

# UPskilling for WELLbeing in multicultural classrooms

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### *Policy Recommendations*



## Introduction

Teachers working in multicultural classrooms face increasingly complex demands linked to linguistic diversity, social vulnerability, emotional labour, and rising performance expectations. Within the framework of the **European Education Area** and the **EU's commitment to equity, inclusion, and well-being in education**, evidence from the UPWELL project confirms that **teacher well-being is a structural condition for inclusive and high-quality education**. It should therefore be addressed as a systemic policy priority rather than an individual coping issue.

UPWELL findings show that when teachers are supported through practical, evidence-based tools and sustained institutional backing, the impact goes beyond individual resilience. Improvements in teacher well-being translate into better classroom climate, stronger student engagement, and more effective learning outcomes, directly contributing to EU objectives on educational success, social cohesion, and equal opportunities.

## Evidence base from UPWELL

The policy recommendations are grounded in a robust evidence base generated across multiple EU contexts and fully aligned with Erasmus+ priorities on inclusion, participation, and innovation in education. The UPWELL project includes:

- extensive qualitative and quantitative field research, comprising **540 questionnaires and 66 interviews and focus groups** on teachers' competences and skills, and **416 questionnaires and 84 interviews and focus groups** on teachers' needs and expectations in multicultural classrooms;
- a WP4 pilot phase that tested UPWELL training materials in real school settings, involving **16 teachers and approximately 459 students** (mainly aged 11–15), with teachers reporting a **72% improvement in their own well-being**, a **52% improvement in pupils' learning achievements**, and a **48% improvement in group relational climate**;
- qualitative evidence highlighting structural gaps in existing inclusion frameworks, particularly regarding language assessment capacity, intercultural approaches, access to mediation, and opportunities for

- professional collaboration—areas that are central to EU priorities on inclusive education and teacher professionalisation.

## Target audiences of the policy recommendations

In line with the EU's multi-level governance approach in education, these policy recommendations are addressed to:

- **national and regional education authorities**, responsible for translating EU priorities on inclusion, teacher support, and well-being into policy frameworks and funding mechanisms;
- **teacher education institutions and continuous professional development providers**, key actors in implementing the European Education Area objectives through initial and in-service training;
- **school leaders and local authorities**, who play a decisive role in operationalising EU and national policies at school level and ensuring their impact on everyday educational practice.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Position teacher well-being as a structural pillar of inclusive education policy

Teacher well-being should be explicitly recognised in national and regional education policies as a **prerequisite** for inclusion and quality learning.

Policy action should focus on **embedding well-being within existing governance frameworks** rather than creating parallel systems. In practice, this means requiring schools to integrate teacher well-being and inclusion objectives into school development plans and accountability processes, while keeping monitoring proportional and supportive.

#### Implementation Suggestions

- integrating teacher **well-being indicators** into school improvement frameworks; embed well-being targets into existing school **evaluation frameworks** and Continuous Professional Development planning (no new structures are required).
- linking inclusion outcomes with **staff support measures** rather than individual responsibility;
- **recognising** well-being as a collective, organisational matter.

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### 2. Make well-being-oriented CPD mandatory and practice-based

UPWELL research reveals **persistent gaps** in teachers' preparation for multicultural classrooms, especially in intercultural competence, social-emotional learning, inclusive pedagogy, and language-aware teaching. Teachers consistently report that initial training is insufficient to manage today's classroom realities.

Education authorities should therefore ensure that CPD is **mandatory, recognised, and grounded in practice** for teachers working in high-diversity contexts. Training

should balance professional competences with emotional sustainability and stress management.

### Implementation Suggestions

- Accredite UPWELL's e-learning course + toolkits as **recognised CPD hours** nationally
- **Integrate UPWELL modules** into national in-service catalogues; require completion for schools above a defined diversity threshold.

The UPWELL curriculum and toolkits already offer a validated and adaptable model that can be accredited as CPD or embedded in national in-service training systems <https://academyofentrepreneurship.org/course/upwell-en>

## 3. Ensure welcoming and inclusion procedures are operational, not symbolic

Although inclusion is widely recognised in policy documents, UPWELL findings show that welcoming procedures for newly arrived students are often **unevenly applied or poorly communicated** at school level.

Education authorities should define **minimum standards** for welcoming and inclusion protocols, ensuring they are clearly understood, regularly used, and institutionally supported.

### Implementation Suggestions

- Creating of **Effective Protocols, covering**: reception and orientation of newly arrived students; initial language and learning assessment; family engagement and communication pathways; access to mediation and external support services.
- **Linking** these protocols to existing school review processes.
- **Cooperation** - where relevant - with social services and/or CSOs supporting migrant families' inclusion.

## 4. Treat language support and multilingual resources as core inclusion tools

**Language barriers** remain a key driver of exclusion in multicultural classrooms. UPWELL evidence highlights teachers' strong demand for multilingual materials, language-aware teaching tools, and accessible digital resources to support both learning and participation.

Policy action in this area can remain largely cost-neutral by prioritising open educational resources, shared repositories, and targeted investment where needs are highest. Pilot activities confirm that technology-supported and language-sensitive approaches increase student motivation and engagement while reducing teacher stress.

### Implementation Suggestions

- Ensuring schools have access to: **multilingual learning materials** (core subjects and key school communications); **translation supports** where appropriate; teacher-friendly tools for supporting language development alongside subject learning.
- Prioritising **OER and shared repositories** (including UPWELL materials).
- Granting schools the necessary didactic and organisational **autonomy and flexibility**, together with adequate human resources, to ensure the initial stages of learning the host country's language through a combination of targeted educational activities for "newcomers" and peer-learning activities that enable them to interact with classmates who already have a good command of the language.

## 5. Institutionalise mediation and family engagement

UPWELL research underlines the **positive impact of strong school-family-community relationships** in multicultural settings. However, mediation and family engagement are often treated as temporary projects rather than stable components of school systems.

Education policies should recognise mediation and structured family engagement as essential inclusion infrastructure. This requires moving beyond short-term funding and supporting schools through stable mechanisms such as dedicated inclusion resources, partnerships with community actors, or targeted support for high-diversity schools.

### Implementation Suggestions

- Micro-grants to schools for family engagement + mediator hours, prioritising high-turnover / high-NAI contexts.
- Integrate mediation and family engagement into standard staffing/resource formulas.

## 6. Protect time for collaboration and relational work within teachers' workloads

Teachers consistently report that **time constraints** are one of the main obstacles to inclusive practice and well-being. UPWELL findings confirm that collaboration, peer exchange, and reflective practice are essential, too often pushed outside formal working time.

Education authorities should formally allocate time for collaborative and relational work within teachers' schedules, recognising it as a core professional activity. In most cases, this can be achieved through **reorganisation** rather than increased workload.

### Implementation Suggestions

- Allocating protected time **within working hours** for: teacher peer collaboration on multicultural classroom strategies; joint planning/adaptation of materials; reflective practice on well-being and classroom climate.
- **Reallocating rather than expanding**: embed collaboration time into existing staff meetings days, with clear goals and facilitation.

## 7. Scale proven models such as UPWELL rather than reinventing solutions

UPWELL provides a coherent, evidence-based, and transferable model that combines research, training, and practical tools. Pilot results demonstrate its effectiveness in improving teacher well-being, classroom climate, and student engagement.

- **Promotion** of UPWELL resources within school networks and clusters.
- Regional **scaling** through ToT networks and school clusters.

## CALL TO ACTION

UPWELL demonstrates that inclusive education cannot be sustained without **investing in those who deliver it.**

Supporting teacher well-being through structured training, clear procedures, protected collaboration time, and accessible resources is not an additional burden. It is a **strategic investment** in educational quality, equity, and social cohesion.

The evidence is clear. The tools are ready.

**What remains is decisive policy action.**