

UNICREDIT GLOBAL ERGS AS STRATEGIC PARTNERS

At UniCredit, Employee Networks (ENs) have evolved into strategic partners that shape culture, inform policy and drive innovation across borders. Nikolina Zečić, Head of Culture, Learning & Development and Attraction, explains how.

Global & Local Impact

UniCredit operates across Europe, navigating diverse regulatory contexts and varied cultural perspectives on inclusion. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, its ENs follow a “globally connected, locally rooted” approach. “Our ENs are connected at Group level but rooted locally, allowing them to act as authentic ambassadors of change within their specific social and cultural landscapes”, Nikolina says. This approach ensures global coherence while respecting local sensitivities - an essential factor in driving network credibility and engagement.

In practice, UniCredit’s ENs share a common purpose and governance framework, but shape their work around the unique needs, expectations and cultural sensitivities of their region. In some markets, ENs are well-established communities; in others, they are still developing. Financial resources and support are coordinated centrally and locally to ensure alignment, consistency and meaningful impact across all EN initiatives.

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Cross-Border Networks

Thanks to sustained investment, UniCredit now has more than 20 active networks throughout the organisation, engaging more than 1,000 employees. The Unicorns Network (LGBTQIA+) stands out as a mature, cross-border community: strong chapters in Italy, Germany, and Austria have catalysed expansion into the UK, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Slovakia and the United States. Nikolina notes that the network has “launched cross-border campaigns, influenced internal policies and created dedicated moments of awareness on these topics for all employees.” Other networks - focused on Gender, Disability, Cultural Diversity, Generations, Caregiving, and STEM - are particularly well established in Austria, Italy and Germany, where they contribute actively both to cultural initiatives and business conversations.



Influencing Strategy

A defining feature of UniCredit's ENs is their direct influence on the bank's HR and DE&I strategies. Rather than operating on the margins, ENs are embedded in decision-making through structured consultation, feedback loops and co-creation of policies and trainings. EN Leads are regularly consulted on the development of inclusive policies, courses and guidelines," Nikolina highlights. In 2025 they actively contributed to the release of the Microaggressions Learning Path, available in all Group languages to equip colleagues to address and prevent microaggressions.

Powerful examples include the Unicorns Network's contribution to gender-transition support guidelines, the promotion of inclusive language practices, and the use of inclusive icons across bank documents and visuals. The Disability Network has collaborated with HR and Digital teams to improve accessibility standards and raise awareness of invisible disabilities.

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Beyond policy, ENs amplify the lived experience of employees. "ENs act as trusted listening posts, providing real-time insights from diverse employee communities," Nikolina explains. The Cultural Diversity REACH (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage) Network is a key platform for dialogue and knowledge-sharing across geographies.

Inclusion and Innovation

The strategic value of UniCredit's ENs extends beyond Culture into innovation and business impact. By elevating diverse perspectives, ENs help identify gaps, risks, and opportunities that might otherwise go unnoticed. "Employee Networks bring valuable and diverse insights that help shape product design, enhance the customer experience, and improve internal processes," says Nikolina. Tangible outcomes are visible across the organisation: from the Disability Network's contributions to accessible digital banking features, to Unicorns' role in shaping innovative workplace guidelines. Women and STEM communities spotlight success stories and create powerful mentoring opportunities, while the Caregivers Network equips colleagues with tools and awareness to navigate caregiving responsibilities. At the same time, Generations networks complement this work by fostering meaningful cross-generational collaboration that enriches the entire organisation.

These examples demonstrate how, when embedded thoughtfully, inclusion becomes a driver of innovation.



Building Belonging

As in many inclusive organisations, ENs at UniCredit play an invaluable role in fostering a deep sense of belonging. Across regions, these networks create spaces that spark dialogue, strengthen allyship and celebrate the richness of our diversity. As Nikolina emphasises, “These spaces cultivate a profound sense of community and psychological safety across the Group,” empowering our people to bring their full selves to work. The REACH Network, in particular, drives cross-business initiatives to build mutual understanding and bridge cultural and geographic divides. This sense of belonging enhances engagement, collaboration and performance – critical outcomes for a pan-European bank.

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Organisational Impact

UniCredit regards its ENs as “strategic contributors to organisational success.” They foster inclusion, engagement and belonging, all of which support talent retention and attraction while reinforcing business resilience. ENs often contribute to:

- **Innovation and business insights:** surfacing diverse perspectives that inspire new ideas and reveal market opportunities
- **Employee engagement, well-being and productivity:** creating inclusive environments that enhance motivation and collaboration.
- **Talent development:** offering leadership opportunities and mentoring aligned with succession planning and career growth.
- **Brand and reputation:** strengthening UniCredit’s position as a socially responsible and inclusive employer.

As Nikolina summarises, “Ultimately, Employee Networks are not just social groups, they are strategic partners.” They also play a vital role externally, partnering with NGOs and community organisations, supporting volunteering and fundraising, and representing UniCredit in external DE&I forums. These partnerships broaden the organisation’s social impact while empowering employees to engage meaningfully with the communities it serves.

A Blueprint for Success

UniCredit’s experience shows that global employee networks thrive when they are locally relevant, strategically embedded and recognised as partners in driving cultural and business transformation. As Nikolina concludes, ENs “actively shape and accelerate Culture evolution, making organisations more adaptable, inclusive, and future-ready. We are proud that UniCredit has been recognised as a Radius Certified ERG Investor in 2025. This acknowledgment highlights our commitment to supporting our Employee Networks and giving them voice and visibility. It also serves as motivation to never settle and keep striving for excellence.”

In a global landscape marked by rapid change, Employee Networks like those at UniCredit are not just supporting inclusion - they are helping define the future of work.

