**EMBRACING
DIVERSITY
IN EDUCATION**

REPORT

ONLINE SEMINAR

18 JANUARY 2021

CSEE
ETUCE

INTRODUCTION

The Seminar of the ETUCE Project "Education Trade Unions and Inclusive Schools: Embracing Diversity in Education" took place online on 18 January 2021.

Europe's learners and education personnel are becoming increasingly more diverse. Their different social realities and cultural backgrounds require inclusive and safe physical and social environments for learning and teaching. However, ETUCE research shows that teachers and other education personnel do not feel prepared and supported to teach students from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In this context, the ETUCE project "Education Trade Unions and Inclusive Schools: Embracing Diversity in Education" aims at building the capacity of education trade unions in order to prepare their affiliates to address the socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and other types of diversity in education institutions as well as in society. It also seeks to support education trade unions in implementing inclusive learning environments that enable every student and teacher to achieve their full potential. Following this Seminar, three consequent **training webinars** are to take place in spring 2021 to provides teachers and education personnel with the training they need to implement inclusive education. The webinars in three languages (English, French and Russian) are to be recorded and disseminated online as training material. Besides, the good practices collected all along the project will be published in a **Catalogue of Good Practices on building and maintaining sustainable inclusive learning environments in various national and local contexts** and disseminated on a USB stick and integrated into the existing ETUCE Online Database of Good Practices,'. A series of ongoing **coordinated European and national raising-awareness actions** are to celebrate key occasions on equality and inclusion (3rd December 2020 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities; 18th December 2020 - International Migrants Day; 8th March 2021 - International Women's Day; 17th May 2021 - International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia; 5th October 2021 - World Teacher's Day). These actions, targeted to education authorities and wider society, are to raise awareness about the professional needs of teachers, academics and other education personnel when it comes to addressing diversity in the classroom and society. The **closing project conference** on World Teachers' Day 2021 aims to discuss the results of the project activities and validate a concrete and practical Strategy for the Implementation of the ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion that can be transferred and adapted to the national and local context.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

1. **Provide education trade unions with concrete tools and practices** to support their affiliates in implementing inclusive education.

2. **Raise awareness on the lack of funding and supportive policy frameworks** for inclusive education in Europe and foster the discussion on inclusion and diversity at national and European level in the education sector.

3. **identify the main challenges** that teachers, academics and other education personnel face in implementing inclusive education in classroom.

4. **Disseminate successful good practices** of creating and maintaining sustainable inclusive learning environments.

5. Develop a concrete and practical strategy for the **implementation of the ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**.

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

The project is led by an Advisory Group who provides guidance and field knowledge, assists in the design of the online survey activity, contributes to the project seminar, training webinars and the closing conference as well as supports the implementation of the raising-awareness actions '*Every Learner Matters, Every Teacher Matters*'. The Advisory Group consists of six representatives from national education trade unions for each level of education:

Alison Gilliland, *INTO Ireland*

Alexandra Cornea, *FSLI Romania*

Igor Radeka, *IURHEEC Croatia*

Lyhykäinen Päivi, *OAJ Finland*

Manos Androulakis, *DOE Greece*

Conceiçao Nunes, *SINDEP Portugal*

OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR

Following up on the ETUCE Work Programme 2020-2024, ETUCE reinforces its longstanding commitment to promoting inclusion and diversity in education. As highlighted by the **European Director, Susan Flocken**, in the opening of the Seminar, our society is becoming increasingly more diverse, and this evolution is also reflected in school reality at all levels of education. At the same time, we are also witnessing an increasing polarisation and signs of radicalisation, such as far-right nationalist and populist discourses that challenge the fundamental values of our democracy. Additionally, in 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic inflicted severe repercussions, especially on those who were already vulnerable, marginalised or at risk of exclusion. Switching to the emergency remote and online teaching and learning during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the school community and aggravate inequalities. On this ground, with the Resolution Campaigning to enhance the Teaching Profession for Solidarity, Democracy, Equality and Sustainability (2020) adopted at the ETUCE Conference 2020, ETUCE commits to strengthening its work on inclusion and building the capacity of education trade unions and their affiliates to implement inclusive education in teaching and learning environments.

SEMINAR OBJECTIVES:

1. To discuss the outcomes of the online survey and enrich the research report with specific country cases.

2. To showcase and share good practices on creating and maintaining sustainable inclusive learning and teaching environments.

3. To collect ideas and proposals for the implementation of the ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (to be adopted at the extraordinary ETUCE Conference in July 2021) that can be transferred and adapted to the national and local context.

RESEACH REPORT INSIGHTS

Project research expert, **Dominique Danau**, gave an overview of the **project research report** (EN, FR, RU) based on the results of the online survey that was carried out among ETUCE member organisations in spring-summer 2020. 47,2% of ETUCE member unions participated in the survey representing 75% of countries in which ETUCE has members.

Insights from the presentation of the research findings by the project research expert, Dominique Danau

Despite the concept of inclusion being mostly consistent with the international and European framework, the research report shows that the increasing diversity in European societies represents both challenges and opportunities for the implementation of inclusive education. Other factors such as digitalisation, rising inequalities, marketisation and privatisation of education, the rise of far-right discourse, growing individualism and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic also have an impact on the implementation of inclusive education in Europe. (**Fact-sheet 'the many facets of diversity in education'** EN, FR, RU)

Concerning teachers, in addition to a lack of diversity in the teacher workforce, the research highlights a shortage of specialised teachers, supporting staff and mechanisms to identify the needs of learners. Teachers and other education personnel participating in the ETUCE survey highlight the urgent need to receive **initial training and continuous professional development** to deliver more inclusive support for students with special needs, address the needs of migrants and refugees, and manage disruptive behaviours to create safe and healthy learning environments.

CHALLENGES AFFECTING INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	120%
Technological progress and digitalisation. (n = 55)						**96%**	
Under-resourcing of public education. (n = 55)						**91%**	
Rising inequalities in living standards. (n = 56)						**89%**	
Cyber security and data protection. (n = 56)						**88%**	
Continuous increasing workload (n = 56)						**86%**	
Social and cultural diversity. (n = 55)						**84%**	
Violence and harassment (including cyber-harassment). (n = 55)						**80%**	
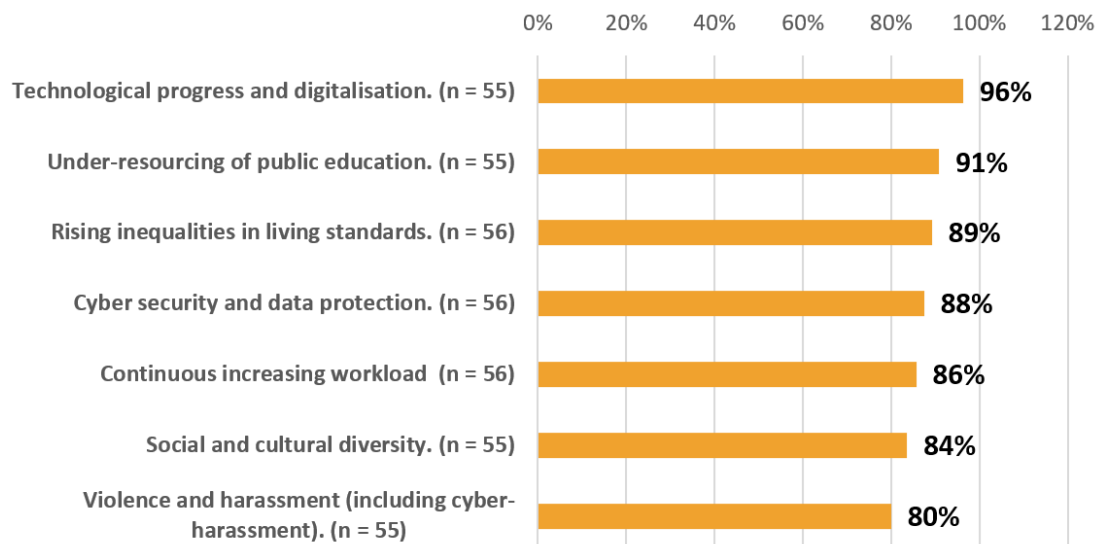
The research report also revealed a consistent implementation gap of inclusion policies. According to the respondents, there is a lack of strategies and policies to support schools and school leaders on inclusion, as well as the absence of a monitoring system to assess how inclusive education is implemented. Furthermore, some tendencies and changes in the society represent both opportunities and challenges, such as diversity in itself, technological progress and digitalisation. As it emerged from the research, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened these challenges, deepened inequalities and increased the workload for teachers and education personnel. In order to address these issues, the study proposes a number of **recommendations on the successful implementation of inclusive education for national and EU policy makers (Factsheet 'Key elements and conditions for the implementation and maintenance of inclusive education**, EN, FR, RU)**:

- A clear vision of inclusive education has to be embedded in policy frameworks, supporting the implementation of inclusive education.

- A meaningful involvement of teachers, academics and other education personnel in development, implementation and evaluation of inclusive education frameworks and strategies at all levels is a must.

- Provision of initial teacher training and continuous professional development of all teaching professionals, reflecting priorities, is necessary to accommodate working in a diverse education setting.

- Adequate supporting mechanisms, e.g. additional support personnel and time allocation for inclusion, have to be provided to all teaching professionals enabling the implementation of inclusive education approaches.

- Multi-agency approaches are key for the implementation of inclusive education.

- Leadership commitment and provision of necessary support to leadership are important conditions of embracing diversity in education.

- Suitable and purposeful assessment and monitoring systems have to be employed both at the level of education institutions and at the level of the learning process of students.

- Education trade unions need to be involved in discussions and negotiations concerning all aspects of inclusive education, including working conditions of education personnel; recruitment and retention in the education sector shaping the initial training and continuing professional development of education personnel, as well funding of inclusive education.

Furthermore, the research analyses the training and professional needs of teachers, academics, leaders in educational institutions, and other education personnel. Among the most urgent needs, highlighted by the participants to the survey are (**Factsheet 'Training and professional development of teachers, academics, leaders in educational institutions and other education personnel'** (EN, FR, RU):

- How to implement a **whole-school approach** for inclusive education.
- How to create a **safe and healthy learning and working environment** free from harassment and bullying, including cyber-harassment.
- How to use **ICT tools, digital technologies and media** to foster inclusion in education.
- How to deliver more **inclusive support for students with special needs**.
- How to recognise and better understand **hidden biases and stereotypes in curricula**, education and research material. Curricula are full of stereotypes that should be avoided.
- How to provide support on how to manage 'difficult situations' in the classroom (addressing disruptive behaviour, bullying, etc.). Practice shows that teachers are not well equipped to deal with misbehaviour in the classroom and in schools (violence amongst students or against educational personnel, hate speech, fake news, etc.).
- How to appropriately manage an increasing workload.
- How to teach in multicultural settings and manage and encourage intercultural dialogue (e.g. better understand interactions between learners from different cultures).
- How to implement participatory and collaborative learning approaches with the view to strengthen the joint work of learners from diverse backgrounds.

As complementing the research report, a collection of good practices on building and maintaining sustainable inclusive learning environments in various national and local contexts is presented in a separate Catalogue of Good Practices on building and maintaining sustainable inclusive learning environments in various national and local contexts as well as in the ETUCE Online Database of Good Practices.

WHY ARE OUR EDUCATION SYSTEMS STILL NOT INCLUSIVE?

KEY ELEMENTS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND CONDITIONS FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

Moving from the research findings, with the view to obtain more in-depth expertise on the state of inclusive education in different national contexts of Europe, a panel discussion addressed the key elements of inclusive educations and conditions for their implementation in three national contexts: Portugal, Croatia, and Finland.

Alison Alison Gilliland (INTO, Ireland) introducing the panel discussion on the key elements of inclusive education and conditions for their implementation

PORTUGAL

Conceiçao Nunes (SINDEP, Portugal), presented the situation of inclusive education in Portugal. Despite having a legal framework for inclusive education, Portuguese teachers face enormous difficulties in implementing the law due to lack of resources and support. Firstly, most of the responsibility for implementing inclusive education falls on teachers who are directly responsible for outlining a personal educational plan for students and who have to comply with strict guidelines - which are sometimes unclear - while managing the expectations and requests

for flexibility from students and their parents. Secondly, in Portugal, the use of ICT for inclusive education is lagging behind and many schools started being equipped with computers only during the emergency times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to these challenges, the shortage of assisting teachers and support staff as well as the excessive size of classes leads to an unsustainable workload for teachers and consequently increased mental distress.

CROATIA

In giving an overview of inclusive education in Croatia, **Igor Radeka (IURHEEC, Croatia)** stressed the need to raising awareness on the basic principle of inclusive education and to clarify that **investing in education is investing in people**. The willingness of education trade unions is to build an education framework based on the acceptance of diversity, starting from the assumption that **every student has unique characteristics, interests and learning needs**. Following the teachers' strikes at the end of 2019 that raised a number of problems in the education sector in Croatia, the government positively took on the recognition of social importance of education. Although a clear vision of inclusive education is embedded in the policy framework, including the concept of involving all education stakeholders, inclusive education is not adequately implemented in the reality. In particular, the needs of students with disabilities, minorities, LGBTI students and migrants remain largely neglected.

FINLAND

Reporting on Finland, **Päivi Lyhykäinen (OAJ, Finland)** described the challenges in implementing inclusive education vis-à-vis the national legal framework. On the one hand, Finland is seeking to guarantee secondary education to all by increasing compulsory education to 18 years of age and gradually abolishing all schools that segregate students with disabilities and special needs. On the other hand, the Finnish law on special education is not working as planned:. teachers in Finland do not receive enough pedagogical skills to teach students with migrant backgrounds or students with special needs. A severe shortage of teachers and supporting staff, especially expert language teachers, migrant teachers and specialised personnel to teach foreign students and students with special needs constitutes another challenge.

Panel discussion with members of the project advisory group: Alison Alison Gilliland, INTO Ireland; Conceiçao Nunes, SINDEP Portugal; Igor Radeka, IURHEEC Croatia; and Lyhykäinen Päivi, OAJ Finland

Despite the peculiarities of each national system of inclusive education, the following needs have been shared by the participants as essential conditions to implement inclusive education:

■ Teachers urge support, including coherent policy frameworks, increased funding as well as initial training and continuous professional development (CPD) to implement inclusive education and address the unsustainable workload.

■ Schools need increased staff, including expert personnel for special education, supporting teachers, and psychologists.

■ Teachers need more time within their working hours and smaller classes to effectively integrate inclusive education in school curricula.

■ Implementing inclusive education requires an efficient dialogue inside the school and more cooperation with the society outside of school, including families, the local community, municipalities, NGOs and health institutions.

GOOD PRACTICES ON CREATING AND MAINTAINING SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The seminar was also the occasion to share good practices on creating and maintaining sustainable inclusive learning and teaching environments.

Maija Yli-Jokipii (AOJ, Finland) illustrated the Finnish project 'Kuulumisia', a complementary teacher training programme addressed to migrant background and minority teachers, developed by the Tampere University in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Culture and Finnish National Agency for Education, and cooperation with Finnish teachers' unions. The project seeks to support migrant and minority teachers, as well as teachers working with migrants in addressing linguistic, academic and social barriers linked to the teaching profession and complying with Finnish law requirements linked to the teaching profession.


Migrant teachers taking part in the Finnish training programme Kuulumisia
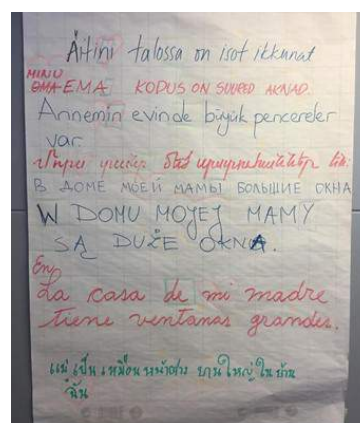
Learning method of the Kuulumisia programme based on the linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy

Based on the linguistically and culturally responsive education approach that entails not only academical expertise, but also intercultural competences and socio-political awareness, Kuulumisia wants to meet the needs of participants with personalised study plans, flexible time-schedule as well as practical training near participants' homes, language support and constant guidance and counselling. Founded in 2009, so far Kuulumisia has trained around 350 teachers from 43 different countries across the world.

Tatjana Babrauskienė (LESTU, Lithuania) illustrated the ECO-IN project led by LESTU and other partners, including universities and NGOs from Italy, Romania and Spain. Moving from the idea that Inclusion is a spiral process instead of a linear and circular one, ECO-IN is a new approach seeking to bring together all education stakeholders to make them act as a team in combating segregation and radicalization as well as monitoring and assessing inclusiveness at school.
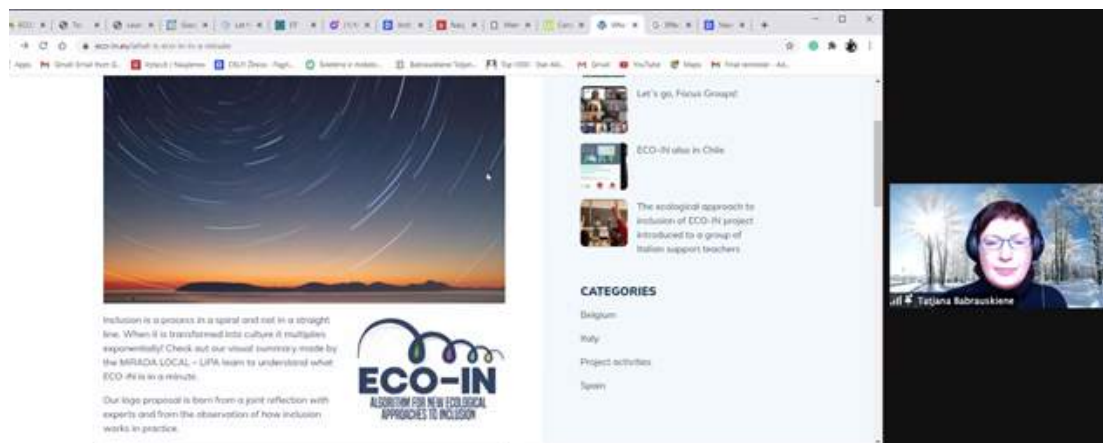
Tatjana Babrauskienė (LESTU, Lithuania) presenting the webpage of the ECO-IN project

Based on the whole-school approach, the ECO-IN project provides specific training and supporting actions to foster the team working and cooperation among the whole school community. Besides several workshops and focus groups organised across Europe, the project developed a survey target to various education actors at European level with the aim to evaluate the needs to implement inclusion in schools.

Judy Ellerby, (NEU, UK) presented '*Creating a sense of place and belonging in schools*' a project developed by NEU and University College London to create a sense of belonging in students with a disadvantaged socio-economic background. The project, in the form of a literature review, seeks to combat the persistent exclusion of students with educational needs (SEN), Black students and those from poorer families in the UK and find a better way to make them feel connected to the school. Built on research carries out in case-study schools, the research findings reveal the role of the school to be central in the lives of young people. Additionally, the sense of belonging has an impact on how students think about themselves and their place in the world.
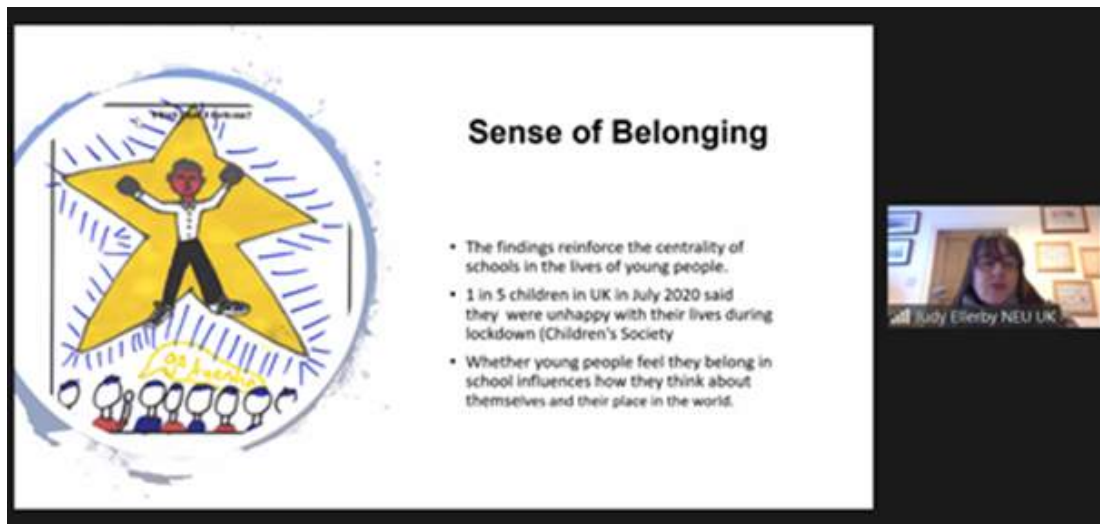
Judy Ellerby, (NEU, UK) presenting the good practice 'Creating a sense of place and belonging in schools' by NEU, UK

The research is organised according to the three themes: leadership, culture and the interlinking between them. The research findings show that behaviours of education staff, leaders and parents that support and respect children and enable them to develop confidence in themselves are crucial to create a sense of belonging and bring together communities.


Insight from the presentation of 'Creating a sense of place and belonging in schools': Interlocking elements in creating the conditions for belonging

CONCLUSION

Participants at the seminar worked together on a strategy to implement the upcoming **ETUCE Action Plan on Equality and Diversity**. At the core of the proposals, the following calls to action were highlighted:

- Improving **initial training and CDP for teachers** to implement inclusion and develop **capacity and cultural sensitivity to work in multicultural environments**. In particular, teachers need more pedagogical skills on how to address the needs of migrant students and students with disabilities and special needs. In addition, more training is needed on how to manage difficult situations in classrooms and how to maintain safe and healthy working environment.

- Making **teachers and education staff more reflective of the diversity of the students and society both in the teaching profession and in trade union membership**. In particular, there is the need to hire a more diverse teaching workforce, including migrants, Black and LGBTI people as well as persons with disabilities.

- **Elaborating a shared clear definition of the terms 'diversity**, equality' and 'inclusion' among education trade unions at European level to develop a common understanding of these concepts.

- Creating a school environment that **fosters professional dialogue and cooperation** among teachers and value any actor within the School, with particular attention the role of young teachers.

- Creating **more spaces for reflection** within education trade unions and build a **culture of inter-personal relations** in order to share challenges, experiences and good practices on inclusive education.

- **Enhancing cooperation** with all the stakeholders in education on equality and inclusion, including school leaders, families and the community itself.

- **Improving cooperation between trade unions** as key to exchange views and good practices, support with each other and work together to **strengthen social dialogue on inclusive education**.

- **Building cooperation with local NGOs** that can provide practical support and legal advice, support in developing coaching and training for teachers.

- Advocating for **changing the mindset of governments and the entire community** and develop a common cultural sensitivity toward diversity and inclusion.

- Undertaking actions to address the issue of **implementation gap of legal frameworks on inclusive education**.
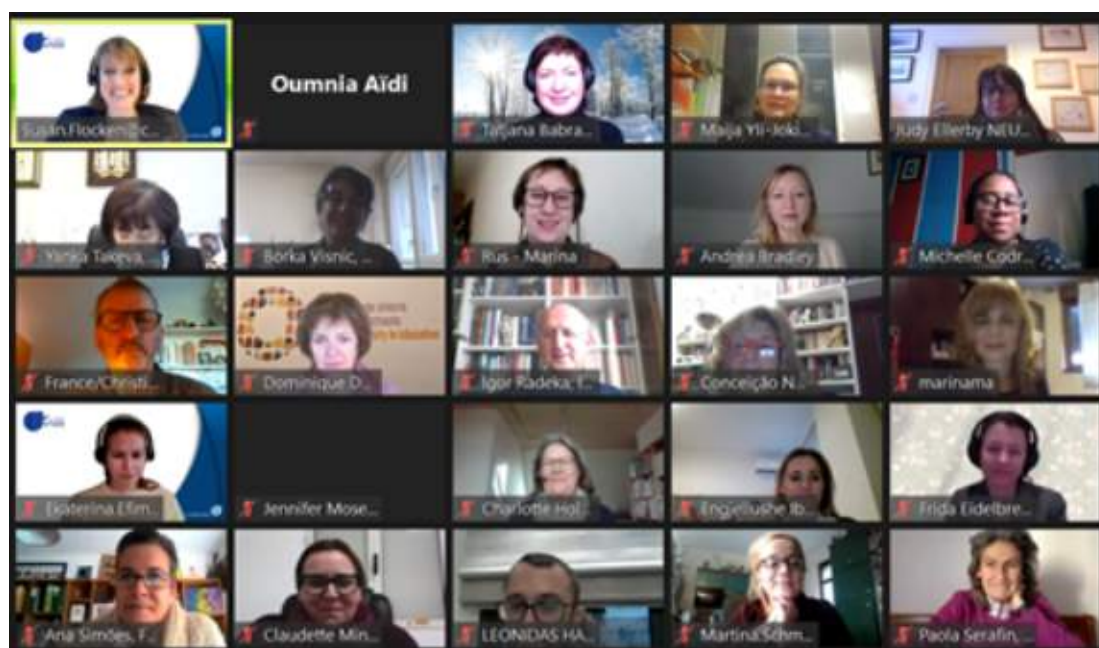
Conclusion of the online Seminar: Final greetings by participants

ABBREVIATIONS

CPD	Continous professional development
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DOE	Greek Primary Teachers Federation
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education
IURHEEC	Independent Union of Research and Higher Education Employees of Croatia
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
FSLI	Fédération des Syndicats Libres de l'Enseignement
LESTU	Lithuanian Teachers, Education and Science Trade Union
OAJ	Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö
NEU	National Education Union
SINDEP	Sindicato Nacional e Democrático dos Professores