



**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON CAREERS AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT OF  
TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS  
2019**



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## BACKGROUND

The European Union is on the crossroad of defining new policy strategies for the next decade on education and training. The *European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders* is a Europe-wide network of different organisations (policymakers, European level social partners in education, school leaders, researchers and other stakeholders) to promote co-operation, policy development and implementation at different levels, and to support the European Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders. This network is building on existing activities developed at European level, especially initiatives and projects supported through European Union programmes in the field of education, eg like the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL).

We acknowledge and we wish to contribute to the implementation of the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights adopted by the EU leaders. It defines that "*Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.*" The leading principle of our work is that the mission of education is social and personal development.

The following recommendations are based on research evidence<sup>1</sup> the project partners have compiled within the framework of the topic of the first year of the project on careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders.

The recommendations provide opportunity to policy makers and stakeholders to align them to different national, regional and institutional circumstances within an enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders and include consultation within own constituencies.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As the focus of the first year of the project was on supporting careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders, we call the **EU institutions, the EU Member States, national, regional, and local decision-makers** to

1. Analyse obstacles for choosing the teacher and school leader profession and improve **motivation to and attractiveness of the profession** by ensuring effective support to teachers and school leaders in particular concerning their professional well-being, supportive work environment, and career development in order to guarantee quality and inclusive school environment and school management.
2. Advocate high **quality and inclusive initial education, induction phase, and continuous professional development of teachers and school leaders, as a right**, supported by necessary reforms in consultation with social partners and relevant stakeholders, research, and sufficient and sustainable investment. Teachers and school leaders need to be well prepared to work in culturally and socially diverse educational institutions and to promote critical

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<sup>1</sup> Further information about the research outcome can be found here: <https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/research/>



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thinking, democratic values and human rights, civic engagement and a responsible use of new technologies.

3. Ensure **equal access and equal opportunities** to access the teaching and school leadership profession and to initial and continuous professional development to teachers and school leaders regardless their gender, age sexual orientation, economic status, ethnicity, language, religion and citizenship status.
4. Advocate a **whole school approach and democratic school culture** by ensuring **democratic and collaborative school leadership** with the participatory approaches of all relevant school actors (school heads, teachers, parents, students, etc) as an example to create democratic and inclusive school environments.
5. Support **professional autonomy** of teachers and school leaders to choose the most appropriate learning and teaching methods so to ensure student-centred learning and freedom of expression, reinforced by **research** supporting pedagogy, knowledge, skills and competences of teachers.
6. Encourage partnership and **cooperation** between educational institutions at different sectors and levels with different local and regional actors in an open school approach, within and beyond national borders, to achieve democratic and inclusive school leadership and enable smooth transitions.

Please find below the Annex to the Policy Recommendations.



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## ANNEX

This annex presents the recommendations of the EEPN project with justification and examples to the recommendations from the desk research reports and the discussions of the annual conference.

The recommendations are on careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders. They are evidence-based, and they have undergone thorough discussions within the EEPN network. The recommendations provide opportunity to policy makers and stakeholders to align them to different national, regional and institutional circumstances. The implementation requires enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders and consultation among their own constituencies in order to ensure that the recommendations have a real impact.

### Process

The Synergies report of the project shows the process of how the EEPN network worked for the recommendations. Concisely, we tried to both find and build synergy across the goals and objectives, within the network and with the stakeholders. The report also includes flow charts for the annual work (Figure 1) and research (Figure 2) processes.

The aim was to develop evidence-based recommendations based on desk research. The project developed the following reports:

- Desk research report on good practices from practitioner and parent perspective
- Desk research report on good practices on policy advice and implementation
- Desk research report on research on teacher recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe
- Desk research report on research on school leader recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe
- Desk research report on ten most relevant European Commission funded projects for teachers' and school leaders' more attractive career paths

While the recommendations were constructed within the EEPN network taking into consideration the views and standpoints of various interest groups, the key policy messages had a more neutral perspective.

The draft recommendations and the outcomes of the desk research reports were at the EEPN annual conference in Jyväskylä, Finland, on 18 November 2019. They were discussed within workshops among 150 conference participants and documented in a digital platform called HowSpace. Speakers in the conference representing the European Commission, the Finnish Ministry of Education, EFEE, ETUCE, ESHA and University of Jyväskylä discussed the workshop feedback and the implementation of the recommendations. The representative of the Finnish Ministry of Education warmly welcomed the project outcomes.

The EEPN leadership team had two meetings after the annual conference to discuss the outcomes of the event. In these meetings, it was agreed to provide examples to the recommendations within an Annex.



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## Recommendations

This section presents the six recommendations the EEPN network constructed to support teachers' and school leaders' careers and professional development. Each recommendation is followed by justifications and examples derived from EEPN desk research reports and feedback obtained from the EEPN network, in particular from the EEPN annual conference.

To improve careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders, we call EU institutions and EU Member States' national, regional, and local decision-makers to consider and implement the following recommendations:

- 1. Analyse obstacles for choosing the teacher and school leader profession and improve the motivation and attractiveness of the professions by ensuring effective support to teachers and school leaders in particular concerning their professional well-being, supportive work environment, and career development in order to guarantee quality and inclusive school environment and school management.**

All the five EEPN research reports found evidence to support the need for further analysis of obstacles for pursuing and continuing to work as teachers and school leaders, and for strengthening the appeal of the professions. There is a shortage of teachers and school leaders across Europe due to people both not seeking into and not staying in the professions. However, particularly in consideration of school leaders the exact numbers are missing.

The obstacles and the needs for improvements were commonly connected with professional well-being, supportive work environment and career development both in the EEPN research reports and in the EEPN annual conference feedback. In the workshops of the annual conference, participants stated that new demands on education make pressures on schools, such as using ICT and social media, preventing climate change, and multicultural school environment due to pupils' and students' diverse backgrounds. These challenges and lack of support for ensuring inclusiveness and quality of the schools and school management are great burden for the teachers and school leaders in several ways. Objectives and resources do not appear to correspond to each other successfully.

The EEPN research reports identified essential information on why and how to develop teachers' and school leaders' recruitment and mobility, initial teacher education, academic standards and research-based education, induction, career wide support, career path systems, appraisals, as well as salaries and status. Our research outcomes can contribute to a successful implementation of education policies of the European Union and of the EU member states, including the regional, local and institutional levels.

Feedback from the annual conference presented many good examples and practices from different countries on how to support the attractiveness of teacher and school leader professions. These examples were, for example, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between teacher unions, employers and other stakeholders (Denmark); supportive national policy for teachers to participate in professional development every year (eg. in Bulgaria); and



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developing educational leadership studies in the universities (eg. in Finland). The participants of the annual conference expressed the need for exchange of further best practices and expertise on these topics among different areas in Europe, and to motivate school systems and school management to make continuous professional development of teachers and school leaders as an integral part of the schools' daily operation.

- 2. Advocate high quality and inclusive initial education, induction phase, and continuous professional development of teachers and school leaders, as a right, supported by necessary reforms in consultation with social partners and relevant stakeholders, research, and sufficient and sustainable investment. Teachers and school leaders need to be well prepared to work in culturally and socially diverse educational institutions and to promote critical thinking, democratic values and human rights, civic engagement and a responsible use of new technologies.**

The EEPN research reports found systematic evidence that high quality and inclusive initial education, induction phase and continuous professional development are essential support to teachers and school leaders to face new demands in the schools and to ensure inclusive and high quality teaching and school leadership. The desk research reports also showed that there is significant variation of induction phase and continuous professional development of the teachers and school leaders among the EU member states.

The examples included in the EEPN research reports and in the feedback of the annual conference manifest the necessity of taking into consideration cultural and societal diversity in teachers' and school leaders' initial education, induction phase and continuous professional development as the European Union itself is culturally and socially diverse. Therefore, the European Union, its member states as well as regional and local communities and educational institutions must acknowledge such a diversity, and support inclusiveness, equality, and equity. The participants of the annual conference also highlighted the need for critical thinking and use of new technologies to ensure inclusiveness in teaching and school management. Similar notions were found also in the EEPN research reports. The EEPN research reports show several examples of EU funded projects (eg. eTwinning, NAOS) and education systems (e.g. Finland) which could be further examined further to support policy implementation on this topic at different levels.

The experts in the annual conference suggested the following solutions for teachers' and school leaders' professional development: mentoring and coaching; exchange of expertise between different areas in Europe; recognizing and supporting all kind of leadership and at all levels; and providing the tools and training to teachers and school leaders which are necessary for supporting students with special needs. In addition, there is the need to ensure freedom of expression and democratic values within the schools. Several of these notions were included also in the EEPN research reports.

- 3. Ensure equal access and equal opportunities to the teaching and school leadership profession and to initial and continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders regardless the gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, ethnicity, language, religion and citizenship status.**



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EEPN research reports identified teacher and school leader shortage in Europe. Several statistics show that the teacher profession is a female profession and there is a problem of recruiting young people to the profession. This is why it is important to raise the issue of equal access to the teaching and school leadership profession and within the initial and continuous professional development. The desk research reports and discussions in the annual conference suggested that it is possible to fight against this shortage by strengthening the status and value of these professions within the society, and providing initial and continuous professional training to teachers and school leaders which helps them to face continuous demands on skills, competences, inclusiveness, etc. within the school and classroom. The EEPN research reports show that one third of European countries provide both traditional and alternative ways of initial education and continuous professional development. However, there is still uncertainty to what extent these trainings are accessible.

**4. Advocate a whole school approach and democratic school culture by ensuring democratic and collaborative school leadership with the participatory approaches of all relevant school actors (school heads, teachers, parents, students, etc.) as an example to create democratic and inclusive school environments.**

EEPN research reports found good examples about the whole school approach and democratic school culture (eg. in Ireland, and in the UK) and in relevant EU funded projects (eg. “Hand in Hand” Erasmus+ project). Discussions in the EEPN annual conference presented concrete descriptions and examples for both the whole school approach and democratic school culture. According to the workshops, development of democratic and collaborative school leadership needs to be based on trust and making clear for all school actors what the shared values, rights, responsibilities and long-term objectives are. It was suggested by the experts that quality initial education and continuous professional training are necessary for teachers, school leaders and other school actors to develop collaborative and democratic school leadership. Including democratic values and critical thinking are essential not only in the teaching of students but within the operation of the whole school. One of the most important elements of the whole school approach and democratic school culture is collaboration between teachers, school leaders, parents, students and other stakeholders (eg. in Germany, Ireland). However, it was underlined that whole school approach and democratic school culture can be created only by effective help from the government through funding and supportive education policy.

**5. Support professional autonomy of teachers and school leaders to choose the most appropriate learning and teaching methods to ensure student-centred learning and freedom of expression, reinforced by research supporting pedagogy, knowledge, skills and competences of teachers.**

Autonomy as an element to support teachers' and school leaders' careers and professional development was mentioned in most of the EEPN research reports. The “Desk research report on good practices from practitioner and parent perspective” highlighted the importance of professional autonomy within high-performing education systems. Autonomy is linked to school-based teacher recruitment and individual learner support, and can be best ensured by defining a right balance of decision making on schools between the government and the school (eg. in the Netherlands) and by national education policy ensuring teachers' professional autonomy (eg. in Finland).



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The “Desk research report on research on teacher recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe” presented the impact of autonomy on teachers’ retention, quality of teaching, and motivation. The “Desk research report on research on school leader recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe” compared the degree of autonomy of schools and school leaders concerning the recruitment, school leaders’ decision-making powers, and within the relationship between autonomy and accountability.

Feedback from the EEPN annual conference emphasized that autonomy requires effective support from the government (funding and policy), independent and honest research, as well as best practices to be used as a basis for policy decisions. In addition, teachers and school leaders need support during the early stages of their careers. A particular problem was identified concerning the different qualification requirements of the school leaders in Europe. Furthermore, it was highlighted to listen to learners’ voice as well, because autonomy brings motivation also to students (eg. in Finland).

**6. Encourage partnership and cooperation between educational institutions at different sectors and levels with different local and regional actors in an open school approach, within and beyond national borders, to achieve democratic and inclusive school leadership and enable smooth transitions.**

This topic was mentioned in the “Desk research report on ten most relevant European Commission funded projects for teachers’ and school leaders’ more attractive career paths”. The report presented the Open Schools for Open Societies (OSOS) project as an example of projects developing school innovation. The project aimed to help European primary and secondary schools with opening up to their own local communities and to describe and implement a process that would facilitate the transformation of schools into innovative ecosystems.

In addition, the EEPN annual conference participants discussed about the role of the school as the heart of the community (eg. in France). However, it was mentioned that this is possible mostly in decentralized education systems and only with the support of the school leader. It was underlined that there has to be cooperation and no competition among the various schools and school levels and it is necessary to consider various ways of cooperation such as project-based cooperation and long-term partnerships with other actors, eg. parents associations, NGOs, community places, and companies. Furthermore, in order to ensure that schools are prominent local actors, the governments must support flexibility concerning workloads and responsibilities of teachers and school leaders, and better exchange is needed between educational research and school practice.

## Conclusions

The desk research reports and the discussions of the EEPN annual conference supported that the policy recommendations are relevant and have to be tailor-made to fit to different kind of circumstances and systems. The recommendations can help to generate improvement in the system from both a bottom-up approach initiated by schools, teachers, school leaders, parents, students, civil society, etc., and a top-down approach initiated by EU institutions, national ministries, school head associations, trade unions of education employees, educations employers, student organisations, etc. The EEPN project partners





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will continue discussing these topics and disseminate the policy recommendations among the project partners and beyond to encourage cooperation and collaboration of different actors in the education systems.

As the EEPN network starts working for second year goals, it will further support the implementation of the EEPN first year recommendations. Particularly, national solutions have to be established to discuss, evaluate and enact the policy recommendations on the national, regional and local levels.

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