learners, students with disabilities, and those from communities experiencing socio-economic inequalities (European Commission, EACEA and Eurydice, 2023; OECD, 2020).

Educational disadvantage often results from **overlapping factors** such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, socio-economic status, and disability. When these intersect with structural inequities embedded in specific contexts, they shape learners' experiences and outcomes in complex ways. Recognising this **intersectional reality** is essential for designing teacher education and policy frameworks that respond to the full diversity of learners' needs. Teachers—particularly in secondary education and vocational education and training play a **pivotal role** in recognising and responding to these inequities in the classroom and in contributing to broader institutional change. However, many educators across Europe report lacking the **skills, confidence, and institutional support** to create inclusive learning environments. Inclusive education principles remain unevenly embedded in initial teacher education and continuous professional development across Member States (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education et al., 2021; TUTOR Project, 2023). These challenges are further intensified **by workload pressures, staff shortages, and limited access to training**.

The TUTOR project responds to these needs by providing practical, evidence-based recommendations to strengthen teacher education and continuous professional development. Its aim is to ensure that educators are equipped to identify and address inequities in their classrooms, contribute to inclusive institutional practices, and engage in wider reforms tackling systemic barriers. By investing in teachers as **skilled, confident, and valued professionals**, Europe can advance an education system that reflects its diversity, and supports the success and well-being of all learners.

Rationale: Why Action is Needed

Teachers are the **cornerstone** of Europe's education systems, shaping not only learners' academic outcomes but also their social and civic development (Liston, Borko, & Whitcomb, 2008; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Yet their capacity to foster inclusive learning environments depends on the **policy, institutional, and resource frameworks** within which they work. Across Member States, persistent gaps in preparation, support, and recognition continue to limit progress toward inclusive education.

Limited preparedness: Many teachers, particularly in secondary and vocational education and training, report **feeling underprepared** to address the diverse needs of today's classrooms. Principles of inclusive education remain **inconsistently embedded** in both initial teacher education and continuing professional development. While some countries have integrated inclusive and diversity-responsive pedagogy into national strategies, others **lack coherent frameworks**, qualified trainers, or sustained funding to ensure equitable access to high-quality professional learning (EASNIE, 2021; TUTOR Project, 2023).

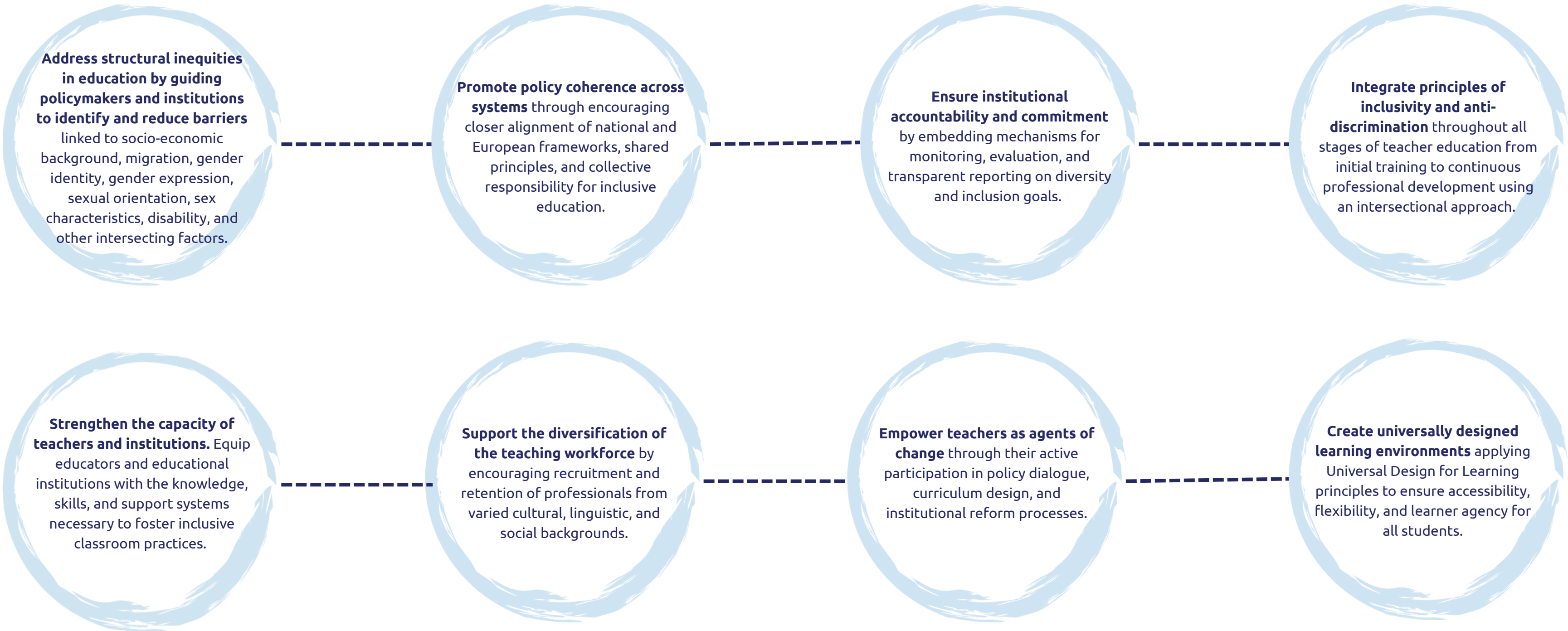


Low professional recognition: The OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2020) shows that fewer than one in five lower-secondary teachers in the EU feel their profession is **valued by society**. Low status, coupled with inadequate resources and fragmented policy coordination, weakens motivation, retention, and engagement in continuous professional learning.

These challenges persist despite strong **EU-level commitments** to inclusive and high-quality education, such as the Council Resolution on the European Education Area (2019), the Council Conclusions on European Teachers and Trainers for the Future (2020), and the European Commission's Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025. Achieving inclusive education requires **aligning these commitments with concrete action** on teacher education, institutional culture, and systemic reform.

Objectives

This set of policy recommendations responds to **persistent** and **emerging challenges** in teacher education and inclusive schooling across Europe. Its overarching goal is to support the transformation of teacher education systems and school environments into inclusive, future-oriented spaces that are responsive to social complexity.



Methodology

The TUTOR policy recommendations were developed through a **structured, evidence-based** process that combined **research, consultation, and expert validation** across partner countries. The methodology ensured that the resulting proposals are grounded in both **empirical evidence and classroom realities**. The process began with a transnational literature review mapping national and EU policy frameworks, research findings, and existing teacher education practices related to inclusive education.

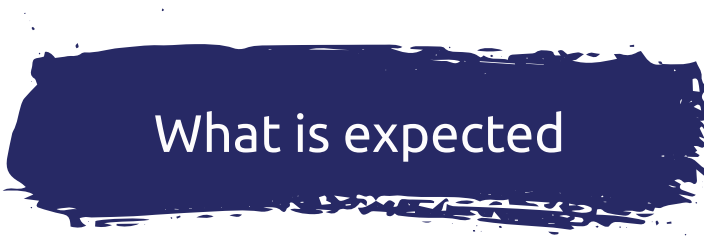
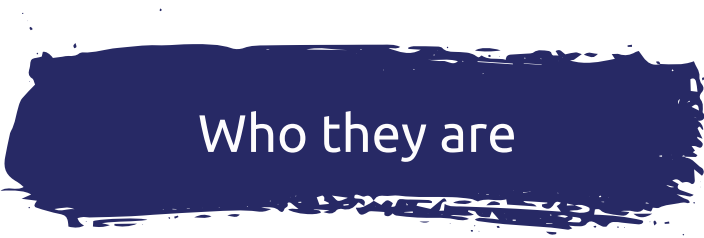
This review identified systemic gaps, challenges, and opportunities for reform. Between December 2022 and January 2023, open consultations were conducted in **Greece, Austria, Turkey, and Ireland** with teachers from secondary education, VET, and further education and training, alongside key educational stakeholders. These sessions, involving **64 participants**, explored understandings of **inclusion, intersectionality, diversity, and teacher training needs**.

Throughout 2023, the consortium assessed teachers' **skills, attitudes, and needs** regarding inclusive education in **Turkey, Belgium, Ireland, Greece, and Austria**. Using **mixed methods**, including over **500 survey responses, 100 interviews, and five focus groups**. The research provided a comparative picture of teachers' preparedness, confidence, and institutional support systems. The first draft of the recommendations was derived from these findings and subsequently reviewed by the **TUTOR Advisory Group**, composed of **five experts in inclusive education**.

The final recommendations reflect an iterative process of analysis, stakeholder consultation, and expert validation, ensuring that they are not only evidence-driven but also feasible, contextually relevant, and aligned with current European education priorities.

Who These Recommendations Are For

The TUTOR policy recommendations are addressed to the key actors responsible for shaping, implementing, and supporting inclusive education across Europe. Their engagement is essential to ensure that inclusive principles are embedded in teacher education systems and translated into practice.



1. Policy and Decision-Makers

Ministries of Education, Regional Education Authorities, and EU-level institutions such as the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education; and the Council of the EU in its Education, Youth, Culture and Sport configuration.

Integrate inclusion and intersectionality into national teacher education frameworks, **ensure sustainable funding** for implementation, and **establish transparent systems for monitoring and evaluation**. Promote alignment with European priorities under the European Education Area and with current and future EU funding instruments for education and training, including Erasmus+, ESF+, and programmes under future MFF.

2. Educational and Training Providers

Universities, teacher education colleges, VET and secondary schools, and other institutions delivering initial and continuing teacher training.

Embed diversity and inclusion across curricula, strengthen institutional cultures of **reflection and peer learning**, and ensure that professional development opportunities are accessible to all educators. Provide feedback to policymakers based on practice-level evidence and innovation.

3. Teachers and Professional Associations

Educators in secondary and vocational education, together with their representative bodies such as AEDE, ATEE, ETEN, and EuroClio.

Engage in continuous professional development, share inclusive practices, and participate in **policy and curriculum discussions** to ensure that reforms reflect classroom realities.

4. Civil Society and Advocacy Organisations

NGOs, community groups, and advocacy networks working on inclusive education, disability rights, migrant and refugee education, gender equality, and socio-economic inclusion such as the LLLPlatform, EASPD, EDF, ENAR, ILGA and ETUCE.

Partner with policymakers and institutions to **raise awareness, monitor progress**, and ensure that reforms address the needs of all learners. Contribute to **capacity-building and knowledge exchange** at local and European levels.

5. Learners and Student Organisations

Secondary, VET, and FET students, along with their representative bodies such as the European Students’ Union like OBESSU and national student councils.

Participate in shaping inclusive learning environments through feedback, co-design of school policies, and **engagement in a public dialogue** on learners' well-being. Student voices should inform **institutional practices**, ensuring that inclusion efforts reflect lived experiences and diverse perspectives.

Policy Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Embed an Intersectional Perspective in Inclusive Education Policies at both EU and National Levels

EU institutions and national authorities must guarantee that education policy frameworks explicitly address the ways in which **multiple forms of structural inequality** such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and xenophobia interact to shape learners' experiences and opportunities. This requires recognising that race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, socio-economic status, migration background, and disability **intersect within specific social and institutional contexts**. Treating these inequalities separately leads to fragmented policies that overlook the complexity of learners' lives (TUTOR, 2023), while evidence shows that **intersectional approaches** strengthen inclusion (OECD, 2023).

Intersectionality provides a lens to understand how inequalities manifest differently across contexts and should guide the development of **targeted measures** that respond to the diverse identities and needs within specific groups, **without homogenising them**. Policy design must therefore combine intersectional analysis with group-specific and context-sensitive strategies. Intersectionality should be embedded **in curriculum reform, teacher education, and school evaluation systems**. At EU level, the Commission should fund pilot projects, facilitate **mutual learning** among Member States, and include **intersectional indicators** within European Education Area data collection to monitor equity, teacher preparedness, and learner outcomes.

Recommendation 2

Mainstream Inclusive Education and Diversity Throughout Teacher Education and Professional Development

In many Member States, **inclusive education remains peripheral** to teacher preparation, leaving educators under-equipped to manage diverse classrooms. **Inclusion and diversity should become mandatory and integrated** throughout both initial teacher education and continuous professional development. Teacher education curricula should develop **practical competencies** such as **bias recognition, differentiated instruction, trauma-informed and restorative pedagogy, and Universal Design for Learning**. These must be supported by adequate time, mentoring, and institutional backing.

To ensure quality and comparability, the European Commission should **promote common benchmarks** and support innovative models through **current and future EU funding and initiatives related to teacher education and professional development**, including Erasmus+ Teacher Academies, Horizon Europe, and programmes developed under future **Multiannual Financial Frameworks**. This should encourage **transnational cooperation and peer learning** across Member States.

Recommendation 3

Involve Teachers in the Design and Assessment of Inclusive Education Professional Development Programs, European Policy Frameworks, and School Strategies

Teachers' **practical expertise is critical** to effective policy and professional development, yet they are often **excluded from decision-making**. This results in training and policies that are overly generic and disconnected from **classroom realities, local challenges, and cultural contexts**. National and regional authorities should establish **sustained mechanisms** such as advisory councils or participatory platforms that **involve teachers in the design, implementation, and evaluation** of inclusive education strategies. While **teachers must play a central role**, the development of effective inclusion policies also requires **the engagement of other key stakeholders**, including **school leadership, learners, and civil society organisations** representing diverse communities. Their participation ensures that reforms reflect lived experiences, institutional contexts, and the needs of all learners.

At EU level, **teachers' representative organisations** should be systematically consulted in working groups and policy dialogues on education and training. **Embedding teacher voice at every stage** will increase policy relevance, strengthen ownership, and align reforms with **classroom realities**.

Recommendation 4

Strengthen LGBTQI+ Inclusion, Training, and Legal Protections

LGBTQI+ learners and staff continue to face **high levels of bullying, discrimination, and exclusion**, often compounded by the **lack of explicit legal protections** in several European countries (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024b; UNESCO, 2021). This is worsened by the **absence of inclusive representation in curricula**, the **inconsistent preparation of education staff to address bias**, and, in many countries, the **lack of explicit legal protections on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)**. Where protections exist, weak enforcement leaves students and staff vulnerable, especially when discrimination intersects with other inequalities.

National authorities should ensure **comprehensive and enforceable legal protection** against discrimination and harassment on all SOGIESC grounds, supported by **binding school-level procedures and accountability mechanisms**. **Inclusive representation** of LGBTQI+ people, histories, and contributions should be integrated across subjects, and periodic, scenario-based teacher training made compulsory. At EU level, the Commission should promote **peer learning, strengthen monitoring, and issue data-informed guidance** to harmonise **rights-based, inclusive education practices** across Member States.

Recommendation 5

Support Students from Migrant Backgrounds Through Targeted Measures

Students from migrant backgrounds face **intersecting barriers** including **language gaps, legal insecurity, trauma, and displacement**. These challenges contribute to **early school leaving rates more than twice those of native-born peers** (Sani, 2023) and lower levels of belonging (UNESCO, 2018). Many schools **lack consistent access to language tutoring, mental health services, interpreters, and cultural mediation**, while teachers often receive only generic diversity training that does not address migration-specific needs. The burden of equity work frequently falls disproportionately on racialised staff (Worth, 2022; Keles, 2025).

National and local authorities should ensure **consistent access to language support, cultural mediation, and mental-health services**, while teacher education should include training **on intercultural communication, language-sensitive teaching, and trauma-informed care**. Partnerships with migrant-led organisations can ensure relevance and authenticity. At EU level, **intercultural capacity-building, data collection, and common inclusion indicators** should be prioritised within education cooperation frameworks.

Recommendation 6

Advance Equity for Learners Affected by Socio-Economic Inequalities

Students from communities that have historically faced or are currently **experiencing socio-economic inequalities** often encounter **barriers to educational participation**, including **housing instability, food insecurity, and limited access to learning resources and digital tools**. These barriers often **intersect with migration, disability, rural isolation, or minority status**, widening inequalities (Suraci et al., 2022; UNICEF, 2023). The **digital divide encompasses both technical access gaps and deficits in digital skills**, increasing risks of absenteeism and early school leaving.

National authorities should implement **integrated, school-based support** combining **material assistance, tutoring, mentoring, meals, transport subsidies, and digital inclusion measures**. Teachers should be trained to identify socio-economic barriers early, linking families to available supports.

Recommendation 7

Improve Structural Conditions and Professional Recognition for Teachers

Inclusive education can only be sustained where teachers work under **fair and enabling conditions**. **Overcrowded classrooms, heavy workloads, precarious working conditions and shortages of qualified staff** undermine teachers' capacity to innovate and personalise learning. These pressures are often most severe in **rural and economically deprived areas**, where **access to learning support assistants, language specialists, and psychologists is scarce**.

National authorities should adopt **staffing policies that cap class sizes, ensure access to specialist professionals** (such as counsellors, language assistants, and psychologists), and **embed collaborative planning time** within working hours. **Improving salaries, career pathways, and professional recognition** will help retain motivated educators and support a culture of **reflective, inclusive practice**.

Recommendation 8

Promote Diversity within Teaching Workforce across Europe

A **diverse teaching profession** enriches educational environments and provides **role models for all students**. However, Europe's teaching profession remains predominantly **white, middle-class, and female, with limited representation of migrant, racialised, and ethnic minority groups**—including **Roma communities and persons with disabilities**. **Teachers under 30 make up less than 15% of the workforce in most OECD countries**, limiting generational renewal and innovation. This lack of diversity can limit students' exposure to role models with shared cultural or life experiences and **reduce the range of perspectives in teaching practice**.

National and regional authorities should **expand access to teaching careers for underrepresented groups** through **flexible entry routes, recognition of international qualifications, targeted anti-discrimination measures**, and structured support such as mentorship and career development. **Inclusive hiring and promotion practices** should be embedded in school governance to ensure diversity is both **achieved and sustained**.

Recommendation 9
Establish Robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability Mechanisms

The success of inclusive education policies depends on the ability to **measure and sustain progress**. National and EU-level authorities should introduce **transparent systems for monitoring inclusion, teacher education outcomes, and learner equity**, using **disaggregated data** to identify persistent gaps. **Indicators** should cover both **quantitative measures** (e.g., training participation, representation rates, attainment outcomes) and **qualitative feedback** from teachers and learners.

Regular public reporting and **peer review under the European Education Area** can strengthen **accountability, support evidence-based policy adjustments, and promote continuous** improvement.

Recommendation 10
Strengthen Collaboration and Whole-Community Approaches

Inclusive education extends beyond the classroom and requires **coordinated action across sectors**. **Governments, schools, school leaders, teachers, families, students, and the wider community** should collaborate with **non-formal education providers, health and social services, and local authorities** to address the **multiple dimensions of learner well-being**. **Civil society organisations and grassroots groups** bring crucial expertise on disability rights, migrant inclusion, gender equality, and anti-discrimination.

Their participation alongside that of **school communities and service providers** should be systematically supported through **consultation frameworks, structured partnerships, and joint initiatives**. **Whole-community approaches, grounded in multi-stakeholder engagement**, promote shared responsibility, cohesion, and sustainable outcomes for all learners.

Glossary

AEDE	Association Européenne des Enseignants – a European network of teachers promoting citizenship and democracy education.
Anti-discrimination measures	Policies or practices designed to prevent unequal treatment based on protected characteristics such as race, gender identity, disability, migration background, or sexual orientation.
ATEN / ETEN	European Teacher Education Network – a professional network that supports research, exchange, and innovation in teacher education.
Bias Recognition	The ability of educators to identify, reflect on, and address conscious and unconscious biases affecting teaching practice and learner experiences.
Cultural Mediation / Cultural Mediators	Professionals who support communication and understanding between schools and learners/families from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds.
Council of the EU (Education, Youth, Culture and Sport configuration – EYCS)	EU institution where ministers from Member States adopt policies and conclusions related to education and training.
CSOs (Civil Society Organisations)	Non-profit organisations working to advance social, educational, human rights, or community interests.
Differentiated Instruction	A pedagogical approach that adapts content, process, and assessment to meet diverse student learning needs.
DG EAC	European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture – responsible for EU policy and funding in education and training.
Disaggregated Data	Data broken down by categories such as gender, socio-economic background, disability, migration status, ethnicity, or SOGIESC characteristics to identify inequalities.
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency – manages EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and oversees project implementation and evaluation.

Glossary

EASPD	European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities – advocates for inclusive education and disability rights.
EASNIE (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education)	An agency supporting inclusive education systems and policy development in Europe.
EDF (European Disability Forum)	Umbrella organisation advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities across Europe.
ENAR (European Network Against Racism)	EU-wide network combating structural racism and promoting racial equality.
Erasmus+	EU programme supporting education, training, youth and sport through mobility, cooperation, and professional development.
Erasmus+ Teacher Academies	EU-funded partnerships promoting innovation and cooperation in initial teacher education and continuous professional development.
ESF+ (European Social Fund Plus)	EU funding instrument supporting employment, education, social inclusion, and skills development.
EuroClio	European Association of History Educators – promotes inclusive, responsible history teaching.
European Education Area (EEA)	EU initiative aimed at enabling high-quality, inclusive, and digital education across Europe through cooperation, mobility, and mutual learning.
EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)	Provides evidence and advice on fundamental rights issues, including discrimination and hate-motivated violence.
FET (Further Education and Training)	Post-secondary, non-higher education programmes focused on vocational and practical skills.

Glossary

Horizon Europe	EU's research and innovation funding programme.
ILGA-Europe	European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association – advocates for LGBTQI+ equality.
Inclusive Hiring and Promotion Practices	Procedures ensuring non-discrimination and equal opportunities for candidates from diverse backgrounds in recruitment and career progression.
Intersectionality	A feminist analytical and policy framework recognising that individuals experience overlapping and mutually reinforcing forms of discrimination and inequality (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, classism), which are shaped by context, power structures, and social institutions. Intersectionality highlights how these interconnected factors influence people's opportunities, experiences, and outcomes, and informs policies that address inequalities in a holistic, non-fragmented way.
Language-Sensitive Teaching	Pedagogical approaches that account for students' linguistic backgrounds and support learning through language scaffolding.
Language-Sensitive Teaching	School staff who assist students with additional learning needs to promote inclusion and accessibility.
LLLPlatform (Lifelong Learning Platform)	European civil society organisation advocating for quality and inclusive lifelong learning systems.
MFF (Multiannual Financial Framework)	EU's seven-year budget plan guiding funding priorities and instruments.
Migrants / Students from Migrant Backgrounds	Learners who have migrated or whose parents have migrated, including refugees, asylum seekers, newcomers, and second-generation migrants.
Multi-Stakeholder Engagement	Coordinated involvement of teachers, students, families, school leaders, CSOs, and public authorities in policy design and implementation.
Non-Formal Education Providers	Organisations offering educational activities outside formal school systems (e.g., youth organisations, community centres).

Glossary

OBESSU	Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions – represents secondary school students at European level.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – provides comparative data and policy research on education systems.
Racialised Communities / Racialised Staff	Groups who are socially constructed as "racial" categories and experience systemic inequalities based on those perceptions.
Restorative Pedagogy	Approaches centred on relationship-building, conflict resolution, and repairing harm within school communities.
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics – umbrella term for grounds of discrimination and legal protection.
Trauma-Informed Pedagogy	Teaching methods that recognise the impact of trauma on learning and behaviour and promote safe, supportive environments.
UDL (Universal Design for Learning)	Framework guiding curriculum and teaching design to ensure accessibility and flexibility for all learners.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – provides global research and guidance on education.
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund – supports children’s rights and welfare, including education access.
VET (Vocational Education and Training)	Education and training programmes that prepare learners for trades, crafts, or specific careers.
Whole-Community Approach	An approach that involves all actors—schools, families, learners, community organisations, and public services—in building inclusive, supportive educational environments.

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