



Realising the Rights of Migrants and Refugees

The refugee and displaced persons emergency prompted Education International (EI) to outline proactive initiatives that EI and education unions can undertake to protect and promote the rights of refugee and migrant children, teachers and education support personnel.

Recently, the eruption of wars at the border of Europe led to major exodus, driven by human rights abuses and repressive regimes. In transit and destination countries, the living conditions of refugees are often inadequate. Overly restrictive policies, walls and fences and militarised solutions fail to respond to the real challenges faced by human beings. Many displaced children are denied access to even the most basic levels of education. They are disproportionately at risk of child labour, sexual exploitation and violence. Adult refugees are denied fundamental rights and lack opportunities for language, education and employment training.

If, in many countries, citizens and civil society organisations have coordinated to welcome refugees, their arrival has also led to high levels of public anxiety. Austerity and financial strains, concerns over national security and cultural assimilation fuelled by hostile mass media have bolstered far-right anti-immigrant parties. Inflammatory and dehumanising language about migration and refugees is now increasingly mainstreamed.

EI firmly believes that the right to education is key to the realisation of the full spectrum of human rights and the attainment of social justice worldwide. Education is a

fundamental human right that should be accessible to all people including those displaced by conflict or disasters. EI and teacher organisations therefore hold public authorities accountable for ensuring the right to education for migrant, displaced, refugee and stateless children, youth and adults. EI and teacher organisations also promote the rights of migrant and refugee teachers, researchers and other education personnel, including the right to teach without discrimination.

The three objectives of the EI comprehensive response are:

- **Advocate for the right to education for all migrant and refugee children, youth and adults**
- **Defend and promote the right to teach of migrant and refugee teachers, academics, researchers and education support personnel**
- **Promote education that respects diversity for open, democratic, multicultural and inclusive societies**



Objectives and Action Points

Advocate for the right to education for all migrant and refugee children, youth and adults

- 1.1 Education unions contribute to awareness raising among their membership and education communities about the right-based, equality of opportunities and solidarity values promoted by Education International (EI);
- 1.2 EI and education unions continue to advocate for adequate and sustainable funding of quality public education. The funding should be used to secure access to education through increasing the capacity of schools and strengthening the training and status of teachers;
- 1.3 EI and education unions advocate for national governments and international institutions to devote financial assistance for the education of displaced persons, especially in States having a border with a country in conflict and welcoming a large number of them. However, this financial assistance should not reduce existing commitments to development aid for education;
- 1.4 Education unions monitor policies and practices of authorities in host countries aiming to provide equal access to quality education to all and advocate for the rule of law and precedence of international human rights standards;
- 1.5 EI and education unions continue to encourage the ratification and implementation of international instruments that pertain to the right to education and standards that are relevant for displaced persons, refugees and migrants;
- 1.6 Education unions promote a flexible registration and certification system to swiftly enrol children in the school system;
- 1.7 Education unions advocate for pre-service and in-service teacher training with knowledge and skills to provide appropriate attention for students from different backgrounds, skills and learning experience; and
- 1.8 EI provides a platform for education unions to share school-based initiatives for teachers and personnel to fulfil the right to education for migrant and refugee children and adults.

Defend and promote the rights of migrant and refugee teachers, academics/researchers and education support personnel and their families

- 2.1 EI continues to update and give visibility to the Migrantteachersrights.org web portal which is a practical tool to share information, exchange experiences and good union practices;
- 2.2 EI and education unions continue to encourage the ratification and implementation of international instruments guaranteeing labour and union rights and fair recruitment and employment practices for all workers irrespective of their origin and/or migration status;
- 2.3 EI and education unions safeguard the human and trade union rights of persons, whatever their status, particularly those who are teachers, education support personnel, researchers, students or education unionists;
- 2.4 EI and education unions advocate for the recognition of migrant and refugee teachers' qualifications and experience in their host country and pathways/ training programmes to access to qualified teacher status;
- 2.5 Education unions provide services and information about qualifications, legal support and labour rights to migrant and refugee teachers, academics/researchers and education support personnel; and
- 2.6 Education unions encourage the union affiliation of migrant and refugee educators.

Promote education for open, democratic, multicultural and inclusive societies that respect diversity and prevent all forms of discrimination in education, unions and society

- 3.1 EI creates a repository of materials and resources from member organizations and partners on practices supporting inclusive education, human rights and global citizenship education at national, regional and school level;
- 3.2 EI holds periodic events for sharing and evaluating which educational interventions are having the greatest positive impact on tolerance, inclusion and equality;
- 3.3 Education unions condemn and deter any form of discrimination and impunity for crimes motivated by populists, racist and xenophobic attitudes that take place in educational settings and society at large;
- 3.4 EI marks relevant international days (International Migrants Day [18 December]; World Refugees Day [20 June]; International Day of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [21 March], etc.) at global, national, local and school level.

Allies and Resources

In order to expand its work on international migration and cover asylum-seekers and refugees' issues, EI plans to build upon and further develop existing resources and initiatives. In order to maximise the impact of its work, EI is going to:

Mobilise:

- Affiliates working on teacher and student migration and related issues, such as past members of the EI Task Force
- Affiliates engaged on issues related to asylum-seekers, internally displaced and refugees
- Affiliates who have expressed interest through their response to the EI surveys in cooperating with EI
- EI (sub)regional offices

Intensify its partnership and engagement with:

- Council of Global Unions
- ILO
- UNHCR – Education Sector
- INEE
- ECOSOC
- UNESCO
- UNICEF
- OECD
- The Commonwealth
- Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)
- Amnesty International Human rights Friendly Schools Programme

Mobilise additional resources through fundraising activities:

- Member organizations
- Open Society Foundations (OSF)
- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)
- Other partners

Constraints

In most cases, the lobbying activities of education unions in the field of international migration is made difficult by the absence of a comprehensive national legislative framework in this domain. Related international instruments (The UN Migrant Convention and ILO Conventions 97 and 143 in particular) have been poorly ratified. Even where these have been ratified, implementation remains a challenge. Furthermore, effective national formal social dialogue on labour and migration remains rare.

While the current economic, political and environmental crises forcing people to flee to seek a better future are unlikely to diminish, expressions of intolerance, racism and xenophobia are increasing in many destination and transit countries. In some countries, these manifestations of hostility towards migrants and refugees might affect governments' willingness to collaborate with unions and ensure a right-based appropriate response.

While some teacher organisations are very active in the field of migration and work with grassroots groups and diasporas, many unions lack appropriate knowledge and policies to develop their activities in that area. However, many of them have shown interest in building their capacity in the defence of the human rights of refugee children and adults.



Comprehensive Response

As a federation of education unions representing 32.5 million educators and support professionals in education institutions from early childhood to university in 171 countries, Education International is well placed to help teachers, education institutions and education actors to promote the right to quality education for the children, youth and adults fleeing conflicts.

The 2016 EI action plans focuses on the following components:

- **Capacity building**
- **Research**
- **Communication**

Capacity building activities: A thorough survey will identify education unions that are already active and those interested in developing their work in the field of international migration and rights of refugees. A needs assessment will lead to national action plans, since “one size does not fit all”.

Campaigns will be targeted and tailored to take into account the unique situations and contexts. Local, national and sub-regional activities can be supported, according to the needs and gaps identified by each union, benefitting from the expertise available in others. Areas for peer learning may include:

- **Adopting union policies to defend and promote the rights and integration of migrant and refugee teachers and their families;**
- **Tracking of national/local institutional education policies and practices aiming to provide equal access to education to migrant and refugee children and youth;**
- **Assessing the respect of the rule of law and enforcement of international standards related to the rights of refugee children and educators;**
- **Advocating for education funding;**
- **Organising migrant/refugee teacher families and providing them with short term services and advice;**
- **Facilitating the integration of newcomer families within the school communities;**
- **Advocating for the registration of undocumented children and youth;**
- **Promoting induction and accelerated learning programmes for refugee children’s parents or caretakers;**

- **Supporting local teachers through training and professional development to better understand traumas related to war and displacement, multicultural backgrounds, different education levels, different age groups etc.**
- **Collecting specific teaching resources and curricula (family induction programmes);**
- **Disseminating strategies for facilitating acceptance by locals and integration in host communities;**
- **Advocating for framework to facilitate the recognition/transferability of foreign qualification and experience of migrant and refugee educators;**
- **Campaigning for guidelines and protocols on anti-bullying and anti-racism policies in education institutions to protect migrant and refugee students and teachers.**
- **Challenging hostility, stereotyping and social categorisation in the school environment and public discourse.**

Research: national or local case studies will be systematised in order to collect findings, identify the main themes and challenges to local contexts. A toolkit will be developed on concrete issues, lessons learnt, successful education union experiences, policy briefings and analytical frameworks to support member organisations in their advocacy;

Communication: the project and the outcomes will be related on the EI website and MigrantTeachersrights.org. The portal will be expanded to include information and resources concerning refugee educators and children. Specific education resources, such as checklists and country profiles, will be added. Material and information aiming to support education unions’ work with migrants and refugees will also be included: success stories, best practices, a toolkit of teaching resources developed by education unions worldwide, etc. Refugee and migrant positive stories in and through education will be promoted to highlight the economic and cultural benefits brought to host countries.

A mailing list will be established to share regular updates regarding activities implemented and to coordinate international, regional and national activities around important dates.



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More on the EI Refugees and Migrants Rights strategy

EI 2015 World Congress resolution
[Migration, professional diversity and racism](#) and [The right to education for displaced people, refugee and stateless children](#)

[EI Human and Trade Union Rights Policy Paper](#)
[MigrantTeachersRights portal](#)

[The EI websection](#)