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European ideas for better learning: the governance of school education systems

The final report and thematic outputs of the ET2020 Working Group Schools

Produced by the ET 2020 Working Group Schools

Education
and Training

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
Schools and multilingualism

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European ideas for better learning: the governance of school education systems

The final report and thematic outputs of the ET2020 Working Groups Schools (2016 – 2018)

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1. Introduction



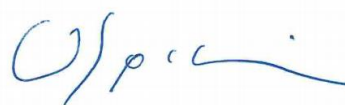
On behalf of the European Commission, I am delighted to present this new report on the governance of school education in Europe.

Schools face a range of changing educational demands - from learners, society and the labour market. To help them in their response, EU education ministers recently concluded that there is a need for contemporary approaches to teaching and learning and to the governance of school education systems.

The European Commission is committed to continuing support to EU Member States in raising the quality of schooling for all learners. In our 2017 'Communication on school development and excellent teaching' we outlined how EU support can contribute to better and more inclusive schools; to enhanced support to teachers and school leaders; and to education systems that are more effective, equitable and efficient overall.

This report by the *ET2020 Working Group on Schools* is a prime example of the potential for working together across Europe to identify solutions to shared challenges. It affirms the importance of peer learning between European countries and stakeholder organisations, as practised under *Education and Training 2020*. Representatives of education ministries and stakeholder organisations state that this is a key way of supporting and inspiring policy development. The principles and messages in this report seek to be relevant to and adaptable by all education systems whilst recognising that each of them are different and complex. More broadly, this report sets out a vision for school education systems that can help define shared values, cooperation and mobility within a European Education Area.

I invite all policy makers, education specialists, and educators to be inspired by its many examples and ideas.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Themis Christophidou'.

Themis CHRISTOPHIDOU
Director-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

2. A vision for European school education systems

The ET2020 Working Group Schools (2016-18) was given the mandate to develop ideas and share policy-making practices concerning the governance of school education systems to promote equity and excellence with a focus on supporting school and teacher development.

Policy-making in education should aim to create the conditions for multiple stakeholders to jointly initiate development and improvement, and for balancing school- and system-led change. Experiences from across Europe confirm that this will make it more likely that policies have a sustainable impact.

Whilst focusing on policy-making processes, the Working Group emphasises that action at any level should be taken with the ultimate goal of improving the learning process and learning outcomes of **all young people**.

2.1 Key challenges

The work responds to a number of challenges in key areas of school education governance:

Quality assurance for school development: Balancing autonomy and accountability is a significant and ongoing challenge for education systems that strive for improvement across many areas. Policy makers recognise an urgent need to improve the interplay between quality assurance mechanisms that are external and internal to schools, to a) allow schools to adapt to the changing needs of learners and b) ensure proper feedback and flow of information that enables evidence-informed action across the system.

Continuity and transitions in learner development: Learner pathways can become fragmented in a number of ways, risking underachievement and possible dropout from school. Policies need to a) ensure that learner pathways are sufficiently flexible, and b) create the conditions that provide appropriate guidance and support to all learners and supporting stakeholders.

Teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations: Teachers have a crucial role in supporting learner development and are key change agents in school development. However, they are under significant pressure from many different areas of the education system. There is a need for policies that a) promote teacher collaboration, autonomy, and distributed leadership within professional learning communities, and b) motivate and engage of all actors to make change happen.

Networks for learning and development across school education systems: Effective relationships and communication help an education system achieve its objectives. Maintaining positive interaction amongst many different stakeholders is a challenge but networking offers a great potential for this. A deeper understanding of the purpose and nature of networks for innovation and implementation is crucial for the positive and sustainable impact of any action.

2.2 Creating the conditions for change

The Working Group explored each of these four key areas of governance in depth and set out guiding principles for policy development, based on recent research and experiences from national contexts. These principles are further illustrated with specific examples from countries, which members of the Working Group shared in order to critically reflect on how different approaches have been put into practice, and with what results. This peer learning process has enabled the policy messages to be relevant and adaptable to all national contexts, whilst recognising the diversity and high complexity of education systems across Europe.

Education systems are complex and operate at national, regional and local levels (vertical interaction). Within them, schools both function as distinct organisations and connect to each other or other types of organisation (horizontal interaction). Each education system can be characterised by its specific composition: by the policy instruments and measures used, and by the distribution of power and interaction of actors across different levels.

Increasingly, national governments are shifting greater control to the local level while maintaining responsibility for the quality – referring to the effectiveness, efficiency and equity – of the overall system. National policy mechanisms may include different types of support. They use direct interventions, such as regulations, or indirect interventions, such as frameworks that may be adapted to local conditions.

Interaction across different levels of governance supports peer learning and development in education. It is important that policies support equity and inclusion but also allow flexibility to meet the diverse needs of learners in schools both within and outside of mainstream education. Policy-making needs to involve all relevant stakeholders in order to achieve this and create shared ownership and accountability. Equally, in order for systems to evolve effectively - and to support schools in their development – they need high quality feedback loops and a flow of information to support evidence-informed action. Both are crucial for the motivation and engagement of all actors in order to encourage change to happen.

An approach to school education governance

Through the guiding principles for policy development and recent case study examples, which were developed under four themes (see Section 4 and the four thematic reports), the Working Group describe a broad approach to governance that school education systems should strive for. This is expressed in the following points that policy makers are invited to consider.

- ◆ A **clear vision for quality** in education with **shared values** concerning school, teacher and learner development;
- ◆ A learner-centred approach to decision-making in order to create **meaningful learning experiences** and **environments** that contribute to the development of the whole child;
- ◆ **Collaborative** decision-making processes, involving the trust and supported dialogue of a range of stakeholders at all levels of the system, and fostering a **sense of ownership, responsibility and accountability**;
- ◆ Developing schools as **learning organisations** that support effective decision-making and become contexts for a process of inquiry and **continuous development** at local level;
- ◆ Policies that support highly **competent and trusted professional communities**, recognising teachers and school leaders as key change agents, promoting shared leadership, collaboration and innovation, and investing in capacity-building that will motivate their continued development to ensure high **quality teaching and learning**;
- ◆ Generating and using different **types of data** in different parts of the system, which can help to better identify strengths and areas for improvements;
- ◆ Making **well-timed** policies, meaning that they directly respond to evolving needs across the system, with focused implementation processes of an adequate duration, and a coherence with other current policies, for sustained and renewed change.

3. Learning organisations within learning systems

Improving the experiences and outcomes of all learners should be the central pursuit of school education policies. Therefore, it is prudent to examine what is needed at school level and, at the same time, the conditions that can be created at policy level.

Understanding **school education as a learning system** directly responds to the challenges of complexity and improvement as it is based on collaboration and communication between horizontal and vertical connections. Horizontal connections may be between regions, between schools, or between a school and the wider community. They may be based on formal or more informal arrangements. Vertical connections are often hierarchical, such as between a school and the inspectorate. There are degrees of authority in these relationships, the level of which can influence how the work is initiated and carried out.

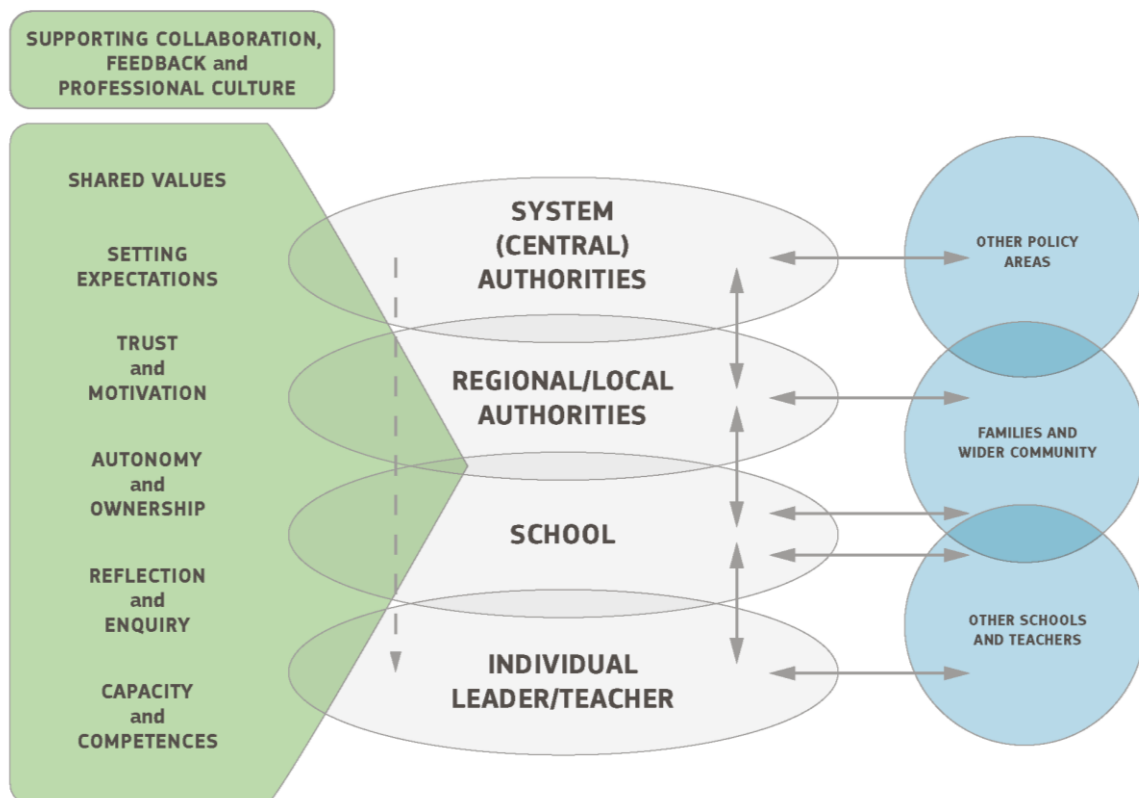


Figure 1: Vertical and horizontal relationships within school education systems with an approach to governance

Strengthening and exploiting these connections helps to organise collective intelligence in order to understand and act upon what is - and what needs to be - happening in different parts of the system. Networks and feedback loops are particularly important mechanisms for this. A learning system promotes a long-term step-by-step approach to school education development, with piloting, reflection and feedback, in order to ensure the sustainability and legacy of education policies.

Across Europe, the role of central government is increasingly focused on supporting and enabling change at local level, rather than prescribing it.

Within this system are **schools as learning organisations**.

These encourage and enable teachers and school leaders to improve both their pedagogical and their organisational practices concurrently through local collaborative research, networking and continued professional development. Developing the capacity and role of teachers and school leaders is essential for schools to provide a clear strategic vision and leadership that guides and fully supports teaching and learning, and which enables effective communication with other practitioners and stakeholders.

Such schools do not exist in isolation; they are linked and embedded within a learning system where decision-makers can learn from the developments that are taking place in and around schools.

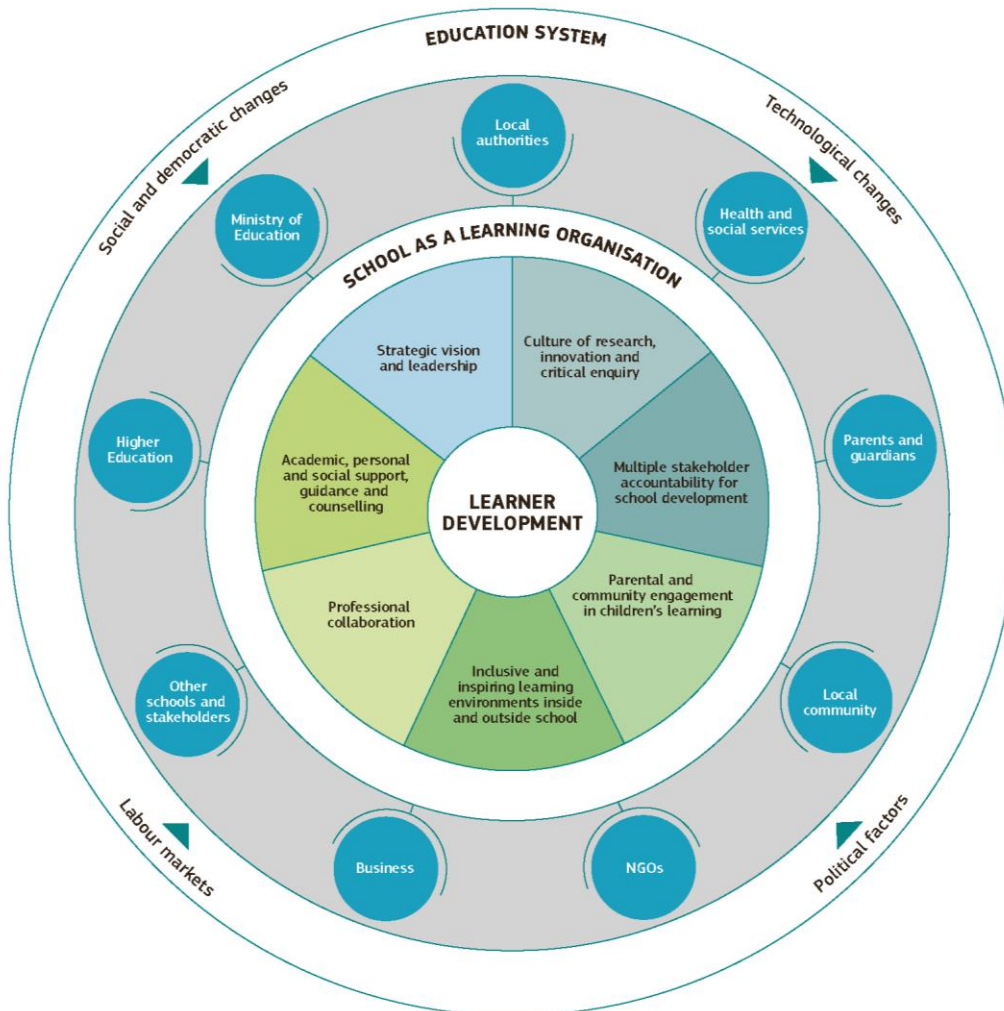


Figure 2: The different elements of schools as learning organisations. This was developed in several contexts: the thematic work on Teachers and School leaders using a similar OECD/UNICEF (2016) model; the Study on Supporting school innovation across Europe (European Commission 2018); and Working Group discussions on the aims and activity of education systems.

3.1 Policy action within school education as a learning system

In the context of school education as a learning system, policy action takes a critically reflective approach. This section describes the main features of that process and how key elements can be examined in response to a number of key questions.

It is important to first define a **vision and values** for school education.

➤ **Key question(s)**

- i. What are the strategic goals of a new or revised policy action and how does this action contribute to an overall national approach to raising the quality of learning experiences and outcomes?

A process then begins as a cycle of investigating what is happening within the system and making decisions based on that evidence. This cycle is dependent on the stakeholders within the system and their capacity to act, their creativity, the collaboration between them, their confidence, and the coherence of the action with other initiatives.

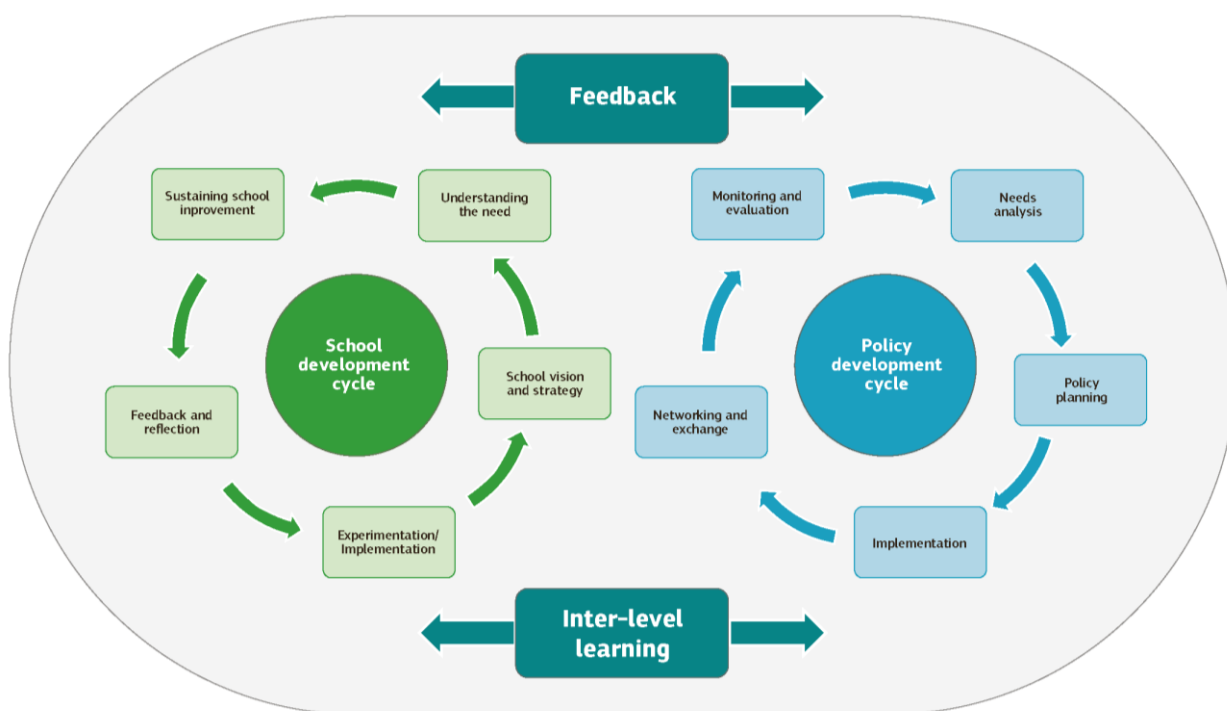


Figure 3: The twin cycles (processes) of development at school and system level, developed from the Study on Supporting school innovation across Europe (European Commission 2018)

Taking effective action in school education requires considering three key elements of the system: the **structure, mechanisms and actors** (stakeholders).

Structure

Any system should consider its structure, such as **horizontal and vertical links** between teachers, school leaders, authorities, and other actors, and the **flow of information**.

➤ Key question(s)

- ii. Who is responsible for each action at national, regional and local levels? How do the actions relate to each other?
- iii. How will consistency across regions and schools be supported?
- iv. How do the different actions contribute to improving learning outcomes?

Mechanisms

Specific mechanisms – meaning the **tools and processes** that work on both school organisation and pedagogical practice – should be versatile and carefully selected to operate in specific or a range of different contexts. They should take into account the impact on the system structure (see above) and the **work and relationships** of the system actors.

➤ Key question(s)

- v. Which mechanisms are the most appropriate to develop this area of education?
- vi. What types of incentives are used to encourage change?
- vii. How will different mechanisms relate to each other to generate synergies and to prevent inconsistency of objectives?
- viii. How do the different mechanisms reinforce the concept of continual learning and development (by teachers, schools)?

Actors

It is important for policy makers to consider how to build trust between stakeholders and a positive attitude towards school development, in order to encourage a more **participatory culture**. Particular attention may need to be given to 'mediating' actors who are leading, facilitating, or linking in the middle within the system; for example between school staff and local authorities.

➤ Key question(s)

- ix. Which stakeholders should be (more) actively involved in reviewing existing, or developing new, action?
- x. What competences are needed for actors to effectively and efficiently a) implement change and b) achieve feedback and evaluate results?

4. Four thematic areas of policy development

Responding to the key challenges in four areas of school education (see 2.1), the Working Group undertook an in-depth consideration of system structures, mechanisms and actors (see 3.1).



Quality assurance for school development: policy approaches to improve the interplay between quality assurance mechanisms that are external and internal to schools.



Continuity and transitions in learner development: policy approaches to ensure learner pathways are sufficiently flexible to create the conditions to provide appropriate guidance and support to all learners.



Teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations: policy approaches that promote teacher collaboration, autonomy, and distributed leadership within professional learning communities.



Networks for learning and development across school education systems: a deeper understanding of the purpose and nature of networks for innovation and implementation, and the participation of stakeholders at different levels of the system.

How to read the thematic reports

Each report sets out guiding principles for policy development within a context of recent research in a specific area of governance of school education. These principles are further illustrated with examples from countries, as shared and discussed by representatives of European ministries and stakeholder organisations - the members of the Working Group. The content comes from a series of meetings held in Brussels, literature reviews, research (member self-reporting), and Peer Learning Activities (longer meetings supporting members in collaborative critical review of their systems).

The reports are primarily designed for those making and shaping policies with an impact in and on education systems. They take a broad perspective on the governance of school education systems, taking into account not only structures, but also relationships, capacity, culture and accountability at multiple levels. Country examples are presented not only as success stories but also as part of ongoing development. They are offered as both illustration and inspiration.



Quality assurance

There is a need for greater coherence and synergy in quality assurance – that is, the effective interplay between internal and external mechanisms (tools, processes and actors) of quality assurance – in order to ensure that they best serve school development and innovation and allow schools to adapt to the changing needs of learners.

External mechanisms may include national or regional school evaluations and/or large-scale learner assessment. Internal mechanisms may include school self-evaluation, staff appraisal and classroom-based learner assessment. These mechanisms have different but complementary purposes. Ideally, they are part of a coherent, integrated approach in which the different mechanisms support and reinforce each other. They will provide data on aspects such as school climate; the well-being and professional development of all members of the school community; effective teaching and learning; and the impact of innovations. Quality assurance is also important for accountability; and well-functioning education systems have mechanisms to support and balance vertical and horizontal, internal and external accountability.

Conditions for effective quality assurance for school development include ensuring ownership of the process through meaningful dialogue and actions, and supporting opportunities for 'out of the box' thinking and creativity. The challenge for school education systems is to develop and sustain professional learning communities and cultures to support school development, with an emphasis on improvement more than quality 'control'. Whilst the focus is on the governance of school education systems, the ultimate aim of quality assurance is to ensure that learners have the best learning opportunities possible.

Guiding principles

1. **COHERENCE:** Systems should strive over time to achieve balance and coherence across different mechanisms that have been developed to meet the demands and expectations of stakeholders working within schools and in the wider school education system.
2. **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:** Quality assurance policies should support professional learning communities to make best use of quality assurance data for school and system development with the ultimate goal of ensuring the best learning opportunities for all learners.
3. **TRUST AND SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY:** Trust and respect between and among internal and external actors are fundamental for effective evaluation and school development.

4. **SUPPORT INNOVATION:** Schools leaders and teachers need opportunities to take considered risks in order to innovate and develop. Careful attention to data on the impact of innovations, including potential unintended outcomes, is essential.
5. **SHARED UNDERSTANDING AND DIALOGUE:** Quality assurance approaches should support the development of a common language and shared understanding among internal and external actors that the fundamental purpose of evaluation is to support school development.
6. **NETWORKS:** Networks between schools and with local and wider communities can support collective engagement, build social and intellectual capital and spark new synergies across school systems.
7. **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR DATA:** Investments in building capacity of key actors to generate, interpret and use data, are crucial.
8. **DIFFERENT DATA FOR BALANCED VIEW:** Different types of data - both quantitative and qualitative, and gathered over time - are necessary for a balanced understanding of school development and learner progress. These data should communicate authentic narratives of schools and provide the information necessary to support decision-making both within schools and across school systems.





Continuity and transitions

Learner pathways can become fragmented in a number of ways, risking underachievement and possible dropout from school. Transitions between levels and types of schools require consideration, as they can be a moment where problems arise or may reveal symptoms of other issues. However, if these pathways are sufficiently flexible and provide appropriate guidance and support, learners can encounter different ways and contexts of learning which can have a positive impact on their development.

Support to learner development can be formal or less formal and can take place within or outside the school. Regardless of context, a clear policy 'vision' and action needs to balance key priorities for each learner. This is in order to help them develop the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for an active role in work and life in society - both now and in the future. At the same time, the aim is to support the personal development of the individual and their relationships with others - taking into account their aspirations and building on their strengths.

There are key ways in which policy action can support continuity in learner development: bridging transition points between levels of education and facilitating transition between types of education; effectively generating and sharing data with appropriate mechanisms (how to measure and communicate); and using and reporting data analysis in an appropriate way and by different stakeholders to support learner decision-making. Being 'inclusive' as a system does not mean solely taking a universal approach to all learners. Taking an individualised approach to all learners is a basis for inclusiveness. It is also important to invest in targeted support to learners with additional needs, including those at particular risk.

Guiding principles

1. EARLY YEARS: High quality learning experiences should be available to all children from the beginning of their lives as a foundation for lifelong learning¹.
2. LEARNER AND PARENT CHOICE: Pupils and families should be supported with guidance and participatory decision-making in navigating pathways between levels and types of school education, and between school and future education and employment.
3. INTER-INSTITUTION COLLABORATION: Systems should have structures and mechanisms to support collaboration across institutions and between actors, focusing on transitions between levels and types of education.

¹ European Union Council's (2009 /C 119/02) strategic priorities for lifelong learning, include: (a) The personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens, and (b) Sustainable economic prosperity and employability, whilst promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue.

4. **TEACHING AND LEARNING:** Appropriate curricula and teacher pedagogical approaches should help bridge transitions and foster learners' growing sense of responsibility for their own competence development and future lives in society.
5. **ACCESS AND INCLUSION:** Systems should ensure sufficient flexibility to include and integrate pupils who enter or leave at different stages, or who have difficulty in accessing formal education.
6. **SHARING DATA:** Relevant learner data should be shared between institutions in both directions, as part of an ongoing dialogue to ensure continuity and progression in learning and continued support for competence development.
7. **DIFFERENT TYPES OF DATA:** Information from quantitative and qualitative assessment and reporting mechanisms should be used to help construct a holistic understanding of learner development and progression.
8. **APPROPRIATE LEARNING CONTEXTS:** Supportive, varied and inspiring learning environments and contexts – relevant to the stage of development and different learners – should be created and reviewed.
9. **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:** Schools should have the capacity to engage with different stakeholders to provide social and emotional support to learners, including during the period of transition between levels of education.
10. **SUPPORT TO 'AT-RISK' LEARNERS:** Targeted strategies and resources should be used to identify and support vulnerable learners at the earliest opportunity – this school information should also be fed back at regional/national level to support policy-making and strategic investment for pupils at risk.





Teachers and school leaders

Teachers and school leaders are central to the learning process in schools. However schools are organised, and whatever curricula are taught, pupils are ultimately dependent for their competence development on the expertise, energy, inspiration and imagination of the adults to whom they are entrusted. Teachers can be motivated by this privileged responsibility, but it is not an easy challenge and societal and governmental expectations are demanding. There may also be tension between, on the one hand, the autonomy vested in teachers and school leaders, and, on the other, the accountability that might be expected of them.

Although set within a national or regional framework of governance for the education system, teachers and school leaders ultimately work in their local context. They have a real and immediate setting for their work, which also extends beyond school into the local community, including parents and employers and support services. Policies should therefore aim to enable them within these environments by promoting and supporting team learning and collaboration among all staff, with an emphasis on peer-learning and distributed leadership. The wide range of policies and regulations that shape the working environment and effectiveness of these professionals extends beyond curricula, guidelines on learner assessment or school funding. It also includes initial teacher education, recruitment, professional development and career pathways, none of which can be considered in isolation.

The personal and collective identities that teachers and school leaders form are also critical. If teachers and school leaders feel trusted and respected, and feel fully integrated into the wider education system, they may be more motivated to collaborate and improve that system, at local level, and potentially beyond.

Guiding principles

1. **EDUCATION AS A LEARNING SYSTEM:** Education should be an inclusive learning system with a key role for teachers and school leaders.
2. **COHERENCE OF POLICIES:** Policy-makers should aim to achieve coherence across the system, aligning different policies directly affecting teachers and school leaders and embedding them in wider school policies, to serve the ultimate objective of ensuring high quality education for all learners.
3. **SHARED VISION AND UNDERSTANDING:** Shared vision and understanding, which consider national, regional and local perspectives and priorities on school policy, give direction to the work of schools as learning organisations and to the systems by which they are supported.

4. **SETTING EXPECTATIONS:** Clear expectations for the engagement of teachers and school leaders that can be set through frameworks, such as standards, competence frameworks and curricula, help to define roles within learning organisations.
5. **SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHERS SHAPING LEARNING SYSTEMS:** School leaders and teachers should be acknowledged and respected for their expertise and their contribution to developing the education system at different levels.
6. **PROFESSIONAL CULTURE:** Education systems can help schools develop professional working and learning cultures that motivate teachers and school leaders.
7. **RESEARCH, REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND ENQUIRY:** Policies should support a culture of research, reflective practice and enquiry-based learning at school.
8. **PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES, CAPACITY AND AUTONOMY:** Teachers and school leaders should be supported in their professional development, autonomy and growth in a continuum spanning all phases of their careers.
9. **LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE:** Systems should provide opportunities for school leaders and teachers to develop leadership competences that support them in strategic thinking and planning.





Networks

Networks are a way for different actors and levels of school education systems - policy makers, schools, school education leaders, teachers and a range of stakeholders - to promote and support school development. They can help these stakeholders to address and potentially solve problems concerning the education of young people in collaborative and flexible ways. They are important sites of co-responsibility and shared accountability.

Understanding how these professional networks function, and identifying the important elements to consider, can help to better realise network goals, identify opportunities for networking across school education systems, and contribute to a broad and embedded culture of learning. This culture values – and is dependent on – trust and motivation, as well as confidence, communication, collaboration, and critical (self-)reflection. At school level, in particular, it depends on having satisfactory conditions and status for teachers and an acknowledgement of the demanding nature of teaching. Networks should not exist for their own sake: they depend on mutualism and action driven towards shared goals. It is important to use evidence for their appropriate creation and development so that action has the greatest impact possible.

Guiding principles

1. **GOALS:** a shared vision is needed to inspire the cooperation of different actors, in the interest of school development. Clear shared goals should be defined the first stage in network development, in order to engage the appropriate actors in an appropriate structure. Goals may be redefined as the network evolves.
2. **AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY & FLEXIBILITY:** pay attention to the decision-making capacity, agency (ability to act) and perceived control by different actors. Flexibility may encouraged increased activity. Self-assessment may help identify or motivate new network actors; help existing members identify their own needs; and contribute to network development with an increased sense of ownership.
3. **MOTIVATION & BENEFITS:** an open and supportive environment supports inter-school and inter-professional exchanges. Balance interests within and between different system levels, as friction and competition between schools or other actors can undermine the cohesiveness of networks. It is important to demonstrate that the inputs (in time or resources) are proportionate to the outputs.
4. **ROLES:** Promote cooperation between teachers: a) providing time for dedicated activities, b) assuring recognition; c) giving them a voice, and d) assuring a climate of trust. Clarify positions - this may be different to their daily professional tasks or simply not a conscious awareness. Effective distribution of leadership is particularly important.
5. **CAPACITY-BUILDING:** teacher collaborative competence should be developed through ITE and CPD. There should be both horizontal and vertical cooperation, taking care not to overload particular actors. Mediators between network points may need specific support.

6. CROSS-SECTORAL WORKING: identify points of shared interest and align policy development cycles of different areas. Evidence-based policymaking and practice requires connections with and between teacher-led experimentation, and expert pedagogical research.

7. NETWORK DEVELOPMENT: networks should be flexible. Understand that they may be temporary or longer term, and may exist as an initial phase in establishing and embedded a culture of collaboration. They may also make lasting connections of which project activity may be one part; guided by the actors. Managing or acting within networks can inform decisions about distribution of resources.

8. IMPACT, QUALITY ASSURANCE & EVIDENCE: Monitoring and evaluation is central to understanding the effectiveness of networks and self-reflection is key to ongoing development. Consider how progress and outcomes will be measured, define key indicators, and to decide how and by whom they will be measured. Appropriate data generated by networks should be taken into account at local and national levels of decision-making.

5. Policy guidance in action

Five examples of responses to educational challenges to inspire policy makers

This section translates the key policy messages from conceptual understanding into scenarios of practical application.

It describes five hypothetical 'policy challenges', each based on one or more real country examples. Each challenge is then followed by a description of the relevant guiding principles and policy measures from the four thematic reports, which policy makers may consider in order to design an approach to a similar challenge. No single scenario attempts to describe all European systems, or even a single system, perfectly. They are offered as inspiration to be adapted to different national, regional or local contexts.

The five examples concern:

1. School development
2. Teacher professional development
3. Support to specific groups of learners
4. Supporting innovation
5. Coherent policy-making and action

Each example highlights specific sections of the thematic reports inviting the reader to explore the policy options in more depth, based on real country examples. These sources are complemented by references to other European work and publications.

Policy Challenge 1: School development

The scenario

In this education system, schools that are performing adequately, as evidenced by pupils' learning outcomes, receive a visit from the inspectorate once every five years. Schools that are at risk of underperformance are visited annually and provided with extra support and guidance. At the same time, it is apparent that even in the best schools, learners' performance is stagnant.

The inspectorate reports that there are changes schools could make to help learners achieve their full potential. However, the challenges and possible responses are very varied depending on the region and on the local community. The inspectorate recommends to the ministry to develop policies that support school development in other ways than national (government-led) initiatives.

ET2020 Working Group Schools – key messages and case studies

While there is a continued role for external quality assurance, for example through inspection or national learner assessments, internal mechanisms can support teachers to take collective responsibility for pupils' learning. By promoting schools as learning organisations, both centralised and decentralised systems can encourage and enable teachers and school leaders to help shape pedagogy and refine current practice through local research and networking. Individual teachers, teaching teams, and entire schools are then less reliant on conventional hierarchies (waiting for change to be initiated from the top down). They are also in a better position to respond to rapid changes of policy and ever-higher quality expectations.

Within school

School **self-evaluation** coupled with teacher appraisal helps direct action to those areas most in need of improvement. School self-evaluation can also support cultures of informed risk-taking, as schools develop the capacity to identify areas for improvement and, through joint-enquiry, develop innovative approaches to addressing needs. Schools are able to monitor the impact of innovations and to adjust strategies to develop new school action plans, such as in **France** and **Cyprus** (QA 4.2).

Clarifying expectations towards staff in **competence frameworks or standards** can help make collaboration and a contribution to wider school development the norm. Supporting teachers and school leaders to act as researchers and innovators was one of the aims of the Bulgarian new national educational standards (TSL 4.7, Box 19).

There are other measures to give more **autonomy** to schools, for example by adjusting their curricula or learning environments to be more suited to the needs of pupils. This has been the case with **Portugal's** 'autonomy contracts' and in some of **Spain's** lower secondary schools (CT 4.8).

In order to help drive school development, **school leaders** should be **inspiring** and be able to **set priorities** for themselves and others. A number of countries have developed leadership initiatives, such as **Estonia** who also include mentoring in their programme (TSL, 4.9, Box 30).

Between schools

The concept of the school as a learning organisation implies that schools can also connect with other schools, enabling co-construction of educational progress. Similarly, professional learning communities view individual teachers as connected within a broader culture of professionals with shared concerns and goals.

Supporting **networking between schools** has been proven to have a positive impact on school and teacher development, and learning outcomes. This is due to the sharing of practices and peer-supported critical reflection based on a local understanding of other schools' circumstances. Examples include the TEIP programme in disadvantaged regions in **Portugal** (N 4.4, Case Study 8) and the SHARE project, partnering lower and higher performing schools in **Serbia** (N 4.4, Case Study 9).

In a number of countries, such as Italy, grouping primary and lower secondary schools can support development particularly around the time of **transition** from one to the other (CT 4.3). Steiner Waldorf Schools offer another example of cooperation between early childhood education and care and primary education, and of the integration of primary and secondary education (CT 4.3, Box 6).

School and wider community

School development can be supported by the involvement of local community members, including parents, higher education institutions, welfare services, cultural organisations, and businesses. This can be not only by exchanging ideas but also by **sharing resources** and offering **alternative learning environments**. Both **Greece** and **Finland** have a multi-stakeholder approach to learner development (CT 4.2). As part of their own development, schools may need to address the mechanisms and language by which they engage with different actors, particularly parents.

Schools and the system

Having a **shared vision** is crucial for the system to support school development. By taking into account national, regional and local perspectives and priorities on school policy, such a vision will give direction to the work of schools as learning organisations and to the systems by which they are supported, such as in **Portugal** and **Finland** (TSL 4.3).

Multiple types of data, gathered over time, are needed to develop a **well-rounded understanding** of school development across the system. For example, in **Serbia**, the 'School Report Card' uses indicators and a checklist of information gathered by the school (QA 4.8, Box 22). The new model of evaluation in **Montenegro** includes an indicator on the presence of educational innovations (QA 4.4 Box 11).

Further inspiration

Study on Supporting School Innovation Across Europe (European Commission 2018)

Policy Challenge 2: Teacher professional development

The scenario

The national Ministry of Education has long had a strong focus on academic excellence for all pupils. Teachers entering the profession have demonstrated their own academic achievements and deep knowledge of both pedagogy and the subject(s) they will teach. They are well prepared through their Initial Teacher Education to teach the curricula.

At the same time, many teachers are facing challenges in their schools and classrooms as they find that learners, for a variety of reasons, are increasingly disengaged, distracted, or in need of extra support. A recent survey reveals that teachers feel less prepared to address their pupils' needs, and are concerned that they are not learning effectively.

Policy makers in charge of teacher development want to decide on measures to improve teachers' capacities, both individually and collectively.

ET2020 Working Group Schools – key messages and case studies

Increasingly, schools and teachers have both a need and greater autonomy to develop strategies that are appropriate for the needs of their pupils and for the local context. One implication is that professional development to a significant extent becomes local, generated from within the school and its immediate network. The essential objective of Continued Professional Development must be to create a lasting impact on pupils' learning through improved teaching practice as well as efforts to engage learners and meet their individual needs.

Within the area of quality assurance in school education, responses to evaluations – particularly in systems that hold teachers accountable - need to have a strong focus on supporting improvement. They also need to be based on trust and respect between internal and external actors (QA 4.3). Countries may be able to address this by reviewing opportunities and modes of self-assessment.

Developing a **shared vision and understanding** strengthens teachers' and school leaders' ability to develop effective learning and teaching, and to collaborate rather than compete (TSL, 4.3). This may be achieved through open fora or platforms to bring together perspectives from different levels, such as **Finland's** 'Teacher Education Forum' (TSL 4.3, Box 7).

Policy makers might also consider ways to **align teacher policies with wider school (and other) policies**, such as in **Romania** and the **Netherlands** (TSL 4.2, Box 5).

Creating opportunities for staff to innovate, take risks and experiment in a **spirit of inquiry** and open-mindedness are also important. This may include teacher-led sharing of good practice online, such as in **Belgium(Flanders)** (N 4.5, Case Study 11), and within specific areas of teaching such as digital education in the e-Schools initiative in **Croatia** (TSL 4.6, Box 18). It also may require consideration of the **time available** within teachers' contracted working hours for such professional development activities.

Where teachers receive personalised feedback there can be significant positive impact on learning outcomes, as demonstrated in Latvia (QA 4.2, Box 19).

Developing competence through collaboration

Teachers and school leaders will also need appropriate competences to take full advantage of this autonomy. Policy action may focus on:

Teachers collaborating effectively at the school level and with service providers in the community: A number of countries have implemented targeted support to 'at risk' learners from external services (CT 4.10). Professional networks may also be established to achieve specific goals, including the input of other expertise as in Slovenia (N 4.5, Case Study 10).

Self-gathering and interpreting of data on school performance and developing and monitoring school plans: Different tools may be developed to support teachers and schools to reflect on specific learner groups, such as the self-evaluation form developed in Sweden (CT 4.7, Box 32).

Teachers engaging in joint enquiry and design interventions to better support learning: Research, reflective practice and enquiry are encouraged in many countries (TSL 4.7), for example, the use of an ongoing professional portfolio in Italy (TSL 4.7, Box 20) or partnerships with higher education institutions for practice-oriented educational programmes as in Norway (TSL 4.8, Box 24).

Supporting the development of visionary, inspirational school leaders, including the ability to inspire and to set priorities for oneself and others: Competence frameworks, or standards, can help to define roles set expectations for professional learning, such as in Ireland and Slovakia (QA 4.5 Box 14) and under development in Slovenia and Latvia (TSL 4.4 and 4.5).

National support bodies for leadership may also be established, such as in Austria and Ireland (TSL 4.6 Box 29).

Further inspiration

Guide on policies to improve Initial Teacher Education (ET2020 Working Group report, 2016)

Supporting teacher competence development (ET2020 Working Group report 2013)

eTwinning: the European Commission's online teacher community

School Education Gateway: the European Commission's online platform for school education

Policy Challenge 3: Support to specific groups of learners

The scenario

A small municipality has seen an increase in the number of newly arrived migrant children and their families in recent years. Local schools have reported that they lack the resources and expertise to meet the language and welfare needs of these children.

When the ministry calls a strategy meeting with municipal leaders, it is revealed that these challenges are echoed by schools and officials in some neighbouring municipalities. They report that even though they have not received as many first-generation migrants, pupils in certain areas of the city are entering lower secondary with literacy levels significantly lower than their peers’.

ET2020 Working Group Schools – key messages and case studies

As explored principally under the theme of ‘Continuity and Transitions, action at national, regional and local level can be directed to different learner groups: ‘universal’ strategies are for all learners; ‘selected’ strategies for specific groups; and ‘indicated’ strategies for particular individuals.

Universal strategies

Evidence shows that **good quality Early Childhood Education and Care** is an important basis for learner development at subsequent educational stages, and that investing early achieves greater returns than at any other educational stage. It is also an environment that supports the integration migrant children, such as in **Norway** where free early education for children from a migrant background is associated with improved outcomes at first and second grade (CT 4.1). Therefore, a review of support for all learners should include early years settings alongside schools, as well as the transition from one to the other, as supported by a specific language-learning network in **Austria** (N, 4.5).

Another broad approach is to create opportunities for **teacher pedagogical exchange**, including on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. This has proven to be effective in the **United Kingdom** where it is based on a national skills framework (CT 4.3, Box 5) in **Slovenia** where it takes the form of a government-driven network initiative (N, 4.5, Case Study 10).

Policy makers may also review the support to schools regarding the **monitoring of learners’ progress**. A pupil monitoring system in **Belgium(Flanders)** is an example of a testing package with guidelines that can also be an effective part of school self-evaluation (QA, 4.7, Box 20).

Involving stakeholder organisations, consulting European networks, or creating **multi-disciplinary teams** might also be options for this policy scenario. Such contacts can provide a range of expertise and research evidence that can inform decision-making relevant to all pupils (TSL 4.2, Box 4).

Strategies for specific groups

A cause of low attainment of learners may be that they are leaving and entering school systems at different stages, or have difficulty with accessing mainstream education. Policy responses may vary from separate reception classes for migrant learners, such as in **Turkey**, to specific ‘immersion’ programmes within mainstream schooling, such as in Italy (CT 4.5).

Cross-school collaboration may also be supported in order to meet the needs of specific groups of learners, such as the Priority Intervention Educational Territories Programme (TEIP) in **Portugal**, which offers a promising model for school clusters (N 4.4, Case Study 8).

Although intended for selected groups of learners, the challenge remains of how to implement relevant pedagogical approaches nationally, in contexts where schools have little prior exposure to such methods, and where they have not traditionally featured within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes. There are examples of national centres that have successfully provided **curricula support and teacher professional development**, such as in **Sweden** for newly arrived migrants (CT 4.5 Box 10) and **Greece** (N 4.2, Case Study 3).

Strategies for individual learners

The quality of relationships with peers, family and teachers, alongside physical and mental health, are all determinants of positive educational outcomes.

Policy measures can secure **access to counselling and specialist support services** and thus to high quality social and emotional support to learners, such as in **Estonia** (CT 4.9, Box 17) and **Slovenia** (CT 4.9, Box 18). Newly arrived migrant learners may have missed periods of schooling and experienced family separation or other traumatic events. Targeted support would need to form part of a strategy to facilitate their inclusion.

Teachers also require support to **work effectively with other actors in the community**, particularly families, such as through the ‘School as Community Centre’ initiative in **Albania** (TSL, 4.5, Box 14). This may be assisted by early identification and intervention processes, such as in **Norway** (CT 4.10 Box 19).

Constructing a **holistic narrative of an individual’s development** may also require the revision of approaches to assessment of and for learning. This may include specific tools such as portfolios, piloted in a number of countries, or a shift to looking beyond academic achievement, such as in the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** (QA 4.8, Box 25).

Further inspiration

A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving (ET2020 Working Group report, 2016)
School education for migrants: European Commission [webpage](#)

Policy Challenge 4: Supporting innovation

The scenario

The ministry has recently completed a long implementation of a new curriculum. Whilst it has assured teachers and school leaders that there will be no significant changes in the near future, it is keen to build on some early improvements and maintain a spirit of positive change.

There is new drive to encourage schools and local level actors to take the initiative and provide enhanced learning opportunities. However, the recent implementation involved a number of phases of work which demanded a lot from regional governors whilst some schools and groups and teachers felt neglected.

The ministry instructs a new Innovation Unit to support innovation across the system, in particular the capacity-building of educators.

ET2020 Working Group Schools – key messages and case studies

Across the system

Where innovation has been the focus of initiatives, a number successful system-wide approaches to educational development and progress have all supported **participatory and collaborative** working to achieve their aims. Different examples exist from **Austria, Slovenia** and some major European cities (TSL, 4.1, Box 2).

Networks can support policy formulation and testing and therefore act both as a source of innovation and as a means of dissemination. This could include reaching out to a **range of stakeholders** and including their expertise in a consultation, such as the approach of Ireland's National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (N 4.2) or drawing on the expertise of cross-border networks of schools such as the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (N 4.1).

It is clear that local level stakeholders are crucial to the achievement of an effective school education system. If policy makers can harness the capability and enthusiasm of the school workforce, their plans for implementing innovation and progressive change stand a much greater chance of successful adoption. Coherent policies should provide a **stable platform for experimentation**. Engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including social partners, in dialogue and action may help achieve this consistency (TSL 4.2, Box 4) and complement the work in schools, such as via education conferences in **France** (QA 4.6).

In this policy challenge, the ministry has already engaged a new Innovation Unit. There may be other organisations, such as universities and research institutes, that could complement their work with **research and evidence**. This will then underpin the school leaders and teachers in their endeavours to shape their learning organisations. Identifying and recording such evidence of innovation may be initiated by school evaluation procedures, such as the inclusion of a specific innovation indicator in **Montenegro** (QA 4.4, Box 11).

Curriculum development should take account of wider societal and technological developments. Whilst not the only means of innovation, digital tools provide new opportunities for teaching and learning. Systems should also consider their digital strategy for school education, such as in Ireland and other countries (CT 4.4).

Schools

Given the ministry aims in the scenario, and the historical approach, it may be that the worked of regional authorities can be scaled back and that schools may be granted greater autonomy than in the past.

The **shared ownership** of the responsibility for innovation among relevant stakeholders at local level need not compromise the expectation of accountability. By reviewing and carefully adjusting the role of inspectors and raising the implied trust in the system, the likelihood of cooperation and innovation increases and whilst maintaining a focus on school development planning. Such approaches have been identified in **Hungary** (QA 4.2, Box 9), **Norway** and **the Netherlands** (QA 4.2, Box 10). They illustrate how greater autonomy at school level can be achieved without reducing the schools' responsibility for high quality outcomes.

Networks can support individual schools in their own innovative development, such as in **Switzerland** (N 4.2). They can also support clusters of schools to work **collaboratively**, such as **Portugal's** pilot programmes for Pedagogical Innovation and Curricular Flexibility (N 4.2) or provide the frame for a more complex programme of multi-stakeholder investment and school development, such as the Lighthouse project in Finland (N 4.4, Case Study 7).

Capacity of local actors

Identifying the **characteristics** and qualities of innovation in teachers themselves – as explored by The Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) in a research project across eleven countries (TSL 4.4, Box 11) - can help to determine what is appropriate support to develop these innovative qualities. This may be expressed in a **framework**, such as in **Bulgaria** (TSL, 4.7, Box 19).

Encouraging **distributed leadership** may also have a positive impact. This depends on establishing a high degree of shared vision and understanding and is able to break down long chains of command, but, more significantly, the approach better identifies and utilises the skill-set and expertise that individual colleagues can contribute. It may require systematic support and specialists in school development, such as is provided in **Luxembourg** (TSL 4.5 Box 14).

Networks may also directly connect innovative teachers who may feel isolated, and provide additional professional development opportunities, such as in the **Netherlands** (TSL 4.5, Box 16).

Further inspiration

Study on Supporting School Innovation Across Europe (European Commission 2018)

Policy Challenge 5: Coherent policy-making and action

The scenario

In recent years there have been a number of different priority areas in education together with changes of ministry organisation under successive governments. As a consequence, education policies – although having some positive impact - have typically been developed independently, and not necessarily with other parts of the education system or other policy areas in mind.

The priority for the new government is to consolidate existing initiatives whilst continuing to improve the competence development and learning outcomes of all pupils in all regions, including their well-being and other non-cognitive aspects of learning.

The ministry is under pressure to deliver certain objectives with a restricted budget at the same time as trying to maintain and improve a working relationship with and between education stakeholders (local and regional authorities, school leaders, teachers, pupils, parents, unions and other external partners).

ET2020 Working Group Schools – key messages and case studies

Coherence in this context refers to three aspects:

- i. Coherence of governance; i.e. across regional and local authorities and leaders
- ii. Coherence of practice; i.e. the peer learning that takes place between stakeholders to share and develop approaches while also supporting school autonomy and flexibility
- iii. Coherence of information; i.e. the different data that can be generated are aligned and can reinforce and support each other to improve an understanding of what is happening

These are also interdependent: modes of governance can support peer learning and data feeding back from local to national level can support future policy decision-making. National data can also support quality and equity of provision.

It is important to note that as well as a shared vision, as identified in **Finland** (QA, p. 4.7), flexibility (rather than tight alignment or conformity) is necessary to allow schools to adapt policies to their own local needs, and to encourage innovation that can ultimately support coherent policy action across diverse contexts. Stakeholder collaboration and engagement is also vital to a shared understanding of the policy aims, to ensure that policies and implementation reflect on-the-ground needs and are positively accepted.

Coherence of governance: regional structures and mediating stakeholders

A first step might be to improve the coherence of governance across the regions by identifying and supporting a leader or leaders to develop, deliver and act upon a shared vision. One example is the recent introduction of county governors to co-ordinate sub-networks of municipal leaders in

Norway (N 4.3, Case Study 4). A 'leading from the middle' approach like this can help bridge between central authorities and school organizational and pedagogical practices.

Where there are existing well-functioning regional structures, these may support an efficient and coherent approach for new purposes, such as in **Sweden** for an emerging Continued Professional Development initiative (N 4.3, Case Study 5). Local leaders might also be recruited for special tasks, for example in **Austria** where 'regional leaders' are co-ordinating different approaches and stakeholders that will reduce the need for special education schools (TSL 4.1, Box 2).

Further local adaptation of policies and initiatives may be developed through partnerships with stakeholders internal and external to schools. Eurocities, for example, provides platforms to foster cooperation and exchange among partners: school boards, providers of Initial Teacher Education, research institutions, trade unions, youth organisations, and others (N 4.6, Case Study 12). The benefits of horizontal co-ordination are evident here, even where there may be a variety of goals, and there is an increased chance of such work influencing policy development.

Clustering of schools may have a more direct impact on developing school governance, as seen in **Estonia, Italy** and also in the **United Kingdom** where regional co-ordination and investment were added to enhance an existing initiative to grant schools more autonomy (N 4.3).

Coherence of practice: supporting peer learning

Driving towards a widespread improvement of competence development will require a coherent approach to reforms of teaching and teacher preparation, assessment, and learner pathways from primary to lower and upper secondary school. Supporting peer learning between multiple stakeholders with specific expertise will be beneficial, such as for learners at risk of early school leaving, literacy, or improving the pathways to Vocational Education and Training (N 4.6). Such expertise can also achieve coherence by feeding into future policy development.

A broad drive to improving learners' competence development may require many schools and teachers to develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Curricula may provide guidelines, but flexibility to adapt to local contexts and pupils' needs will also be important. In the **Netherlands**, a funded national network connects innovative teachers with like-minded colleagues from other schools (TSL, 4.5). **Slovenia** also supports networks for school management and teacher learning within the context of national education projects (N, 4.6).

Coherence of information: generating and using different data

The data generated in evaluation processes can support teachers to identify what is working well and where improvement is needed in teaching and learning processes. External evaluators may aid this process to support improvement at school level. For coherence, there may be frameworks and reporting structures in place to streamline and gather information and to ensure alignment with internal school evaluation, such as in **Belgium(Flanders)** (QA 4.7, Box 20).

Sharing data concerning the transition of pupils between levels of schooling, such as in **Estonia** and **Ireland** (CT 4.6, Box 12), is a prime example of where local level actors require support but at the same time can feed back useful information to build a broad, national understanding at policy level.

Central co-ordination can also minimise the burden on schools, such as in **Spain, Belgium(Flanders)** and **Greece** (CT 4.6). Coherent mechanisms can evaluate on both micro and macro levels and ensure complementarity of information, with a sufficient detail for each level, such as in **Iceland** (QA 4.1 Box 2). For data that are made public, issues such as data protection and the impact on stakeholders require consideration.

Finally, complementary data and analysis can be gained by policy makers collaborating with other research bodies, such as in **Finland** and **Slovenia** (CT 4.7, Box 13). Integrating such perspectives can provide added value to coherent policy-making and action.

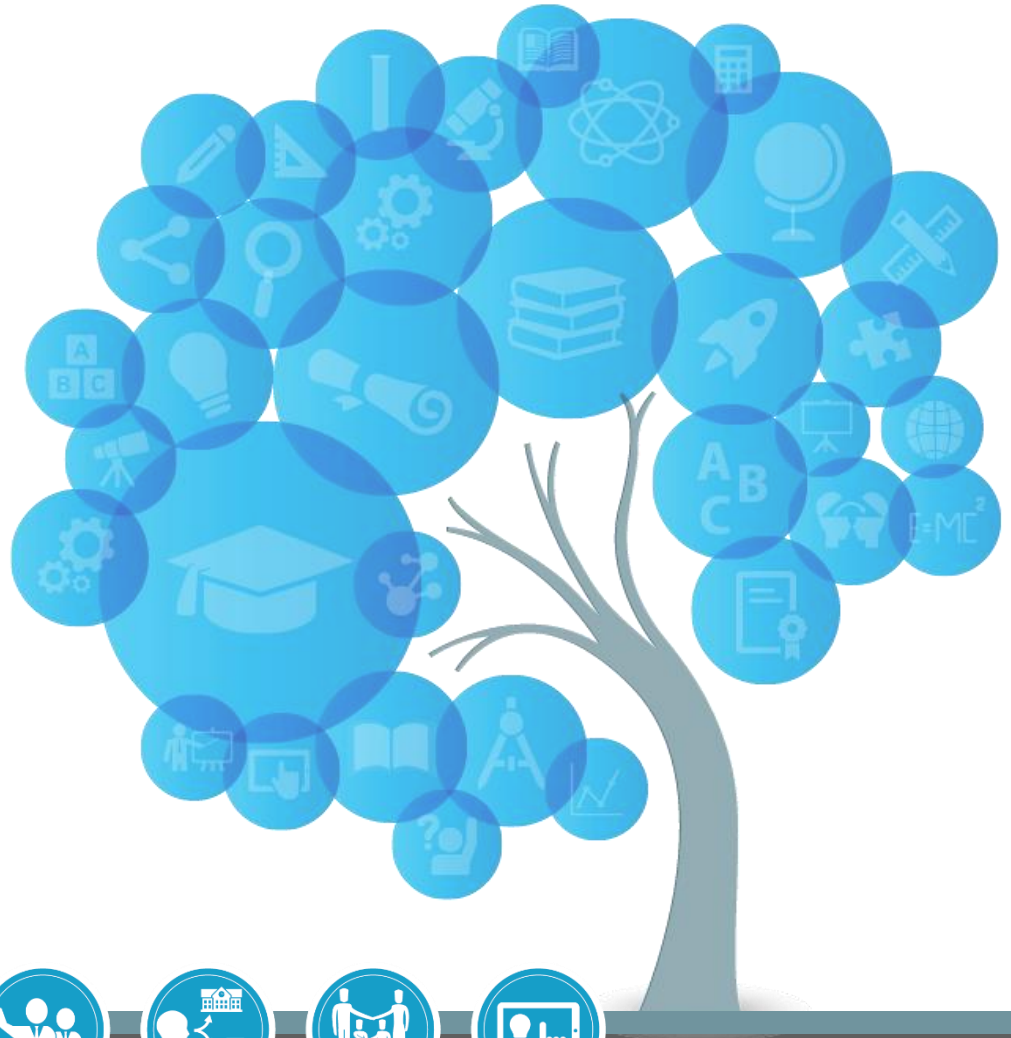
Further inspiration

Descriptions of National Education Systems, including Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments 2013-2015 (Eurydice [webpages](#))

Compendium of policy measures in education and training (European Commission [online database](#))



European
Commission



Quality assurance for school development

Guiding principles for policy development
on quality assurance in school education

Produced by the ET2020 Working Group Schools

Education
and Training

Quality assurance for school development

Output of the ET2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18

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1. About

ET2020 Working Group on Schools

Under its 2016-2018 mandate, the ET2020 Working Group on Schools¹ examined successful and emerging, or potential new, policy developments in Member States. These concern the governance of school education systems that can support and improve quality, inclusion and innovation. They focused on the capacity for systemic change in the four key interlinked areas: 1) quality assurance for school development; 2) continuity and transitions for learner development; 3) teachers and school leaders; and 4) networks.

Quality assurance for school development

Recent research-based recommendations point towards a need for greater coherence and synergy in quality assurance approaches – in particular, the effective interplay between internal and external mechanisms – in order to ensure that they best serve school development and innovation. This includes the Council Conclusions of 2014 on quality assurance in education and training, which called for supporting a culture of quality enhancement and trust. Conditions for effective quality assurance for school development include ensuring ownership of the process through meaningful dialogue and actions, and an opportunity for 'out of the box' thinking and creativity. The challenge for school education systems is to develop and sustain professional learning communities and cultures to support school development, with an emphasis on improvement more than quality 'control'. Whilst the focus here is on the governance of school education systems, the ultimate aim of quality assurance is to ensure that learners have the best learning opportunities possible.

This report

This report sets out eight principles developed by the ET2020 Working Group on Schools to guide policy-making related to quality assurance and, in particular, to ensure a productive synergy of external and internal quality assurance mechanisms. These principles are further illustrated with successful and emerging, or potential new, policy development examples from countries and other European stakeholder organisations. The document concludes with a general discussion of some key challenges and measures to support future policy action.

The content comes from a series of meetings held in Brussels, research (member self-reporting) exercise, and a Peer Learning Activity. The report was compiled and edited by Janet Looney (European Institute of Education and Social Policy - EIESP) and Hannah Grainger Clemson (European Commission) in January-March 2017 with review and validation by members in 2017 and 2018.

¹ Representatives from all Member States, EFTA and Candidate countries, plus social partners and stakeholder organisations.

2. Guiding Principles

2.1 Introduction to the principles

Quality assurance involves the systematic review of educational programmes and processes to maintain and improve their quality, equity and efficiency. While the design of quality assurance mechanisms (tools, processes and actors) varies across national contexts, their common objective is to improve teaching and learning – with the ultimate goal to support the best outcomes for learners.

Quality assurance approaches can include mechanisms that are external and internal to schools. External mechanisms may include national or regional school evaluations and/or large-scale student assessments. Internal mechanisms may include school self-evaluation, staff appraisal and classroom-based student assessments. These mechanisms have different but complementary purposes. Ideally, they are part of a coherent, integrated system, with the different mechanisms supporting and reinforcing each other. This kind of productive synergy can ensure a clear focus on school development, providing data on aspects such as school climate and the well-being of all members of the school community, effective teaching and learning, and the impact of innovations.

Quality assurance is important for accountability as well as to support ongoing development of schools and of teaching and learning. Well-functioning systems have mechanisms to support and balance vertical and horizontal, internal and external accountability. Quality assurance that is focused on development supports schools to adapt to the changing needs of learners. The focus is not only on improvement but also innovation – that is, the development or experimental testing of approaches in different contexts -- to support quality, equity and efficiency. Approaches to quality assurance may need to be adapted over time to better meet needs for feedback and decision-making across systems.

2.2 The eight guiding principles

1. **COHERENCE:** Systems should strive over time to achieve balance and coherence across different mechanisms that have been developed to meet the demands and expectations of stakeholders working within schools and in the wider school education system.
2. **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:** Quality assurance policies should support professional learning communities to make best use of quality assurance data for school and system development with the ultimate goal of ensuring the best learning opportunities for all learners.
3. **TRUST AND SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY:** Trust and respect between and among internal and external actors are fundamental for effective evaluation and school development.
4. **SUPPORT INNOVATION:** Schools leaders and teachers need opportunities to take considered risks in order to innovate and develop. Careful attention to data on the impact of innovations, including potential unintended outcomes, is essential.
5. **SHARED UNDERSTANDING AND DIALOGUE:** Quality assurance approaches should support the development of a common language and shared understanding among internal and external actors that the fundamental purpose of evaluation is to support school development.
6. **NETWORKS:** Networks between schools and with local and wider communities can support collective engagement, build social and intellectual capital and spark new synergies across school systems.
7. **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR DATA:** Investments in building capacity of key actors to generate, interpret and use data, are crucial.
8. **DIFFERENT DATA FOR BALANCED VIEW:** Different types of data - both quantitative and qualitative, and gathered over time - are necessary for a balanced understanding of school development and learner progress. These data should communicate authentic narratives of schools and provide the information necessary to support decision-making both within schools and across school systems.

3. Context

3.1 Policy context – recent research

School education systems are complex and vary greatly across Europe and the same is true of the quality assurance mechanisms that are embedded in and steer themⁱ. It is believed that one model of quality assurance cannot fit all systems; therefore it is more appropriate to explore the role of different stakeholders and the processes they follow at national and/or regional level. Policy makers may then learn from varied experiences of their peers in other countries. This includes exploring the interplay among the different elements of a system, given that recent research-based recommendations point toward a need for greater coherence in approaches to quality assurance.

Many countries incorporate evaluations that are external and internal to schools, which can complement and reinforce each other. It is believed that school education systems that support the synergy of external and internal quality assurance mechanisms will have more resilience for the complex process of change.

While each system is different, countries share several common policy challenges and opportunities in their approach to quality assurance. These include how to:

- set goals and measure progress for education systems and student learning;
- design quality assurance for education systems that are increasingly diverse, decentralised and multi-level;
- support and encourage dialogue and cultures of trust between and among education stakeholders;
- ensure transparency of quality assurance data while also avoiding the pressure of high stakes approaches; and
- prioritise human and financial resources.

Many countries are engaged in continuing or recent reforms, ranging from a general introduction of quality assurance mechanisms, the introduction of specific measures, the adoption of national frameworks, or the formal incorporation of PISA results.

Building evidence: the purpose of quality assurance mechanisms

Governments are increasingly concerned with assuring the quality of public services, including education. In education systems, schools are held accountable for helping all students to meet standards, and for effective and efficient use of resources. Within the context of the European and National Quality Frameworks, systems focus on learning outcomes (defined as ‘statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do at the end of a learning process’)ⁱⁱ. Learning outcomes are intended to ensure qualifications are transparent, and to support accountabilityⁱⁱⁱ.

Decision makers may refer to quality assurance data to: ensure that schools are meeting standards set out in National Qualification Frameworks; distribute resources effectively and equitably; identify schools that are 'at risk' and in need of additional support; and to highlight and share 'good practices' more widely, with the purpose of stimulating and supporting school improvement. Both quantitative and qualitative data are important in this regard.

Increasingly, national governments are shifting greater control to the local level while maintaining responsibility for the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of the overall system. National policy mechanisms may include direct interventions, such as regulations, or indirect interventions, such as frameworks that may be adapted to local conditions^{iv}.

At national and regional levels, it is important to have broad indicators of overall education performance. Quantitative data may be aggregated to make system-level decisions, for example, the equitable distribution of resources across regions and schools. At the school level, disaggregated quantitative data may be used to identify areas where further investigation of student needs may be appropriate. Qualitative data also provide important context and allow a more nuanced understanding of the school's progress.

Countries are also increasingly allowing schools greater autonomy so they may better respond to local contexts and individual learner needs. Internal quality assurance mechanisms support evidence-based decision-making for internal accountability (that is, peer professional accountability) and school development.

Most European countries have created frameworks that integrate some combination of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms, which may include:

- Inspectorates
- National student assessments
- School self-evaluation
- Teacher appraisal

These mechanisms generate data on the overall performance of systems as well as the quality of schools and of the teacher workforce, as measured against learning outcomes and standards defined in National Qualification Frameworks.

Ideally, a broad range of education and training stakeholders, including early childhood education and care (ECEC), general, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE) cooperate to ensure continuity of standards across the sectors^v. At the European level, ongoing work on quality assurance is articulated across fields in education^{vi, vii}.

Finally, it is important to note that quality assurance is an important complement to education research and knowledge. Quality assurance mechanisms provide data on current performance and help to identify areas of success as well as areas for system and school improvement. Education research methodologies allow a much deeper view on 'what works best for

learning^{viii}, for whom, and under what circumstances. Both quality assurance and education research support reflection on effective school development.

Accountability and improvement

The different country approaches to quality assurance are apparent not only in how they integrate external and internal mechanisms, but also in how they balance their accountability and improvement functions. There are concerns that ‘high stakes’ approaches to accountability may undermine school development. High stakes may include denial of accreditation to schools that do not meet quality assurance standards, financial sanctions for schools, or impact on teachers’ careers or salaries. Many countries publish the results of student assessments and school evaluations, which teachers may perceive as adding to stakes^{ix} 2. Reliance on a limited number of high-visibility evaluations and assessments, and government or media-generated ‘league tables’, may also increase stakes.

However, both accountability and improvement are important for ensuring the quality of processes as well as of outcomes. Mechanisms that include a focus on accountability typically include some kind of incentives to focus teachers’ attention on central performance standards and the need to help all students succeed³. At the same time, a focus on improvement ensures that data are used to identify needs, adjust school strategies, and motivate improvements in instruction.

While there are concerns that high stakes may inhibit development and innovation and demotivate staff, countries have taken a variety of approaches to moderate their impact and to place greater emphasis on improvement. For example, a number of countries highlight the importance of moving away from quality assurance as ‘control’ to a more open and ‘trust-based’ approaches. Publication of a range of data on school and teacher performance may also help to lower stakes associated with a single, high-visibility assessment or school evaluation, although this might not always be the perception.

The balance of accountability and improvement is also relevant to internal quality assurance. At the school-level, there is some evidence that strong teacher-to-teacher trust, a collective focus on improving instruction and learning, and teacher experience are associated with higher levels of student attainment^x. In turn, teachers in more successful schools have stronger levels of trust, which indicates strong levels of internal control and accountability^{xi}. Internal quality assurance mechanisms are most effective when they support teacher collective work and are focused on improving instruction^{xii}.

² These include Belgium(Flanders), the Czech Republic, Iceland - school self-evaluation and examinations, Italy - school self-evaluation report, Ireland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - school rankings published, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain - partial results published, Portugal - results of national assessments, and Slovakia -performance indicators rather than school evaluation.

³ It should be noted that there is ongoing debate about levels to set standards for student learning. One approach is to set high standards for all students. An alternative approach is to set standards for all students to achieve and standards to strive for. This debate relates to concerns as to how best to support all learners.

Teacher appraisal, which may be conducted externally (inspectors or local administrators) and/or internally (school management or peers), is another area where it is important to balance accountability and improvement. It is important to clearly separate appraisal that is meant to help teachers to improve classroom teaching from appraisal for high-stakes decisions related to performance awards and/or career advancement. If teachers feel that there are career consequences attached to an appraisal process, they are less likely to be open about areas where they feel they need to improve, thus missing out on an important opportunity for feedback and support^{xiii}. For high-stakes decisions with career consequences, teachers should be encouraged to demonstrate their positive accomplishments.

Reviewing complex quality assurance systems – achieving coherence, adaptability and sustainability

No single internal or external quality assurance mechanism can provide all the information needed for school accountability and development. Taken together, the different mechanisms can provide important and complementary insights on school, teacher and student performance and support evidence-based decision-making.

External quality assurance mechanisms aim to provide objective, valid and reliable data on school performance. For example, school inspectors, who are *not* part of the school community, bring objective viewpoints to school climate, the quality of development strategies, and teacher performance. As inspectors visit a range of schools, they also have the unique opportunity to share ideas on effective practice among schools. A recent study concludes that inspection visits, as well as other inspection processes, appear to have direct, immediate, effects on the quality and responsiveness of school's self-evaluation processes, and therefore school effectiveness^{xiv}. Importantly, inspectorates should be able to provide evidence that inspectors use the same criteria and standards to evaluate schools and teachers (inter-inspector reliability), ensuring that the approach is fair to all schools.

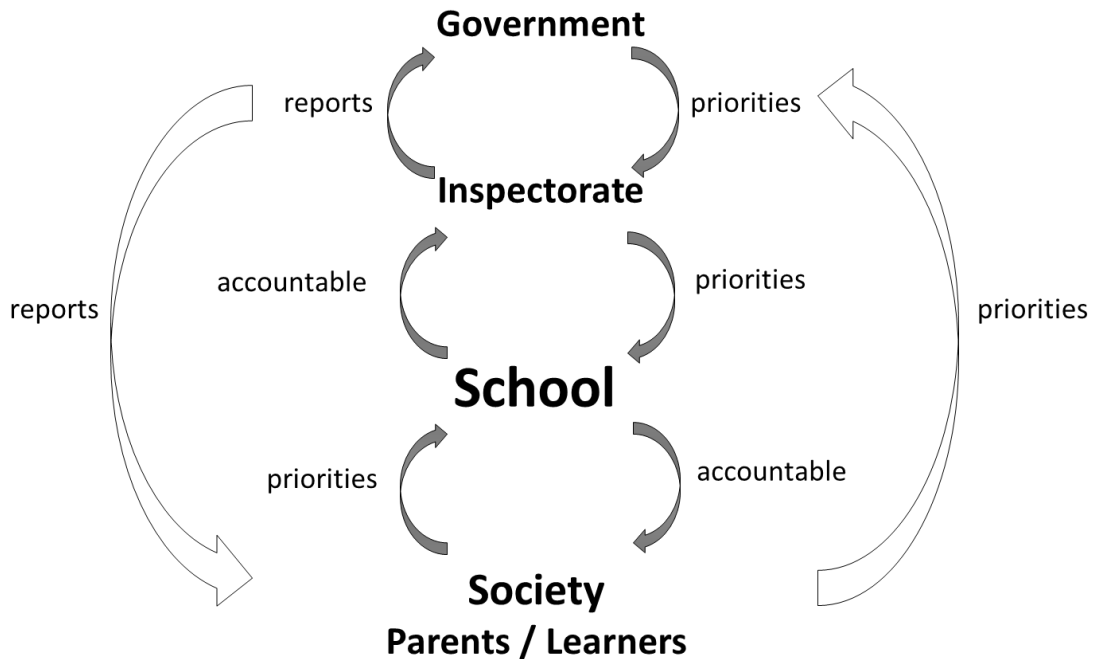
Policy makers may track equity of outcomes, areas for improvement, and progress over time. National (and international) student assessments provide valid and reliable data on the attainment of the general student population. However, the results of student assessments alone cannot provide the rounded perspective needed to support policy decisions related to resource allocation, programmes to support inclusion, curriculum development, and so on. Policy makers are in a position to develop strategies to address a broad range of needs if data sources are combined.

At the school and classroom level, teachers will need to gather more timely and detailed data to adjust teaching to student needs. Different types of assessments (including both summative and formative) implemented over time will provide a more rounded perspective on individual student progress and needs.

The following model was developed by members of the Working Group as a representation of typical relationships between system actors. This may provide a useful reference for reviewing the roles of stakeholders, decision-making processes, and the flow of data. Whilst there are

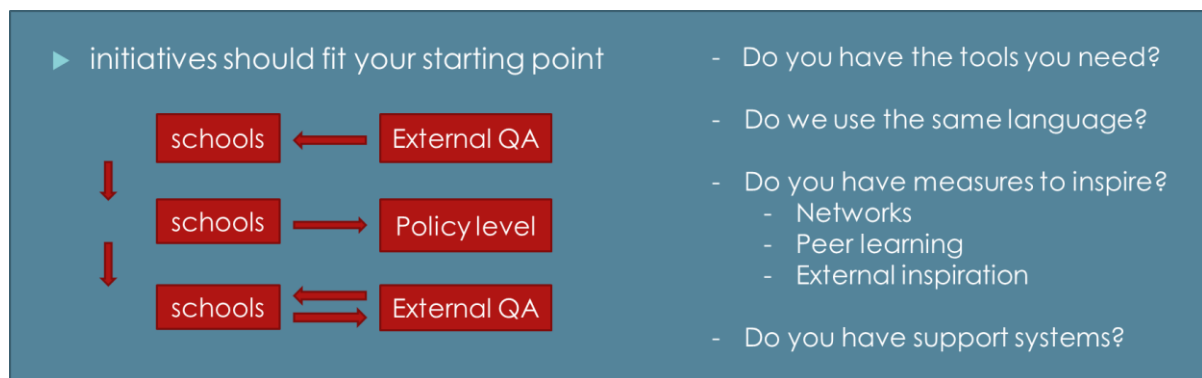
variations, priority-setting is often done externally and imposed on the schools and the school is accountable in return.

Figure 1: graphical representation of the relation between different elements of the system in terms of accountability, reporting and priority-setting



Internal quality assurance, including school self-evaluation and teacher appraisal support teachers to take collective responsibility for student learning. While schools may have access to central guidelines for school self-evaluation, staff may need to develop a consensus on goals and criteria for the evaluation. Staff may also need training on how to gather and analyse data.

Figure 2: graphical representation of school development processes and questions to consider – developed by participants at the Peer Learning Activity, Estonia 2016.



Ultimately, the synergy between external and internal mechanisms will help to ensure a healthy, dynamic quality assurance process. With this in mind, a SYNEVA declaration was made as part of a European Comenius project (2004 – 2007). The declaration, which was developed by 6 partners in 12 different countries, comprises 12 agreed-on statements on 'Quality assurance through Synergy between Internal and External Evaluation: its impacts on learning and teaching'. The main focus is on quality assurance for improvement, with the aim of ensuring that every child develops his/her talents and abilities in order to contribute to the Europe of the future. While evaluations in classrooms, schools, regions, nationally and at a European level support and facilitate improvements in education, the declaration emphasizes that different internal and external mechanisms must become more mutually supportive and integrated. The declaration was subsequently revised in 2016 to reflect deepening of perspectives as well as changes in the context of education.

3.2 Working process

Review of existing literature

An extensive bibliography of international sources exploring quality assurance approaches across countries was shared with members to support their reflections and discussions.

Working Group meetings, Brussels

The guiding principles are based on reflections of those who participated directly in the October 2016 Peer Learning Activity (PLA - see below) as well as the input of all Working Group members who participated in the survey and at meetings. At Working Group meetings prior to and following the PLA, the members explored the topic from different perspectives in working sessions (sub-group discussion, reporting, and full group reflection) with additional input from guest experts⁴.

Survey to member countries and organisations

Prior to the PLA, Working Group members completed a survey which was designed to prompt investigation and reflection by respondents into the application of quality assurance in their education systems, particularly relating to schools. Participants from 28 countries and 3 associations completed the survey, which was organised into three sections on mechanisms, accountability and coherence.

⁴ Professor Graham Donaldson, University of Glasgow, on *Recent developments in the governance of school education systems*, and Tracey Burns, OECD, on *Governing Complex Education Systems*.

Peer Learning Activity

The principles set out in this document were first developed through a participatory process of ET2020 Working Group members, at the Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on ‘Quality Assurance for School Development’, hosted by **Estonia** (11 – 14 October 2016)⁵. This PLA focused on examining the complementarity of external mechanisms that are led at policy level (e.g. national assessments, school inspection) and internal mechanisms where schools take the lead role (e.g. continuing professional development for teachers, assessments of student attainment, school self-evaluation and development planning). The guiding principles as set out in chapter 2 of this report were originally an output of the PLA. There were ten principles with some differences in the text and these were presented to other members for discussion. The next chapter (4) of this report explores the redrafted principles with country examples and references to supporting research.

⁵ A report on this Peer Learning Activity was created for internal use by the Working Group members. It includes further discussion points, as well as forward-looking country reports by each participants.

4. Quality assurance for school development: principles in action

4.1 Coherence of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms

Systems should strive over time to achieve balance and coherence across different mechanisms that have been developed to meet the demands and expectations of stakeholders working both within schools and in the wider school education system.

Quality assurance approaches can encompass a range of mechanisms (tools, processes and actors) to monitor overall system performance, policy implementation, school and staff effectiveness, and individual student outcomes. School systems include various layers, operate in diverse contexts, and employ staff with a range of experience and competences.

External mechanisms provide data important for policy-level decisions and resource allocation, while internal evaluations provide more detailed and timely data important for school-level development and to support teaching and learning. Schools and external institutions and actors may work together to define strategies and alternatives for school improvement. For example, in **Croatia**, school self-evaluation was initiated 15 years ago, but their opinion is that it was not really effective until external evaluation was introduced. Wider communities may also provide data or refer to the results of quality assurance. Quality assurance systems need to take this complexity into account.

Box 1: Using a Framework for coherence and common understanding (Slovenia)

For more than a decade, **Slovenia** has been gradually developing its quality assurance approach. The ministry (MIZŠ) is currently setting up a national framework to support fairness, quality and efficiency of education systems. The purpose is to define a common concept of quality assurance at the level of educational institutions (early years, primary and secondary schools) and, indirectly, system-level evaluation. The trans-sectoral approach and development of school leader capacity are seen as strengths.

Policy makers and practitioners will need to gather data appropriate for their level of decision-making (e.g. aggregated or macro-level data for policy level decisions, and more detailed, micro-level data for school-level decisions). Systems may also achieve greater synergies across the different mechanisms when their data help to complement and reinforce their respective areas of concern (for example, in links between inspection and school self-evaluations).

Box 2: Combining data from different mechanisms (Iceland)

In **Iceland**, external evaluators base their analysis and judgments of school performance on data gathered as part of the Quality Indicators framework. After giving the head teacher an opportunity to make substantive comments, the evaluators send their report to the Ministry. The overall results are then made public on the Ministry's and the Directorate website. Schools have a predefined time to send the Ministry information on how they intend to respond to the results of the evaluation. Educational authorities also use the evaluation results. Municipalities are responsible for improvements at pre-primary and compulsory school levels.

Internal evaluation results are intended for use by the school to highlight and improve various aspects of its own performance and practices. These evaluation reports are also made public, for example on school websites, along with the results of the national co-ordinated examinations (for each school and region), which are only assessment for learning not high-stake exams. There is some concern, however, that media discussion about schools and regions that perform poorly can have a negative effect on the “image” of those concerned.

At the same time, approaches to quality assurance may wish to avoid narrowly defined criteria and standards as well as a tight coherence or alignment of mechanisms in order to provide room for innovative approaches that may not fit within typical measures, and/or the softer, less-quantifiable goals for learning, such as measures related to the well-being of all in the school community. This approach will also better support quality assurance in schools outside the mainstream system with alternative pedagogical approaches (for example, Montessori, Steiner-Waldorf schools and others).

Box 3: Developing new approaches and widening perspectives (Romania, Italy and Poland)

In **Romania**, the national standards and procedures for internal and external evaluation were reviewed in 2016, with the aim of simplifying them and re-directing the focus on student results and children's well-being. 'The Quality Certificate', is issued after recurrent evaluation. The results, which include an 'added value index', are published. In other words, the index includes the evaluation results, after controlling for the influence of the school context and input factors (such as family background and community factors, the socio-economic background of the school, the school infrastructure, etc.). This index is intended to measure educational efficiency, and to reveal whether schools' actual results are above or below the expected norm, given their circumstances.

In **Italy**, the National System for Evaluation of schools (SNV) was first implemented in 2014-15. The key to the success of this system is ensuring that all relevant actors and stakeholders are involved. The SNV follows a three-year cycle: Each school was initially provided with a wide set of data on its resources, processes and outcomes, and was then asked to produce a self-evaluation report identifying strengths and weaknesses, based on a standardised template

from the National Agency for School Evaluation (INVALSI). Each school had to identify areas to be improved and targets to be met over the following years, to align with triennial school development plans. Reports also included the results of the annual INVALSI standardised student examinations, published every year as a means to ensure parents have the necessary information when selecting a school. The school self-evaluation reports, including results of school improvement processes, are published on the Ministry of Education portal, to increase transparency and accountability. In addition, external teams, co-ordinated by an inspector, aim to visit up to 10% of all schools each year (first implemented 2015-16).

Poland has a system of 'pedagogical supervision', as referred to in the 2009 Regulation of the Ministry of Education (further amended in 2013). External evaluation is carried out by regional inspectorates and comprises two aspects: 1) evaluating school quality, and 2) checking compliance with legislation. A school is assessed over 5 days according to 9 standards (including core curriculum implementation, parents as school partners, students' activity and social skills development). School inspectors analyse documentation, meet staff, students, parents and other representatives of institutions that cooperate with school, and observe lessons. Conclusions are discussed with staff before the school receives an official report, which is later published online.

External school evaluations in **Poland** have an advisory character and schools formulate their own action plans based on the findings. The same 2009 Regulation obliges school heads to carry out a process of internal pedagogical supervision and evaluation (which may be supported by teacher training centres). The aims are improving the quality of school work and promoting teachers' individual development. The rationale behind this regulation is to direct the school's attention to its own identified needs and not on the priorities set by the educational authorities. Therefore, it is assumed that the evaluation areas for external and internal evaluation do not need to be the same.

At present, a pilot systemic project is being developed which aims to support schools in their internal evaluation processes. Within the framework of this project, action research methods are promoted.

4.2 Professional learning communities

Quality assurance policies should support professional learning communities to make best use of quality assurance data for school and system development.

Quality assurance should support improvement in school education at all levels: local, regional and national. However, there is a consistent call for professional learning and attention to the development of human resources as part of quality assurance processes. Professional communities that use internal and external quality assurance data to track policy implementation and impact are able to identify areas for school and staff development. Where possible, these types of feedback mechanisms should be designed collaboratively.

Box 4: Participatory model for self-assessment (France)

In **France**, the 'Qualéduc' project is supported by the French Ministry of Education and Research, and is steered at national and school levels, and by academia. The aim is to develop school self-assessment so for continual improvement, to optimize a participative approach to steering, and to mobilize educational teams around shared and substantiated diagnoses and targets for improvement, to encourage student success, and to exchange best practices and experiences. The plan-do-check-act cycle (the PDCA-cycle, also known as the Deming wheel) is one of the most frequently used approaches, particularly, although not only, in vocational education and training institutions.

<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid59929/quaeduc.html>

Professional learning communities provide an opportunity for colleagues to define, interpret and reflect on quality assurance data, and to adjust strategies and/or practices to better meet identified needs.

Box 5: The need to engage teachers and provide feedback (Greece, Cyprus and Latvia)

As a result of the 2009 crisis, **Greece** finds that a shift to a reliance on adjunct teachers in the teacher workforce creates challenges for quality assurance. However, this challenge may be addressed by engaging all teachers in a dialogue and tap into their individual and collective motivation to make learning better for students. This might start with teachers who are stable (e.g. with civil servant status) and focus on what is working well and what might be improved in a school. The more mobile adjunct staff may also bring insights from other places where they have taught.

In **Cyprus** a new system of Teacher Professional Learning was first implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2015. Teachers are engaged in the development, implementation and evaluation of their school's annual action plan for improvement. Based on this action plan, each school develops its overall professional learning action plan and every teacher develops an individual plan. These plans include incorporate teacher self-assessment and data on school

successes as well as areas for improvement. These elements are regularly compiled, and reviewed, and a new action plan is developed based on findings.

In **Latvia**, an ongoing pilot project is supporting school teams as well as municipalities) to develop as learning organisations. Evaluation tools that may be adapted according to each school's goals and needs are also being developed. Teachers receive personalised feedback, and this has had a significant positive impact (as measured by student performance in mathematics).

These communities are most effective when focused on student learning (rather than teaching), when members have established a shared understanding of data, and when members hold themselves accountable for improvements.

Schools outside of the mainstream system (see Box 6 below) may adapt internal quality assurance mechanisms for their own professional learning needs, whilst also coordinating with external evaluators.

Box 6: Quality assurance for schools outside the mainstream system

The German Steiner-Waldorf Schools have developed mechanisms for internal quality assurance for their schools in **Germany**. It is a teacher-led model, rather than a top-down approach.

The key principles are: improving the quality of teaching by individual feedback, advice to teachers, working in teams on pedagogical issues and stimulating individual professional development (alignment with overall school development). The process is integrated into school life – it must be part of core processes and not incur “additional time”, to avoid creating a burden.

The procedure balances internal and external evaluation: Structured peer group sessions are coupled with (supportive) peer group 'mutual' visits and external visits by 'coaching teachers'. Teachers are at the centre of the process: trust and respect are essential, and the model supports capacity-building as a continuous process for all involved teachers. Therefore, special trainings for the college of teachers are provided. The process as a whole has a significant impact on collaboration within the entire school community. The whole procedure is certified by a state accredited agency, which requires continuous evaluation.

Landl, et al. (2016)^{xv} <http://www.waldorfschule.de/waldorfpaedagogik/qualitaet/verfahren-zur-qualitaetsentwicklung/#main-content>

It is equally important to reflect on the roles, attitudes and perspectives of those evaluating schools, the way they are selected and evaluated themselves, and the way they interact with schools. In **Belgium(Flanders)**, **Ireland** and **Portugal**, there are various processes to 'evaluate the evaluator'. For example, in **Belgium(Flanders)**, inspections involve two individuals: one who

safeguards the inspection, or evaluation process and the other who undertakes the school inspection.

Box 7: Shifting to internal appraisal of teachers (Ireland, Italy and Latvia)

In **Ireland**, a system for school appraisal of newly-qualified teachers, called *Droichead*, has been introduced to the education system. Previously, to register with the Teaching Council, newly qualified primary teachers had to have their work deemed satisfactory by the Inspectorate following a number of evaluation visits. The introduction of *Droichead* has seen a gradual extension of an induction model, undertaken at individual school level, as the pathway to full registration with the Teaching Council. It is intended that this system will pass entirely to schools over the next few years. The Teaching Council envisages that the system will combine self-regulation in the school and profession with appropriate external involvement of the Inspectorate in a small number of cases.

In **Italy**, a new merit-based performance bonus was introduced under the comprehensive Good School reform (approved by the Parliament on 9 July 2015, Law 107/2015). Each year, the school head identifies the best –performing teacher for a one-time performance bonus. The award is decided according to criteria developed by the school’s teacher evaluation committee and is focused on student achievement and school improvement. The committee is comprised of) the school head; (ii) three teachers; (iii) an external evaluator (a teacher or head from another school, or an inspector); (iv) two parent representatives (in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools) or one parent representative and one student representative (in upper secondary schools). In 2018, based on an assessment of the first three years of implementation, the Ministry of Education will establish national guidelines for teacher evaluation. EUR 200 million per year have been allocated for teacher performance bonuses.

Latvia first piloted a new teacher appraisal approach under the European Social Fund project *Promotion of Educators’ Competitiveness within the Optimisation of the Educational System*. The approach included teacher self- and peer-assessment linked with the remuneration system. The pilot was the basis for the “Evaluation Procedure of the Quality of Teachers’ Professional Performance (accepted 17 June 2014).

In 2017 the pilot approach was reviewed and a new teacher evaluation model was introduced. It proposes to reduce the number of quality levels from five to three and to simplify the process of evaluation. The most important criterion for assessing the quality of the work of the teacher is the teacher's daily work in the classroom, cooperation skills and pupils learning outcomes. The assessment process of the teacher will be carried out at each education institution, thus promoting the autonomy of it as well as raising the responsibility of the head of the school for ensuring the quality of the education process. The quality level can be awarded to a teacher for one, two or three years and is valid only in the education institution where the teacher has been assessed. The assessment is voluntary, and all teachers will be able to apply for the evaluation, choosing the quality level to which he or she applies.

Teacher appraisals, whether conducted by school boards, school management or peers provide the opportunity to reflect on teaching and learning at classroom level. The OECD TALIS found

a statistically significant relationship between areas emphasised in appraisals and changes in instructional knowledge and practices^{xvi}. It is also important to note that when appraisals emphasise improvement, and are not linked to promotions or incentive awards, teachers are more likely to be open about their challenges and perceived development needs. Appraisal frameworks that are also linked to school priorities for development plans can strengthen opportunities for collective professional learning within a school.

Box 8: Developing formative external evaluation of teachers (Spain)

In **Spain**, the Education Act establishes that the education authorities, with the participation of teacher representatives, will elaborate plans for teacher evaluation. The formative nature of the external evaluation mechanisms deployed nationwide, contribute to the betterment of the teachers' work, presenting themselves as a tool to bring about change in the methodological model towards one that integrates competences.

Both national and international reports include evaluations of teachers' classroom performance, as well as indications as to how to improve practice.

The Act plans that school leaders will be evaluated and, if positive, they will receive personal and professional recognition in the terms defined by each educational administration.

4.3 Trust and shared accountability

Trust and respect between and among internal and external actors are fundamental for effective evaluation and school development

Increasingly, education systems distribute governance responsibilities across national, local and school levels. There is a more equal sharing of accountability for learner outcomes and engagement in and support for school development. Shifts to multi-level governance may also require shifts in system cultures and individual mindsets. This may be enhanced through mutual commitment of internal and external actors to evaluation as a means to improve processes and outcomes. Trust in the quality of the evaluation instruments and the fairness and integrity of the system support are also vital.

Box 9: Including teachers in a critical dialogue on quality assurance mechanisms (Hungary)

In **Hungary**, the education system was re-centralised in 2011, and a new inspection mechanism was introduced in 2013. The previous inspection procedure had been abolished in 1985, so there was a significant gap since schools were last externally evaluated. The biggest barrier to the new approach to inspection is teacher mindset. There has been a lot of resistance to the new approach although the focus is on identifying strengths and weaknesses to support the school's own self-improvement action plan, and inspectors are actually practicing teachers. Hungary notes that to build the mechanism further, it will be important to involve teachers in policy-level discussions, to provide examples of effective working between internal and external evaluation, to monitor the quality of inspectors' work, and to invest in ongoing training for all stakeholders. Trust building will be essential.

Research points to a number of advantages for governance of systems which supports the development of trust among key actors and that this trust can reduce transaction costs and the likelihood of unexpected interactions or opportunistic behaviour^{xvii}. Trust increases the likelihood that actors will invest their resources in cooperation and in developing and maintaining relationships (their social capital). Trust among key actors can also support the search for innovative solutions and exchange of ideas.

In education systems that have traditionally taken a top-down approach to quality assurance, with external inspections seen as 'control' of education systems, it will likely take some time to shift mindsets and perceptions regarding the intentions of different actors. Moreover, in education that have been traditionally risk-averse, it may continue to be important to maintain some level of accountability and transparency of performance data. Quality assurance approaches will also need to strike the right balance between the importance of trust, and the need to verify outcomes.

Box 10: Achieving system-wide development with high autonomy (Norway and The Netherlands)

In **Norway**, the responsibility for quality assurance is divided among the various levels of the education system. Dialogue and co-operation are necessary to promote system-wide learning. There is a national supervisory body to oversee regulatory compliance, but the quality assurance approach is primarily based on trust among actors, so it is important to have good processes. The clear division of responsibility for quality assurance at national and local levels is a necessary to ensure that the mechanisms function as intended. Measurements are criterion-referenced, focusing on actual progress against goals.

In the **Netherlands**, there are no central standards, and schools have a great deal of autonomy in deciding what and how they teach. While inspectors concentrate on schools considered 'at risk' of not meeting quality standards, they may also visit effective schools to see what is working well (in agreement with the school's board). The inspector's role is to consider how they can support school self-evaluation as well as teacher development and innovation. The school board may also organise teacher peer reviews.

Several countries in Europe include high-stakes approaches within their overall quality assurance approach. For example, in **Romania**, accreditation may be denied to schools that do not meet quality assurance standards.

Publication of a range of data may also help to lower stakes associated with a single, high-visibility assessment. **Estonia** is considering how to increase transparency while also supporting school development. The aim is to publish multiple types of data (from both external and internal sources), along with interpretations of data and impact of context for lay readers, in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of school performance and to increase transparency.

4.4 Opportunities to support innovation in schools

School leaders and teachers need opportunities to take considered risks in order to innovate and develop. Careful attention to data on the impact of innovations, including potential unintended outcomes, is essential.

Risk is inherent to the process of innovation. Systems that support the synergy of external and internal quality assurance mechanisms will have more in-built resilience for the complex process of change. This includes shared attention to quality and outcomes; openness to new ideas; open channels of communication among internal and external actors; and capacity to respond quickly to identified needs.

Box 11: Specific recommendations on innovation

Montenegro found that there was a need to raise the level of awareness about the importance of regular introduction of educational innovations and the development of mechanisms to measure their impact, and to provide support for continuous improvements. The improved model of external and internal evaluation (2016) includes an indicator on the presence of educational innovations. Specific examples of innovative practices are disseminated via the website of the Bureau for Education Services.

In **Portugal**, school inspectors may include recommendations on how to improve the level of innovation in classroom and pedagogical differentiation. These external recommendations complement internal classroom observations that are part of teacher appraisal.

Monitoring and evaluation are an integral part of the innovation process. Attention to data can allow innovators to take a more considered approach. Educational innovators may track the impact of new approaches on teaching and learning and make quick adjustments when necessary. This includes being alert to unintended consequences. In **Slovakia**, universities and research institutes conduct experimental verification of new fields of study or specific teaching methods before they are approved by the Ministry of Education and implemented in schools.

It is important to assess the impact of innovations, to make necessary adjustments, and to start the process again. This iterative approach ensures that while innovations entail risk, students will not be left to falter. Moreover, monitoring is not left to an annual, or even tri-annual school self-evaluation, but is ongoing. Schools and teachers implementing innovative methods also need to gather more detailed data on a regular basis to monitor the impact of new methods and make adjustments than possible solely through external and internal quality assurance mechanisms^{xviii}.

External and internal quality assurance typically operate on a longer feedback timeline, but are also important to highlight the impact of successful innovations for further dissemination and take-up, and track potential unintended longer-term consequences. The results of quality assurance may also be used to identify areas where innovations are needed.

4.5 Shared understanding and dialogue among stakeholders

Quality assurance approaches should support the development of a common language and shared understanding among internal and external actors that the fundamental purpose of evaluation is to support school development.

Education actors and stakeholders typically come from different professional backgrounds and contexts. They frequently use different vocabularies to discuss quality assurance. To be effective, quality assurance should be accessible for all stakeholders. A shared language of teaching and learning – focused on learner needs and progress - should be at the heart of communications among all education stakeholders.

Box 12: Boards with different stakeholders (Sweden)

In **Sweden**, at upper secondary level, businesses and other stakeholders are represented in the different programme boards which are run by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Their role is to advise the NAE on the development of the programme content and to make sure that education meets standards and correspond to the demands of working life.

A school survey is carried out prior to school visits by the inspectorate. All students in years 5 and 9, their parents and all teachers are addressed in the survey. The topics concern safety and the learning environment, educational leadership, basic values, and the working of the school. During a regular inspection the Inspectorate interviews the responsible staff in the local authority, the operator of independent schools, and the school head. A visit lasting several days can include classroom observations, if all other data collection means have not provided sufficient information on the school. An in-depth inspection includes, in addition, interviews with teachers, students and student social welfare staff.

For more on this process see European Commission (2014) in Chapter 7: References^{xix}

Dialogue between schools and parents and pupils is also an important part of quality assurance. It is important to avoid vocabulary which excludes any of these stakeholders. **The Netherlands**, notes that the success of its new ‘bespoke’ approach to quality assurance (see above) will require that internal and external assessors are able to express quality assurance concepts in words that are relevant and meaningful for all stakeholders. This includes interpretation of quantitative data to ensure accessibility.

Box 13: Providing tools to assist in the evaluation process (Czech Republic)

The School Inspectorate in the **Czech Republic** has recently shifted from formal inspections to evaluations of teaching and learning processes. The aim is not only to provide objective feedback on school performance, but also to support improvements in teaching as well as of school facilities. These changes are particularly motivated by the desire to provide practical methodological support for the continuous improvement of education for every child. (For more information <http://www.csicr.cz/en/home?lang=en-us>)

The **Quality School model** includes criteria for evaluation of conditions and results of education; methodologies for inspection activities; and forms to record evaluation data. In addition, the Czech School Inspectorate has prepared a new set of tools for evaluation of support and attainment in reading, mathematics, science, language, social, and information literacies.

These tools are also available for the use of schools and school facilities as well as for other education stakeholders, such as school founders or teacher training universities.

In **Italy**, the National System for Evaluation of Schools provides a variety of tools to external evaluation teams (coordinated by an inspector). Prior to the school visit, each team member completes a report based on data and narratives in the school's self-evaluation report. The team members share their findings prior. They then each complete a report of the school visit, and share these with the full team. In this way, the insights of team members are agreed upon and synthesised in the final evaluation rubric.

Communication based on a dialogic process of looking, listening and speaking may help to bridge differences. For example, stakeholders may also require explanations regarding what the quality assurance data cannot tell them about system and school performance, including the limits of existing measurement technologies.

Box 14: Frameworks of standards: working with a common language (Ireland and Slovakia)

Ireland has a long-established and respected approach to quality assurance and school inspection. A range of inspection models are used and reports emanating from all but Incidental Inspections are published on the Department of Educational and Skills' public website. However, no published reports contain data that would enable league tables to be formed. Legislation enabling Ministers to prevent the publishing of league tables has been availed of by all Ministers since the Education Act 1998 was published.

A common framework for teaching and learning was published in 2012. This was revised and extended to include standards for leadership and management in 2016. Since 2012, all schools are required to engage in school self-evaluation using the common framework. Schools are supported by national support services and by the Inspectorate to build a common understanding of the standards, to encourage teachers to share experiences and good practice

within schools, and to improve schools' capacity to gather and use data effectively in order to improve student learning.

In **Slovakia**, in 2017, the Ministry of Education issued professional standards of each category of teaching and professional staff, for each career degree and career position. Professional standards include the teacher's competency profile in relation to the pupil, the education and training activities and the professional development. The professional standards, following the qualification requirement, defines a set of professional competences necessary for the performance of a teaching activity for the category and subcategory of teachers according to the appropriate career grade and career position.

These standards are currently being applied in practice and if necessary they will be improved to ensure, that the expected changes in school system will be realized by highly professionally trained and motivated teachers and other specialists. The aim is to create legislative changes in the system of continual education, credit system, career system and attestation in relation to professional standards of teaching and professional staff.

Box 15: Improving the use of an established Framework (Serbia)

School quality in **Serbia** is currently evaluated against 30 standards. These standards are grouped in seven key domains related to school work, which include a total of 158 indicators. External evaluation of schools is based on: analysis of records, school documentation and school self-evaluation reports, class observation, interviews with principals, school counselors, teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders.

The first five-year cycle of external evaluation in **Serbia** was completed at the end of 2017. A new quality framework with revised standards and evaluation procedures is planned to be introduced in the new cycle at the beginning of 2018/19 school year. The aim is to improve the current framework to better support school development and innovation, based on evidence of its impact and on stakeholder feedback. The Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation is to involve all relevant stakeholders (including teachers and external stakeholders) through quantitative and qualitative research and public hearings. Several advisory sessions for external evaluators have been already conducted aiming at reviewing the framework for evaluation and operating procedures. School development will also be supported through external contractors.

4.6 Networks to support development

Networks between schools and with local and wider communities can support collective engagement, build social and intellectual capital and spark new synergies across school systems.

Networked professional learning communities, which bring together practitioners within a school or link or cluster institutions, can incentivise pedagogical and school development. Networks with clear objectives, that are well-managed, and which build on evidence (including quality assurance data) can effectively support collaboration for change.

Box 16: Compulsory integration of network plus network tools (Poland)

In **Poland**, it is obligatory for school inspectors to involve, as appropriate: parent board (or individual parents), student council, NGOs, representatives of police, social welfare, and others in the process of external evaluation of the quality of school performance. There are two types of measures used to gather the data: anonymous questionnaires online, and interviews with representatives. School leaders and teachers can use the special internet website (www.npseo.pl) with the web based platform where they can find all the information about the assessment procedures, research tools, school evaluation reports, articles and other resources.

Collaborative networks enable educational innovations and school developments to evolve more quickly as more stakeholders are involved in testing and improving approaches. Research suggests that educational innovation networks are important both for the development of innovation as well as transfer of knowledge and practice across a wide range of stakeholders^{xx}. Collaborative networks may create a pool of ideas and resources, and support dynamic exchange among participants.

Box 17: School networks as a shared approach to school development (Portugal, the Czech Republic and Serbia)

In **Portugal**, there are 811 'school clusters' (based on geographic proximity). There is a direct relationship between cluster leaders and the Ministry of Education. There are school councils for clusters to represent stakeholder views and give input on school development plans. External and internal evaluation standards are established for each grade, and schools know what's expected of them. Nevertheless, a major challenge in Portugal is to develop understanding and ownership of quality assurance indicators – including clearly definitions and understanding of 'quality' – and to ensure that it quality assurance focused on real improvement and not just on creating an 'ideal' school self-evaluation document.

In the **Czech Republic**, the Conference of Associations in Education is a voluntary group of pedagogical associations, pedagogical programmes and civil associations. The Conference organises monthly informal round tables on current educational issues as for all interested persons. They also organise annual open conferences of membership associations and other representatives. The main aim is to support networking and cooperation among the different non-profit organisations.

Serbia implements the SHARE project, a school network which supports horizontal learning among schools, thus creating professional learning communities that extend beyond individual schools.

Collaboration between schools and the wider community is also increasingly promoted as a way to ensure inclusion and provide appropriate support for all students. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may benefit from the support of multidisciplinary teams, cross-sector networks and resource-sharing at the local level.

A number of countries have developed quality assurance measures that also involve the wider community. For example, in **the Netherlands**, there are community-based supervisory and representative advisory boards. **Belgium(Flanders)**, the **Czech Republic**, and **Portugal** have school councils which include community members. In the **Czech Republic**, **Ireland** and **Poland**, community members may provide input for quality assurance through questionnaires. At the city-level, Nuremberg (**Germany**) holds an annual *Bilumgskonferenz*, and Nantes (**France**) organises an education conference to bring external stakeholders closer to schools. In **Slovakia**, a new school act on dual training will allow employers to have greater impact on profiling secondary vocational schools. In **Montenegro**, the model for Quality Assurance contains standards for contribution of the wider community to the quality assurance. The report on internal and external evaluation contains recommendations for improving the level of cooperation

Networks require careful management. Research notes that the involvement of multiple stakeholders in interactions creates the potential for more conflicts of interest^{xxi}. Participants in networks which have strong cultures of trust are more likely to invest time and knowledge.

There are several key conditions for effective networks^{xxii}, including:

- Consistency of values and focus
- Evidence-based knowledge creation, “subject to robust quality assurance procedures”
- Rewards related to learning (e.g. support for professional development)
- Dispersed leadership and empowerment
- Adequate resources

Box 18: Piloting a new network model of quality assurance (Slovenia)

In **Slovenia** – a network of 16 kindergartens and 16 schools will pilot the new model of quality assurance between 2018 and 2020. Kindergartens and schools will move from an annual cycle of self-evaluation to a triennial cycle. The self-evaluation will focus on three main quality areas: learning achievement, school climate and staff professional development. The model allows the schools and kindergartens the freedom to add further quality areas at their own discretion. Pilot kindergartens and schools are to prepare self-evaluation reports, present them to the school/kindergarten councils and publish them on their institution’s website. The Council for Quality and Evaluation will review a sample of the reports and together with the national evaluation report, identify possible revisions to mandatory areas of evaluation and evaluation studies, and will develop targeted proposals and research projects.

4.7 Building capacity for generating, interpreting and using data

Investments in building capacity of key actors to generate, interpret and use data are crucial.

Investments in capacity-development of actors at school and local levels can help to develop technical knowledge on generating, interpreting and using quantitative and qualitative data, and developing internal support for evaluation. This is an important factor ensuring school self-evaluation supports school development.

Box 19: General reform and the capacity of actors (Finland and Cyprus)

In **Finland**, the system is highly decentralised and the school inspectorate was abolished in 1989. The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) works very closely with municipalities. The focus is on guiding processes that lead to quality outcomes. Each municipality develops its own plan following its own format. National student assessment is sample-based, so there is monitoring of general student performance but stakes for individual schools are low. Quality assurance is seen as a continuous process of development, and there is a strong focus on the need to establish a vision for the future, and a plan with specific goals and indicators to track progress toward that vision.

Cyprus is undergoing a general reform, which is also affecting its quality assurance reform. The approach is currently limited in that internal evaluation stays within schools and external evaluation is limited to teachers (primary) and school leaders (secondary). The Ministry of Education and Culture and the various stakeholders are examining plans and proposals now for changes in the current system of teachers' evaluation in order to improve this approach and to include school evaluation for development and improvement.

Countries may work on a regional basis, which is certainly the case in **Germany**. Here the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs for educational monitoring adopted measures in 2004 to thoroughly develop and assure the quality of instruction and school education on the basis of binding standards, the *Bildungsstandards*. Thus, quality development in the general education schools of all Länder can be checked against jointly agreed criteria in the form of qualification-related educational standards. In addition the IQB comparisons between the Länder centrally review the extent to which the educational standards of the Standing Conference have been achieved.

School and local stakeholders may need to invest in capacity building on how to generate data (including how to identify the most appropriate indicators to track school progress), to develop a shared understanding on how to interpret data (including from external quality assurance), and to then adapt strategies in areas identified for improvement. This technical knowledge will help ensure a higher-quality review, and help strengthen the integrity of the overall quality assurance approaches.

Box 20: National assessment and the use of data (Belgium(Flanders))

In **Belgium(Flanders)**, standardised examinations of all pupils are not mandated, but information on student outcomes is available from a number of externally designed tests available to help schools measure their outcomes. These include sample-based tests on student attainment in the framework of the National Assessment Programme (NAP) (peilingen). Participating schools in the NAP receive a feedback report, which constitutes a valuable instrument for schools to evaluate their students' performance in comparison with other schools.

The Ministry of Education and Training runs a special website that offers a selection of student tests for schools (Toetsen voor scholen). These include nationally developed or supported tests, tests developed by the education umbrella organisations (funded by the government) and the NAP tests. All registered primary schools can also use the Flemish pupil monitoring system (LVS, Leerrlingvolgsysteem voor Vlaanderen), including a supporting manual of instructions. Schools can use this to monitor student progress in Dutch language and mathematics skills at different stages of their primary education. With the correct leadership, schools can use these as an effective and key part of their self-evaluation activities.

As schools are free to determine their process of self-evaluation, they are equally free to decide how they will use of the results. However, legislation (Participation Decree of 2004) gives key stakeholders - parents, pupils, and others - the right to an official voice in school policy making. The school council comprises representatives of the parents, pupils (in secondary education), members of staff and the local community. They can advise on matters concerning the school self-evaluation. The results of the internal quality monitoring should be presented to the school council.

School self-evaluation is a relatively new quality assurance mechanism in many countries. School and local level actors may need to develop a deeper knowledge of quality assurance processes, and how to ensure school self-evaluation is used genuinely for internal accountability and school development, and not as just another report to be produced. In **Finland**, national student assessment is sample-based, so there is monitoring of general student performance in the education system, but stakes for individual schools are low. **Estonia** and **Slovakia** have recently introduced value-added assessments. These assessments measure teacher's effectiveness in supporting student attainment in a given school year.

Box 21: Different access to and use of data by different stakeholders (Austria, Cyprus and Italy)

In **Austria**, the results of external student assessments are not linked to direct consequences (for example, performance awards or sanctions) for individuals. Data are disseminated according to the level of governance: while students receive their individual examination results with reference to their cohort fellows, teachers get only anonymised results of their classes or groups and school principals receive data on class-level performance to support targeted school development initiatives. Education authorities, inspectors, and school committees receive data which cannot be disaggregated at level of individual student, class or teacher. The results of individual schools are deliberately not published.

Cyprus takes a diagnostic approach to identifying students who are at-risk of not meeting goals for literacy learning. These students are provided with additional support, and parents and schools receive feedback on their progress. Since 2007 the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation has been running the Functional Literacy Programme in the grade 6 and since 2012 in grade 3 of primary school. The purpose of the programme is the early identification of pupils with a high probability to remain functionally illiterate through various stages of compulsory education, so as to include them in supporting programmes.

In **Italy**, the results of external student assessments constitute one of the elements for school self-evaluation and improvement. When schools publish their self-evaluation report, they may decide if they want to include the aggregated results of the external examinations or not. Internally, the aggregated and disaggregated results are intended to support school improvement.

4.8 Developing a balanced view of school development

Different types of data - both quantitative and qualitative, and gathered over time - are necessary for a balanced understanding of school development and learner progress. These data should communicate authentic narratives of schools and provide the information necessary to support decision-making within schools and across school systems.

Multiple types of data, gathered over time, are needed to develop a well-rounded picture of system and school development, including aspects such as well-being of all in the school community. As well as existing in parallel, qualitative data can give added meaning to quantitative data and support broader stakeholder understanding. The tools, processes, and the level of detail for different internal and external quality assurance needs and for broader dissemination should be considered.

Box 22: The use of indicators and checklists (Serbia)

In **Serbia**, the School Report Card is a checklist of information gathered by the school. It includes indicators pertaining to school functioning in several areas:

- General information about the school (basic data)
- Statistical data on students (numbers by different categories)
- Statistical data on educators (structure, work experience, level of in-service training)
- Resources (revenues and material investments and in-service training of employees)
- Education environment (offer of required and optional programmes as well as other extra-curricular activities, professional development, safety of children, etc.)
- Student educational achievements (general academic success rate, qualification examination achievements, other external testing, success achieved in competitions)
- Evaluation of institutional operation (the results of internal and external evaluations)
- Communication (resources and manner of communication with the environment)
- Message to the public (motto / other message which the institution sends out to the public)

The School Report Card serves as a tool for monitoring student achievement in schools in accordance with the previously defined national standards, informing the public on the main characteristics of the school and its progress in certain areas of development and provides the decision maker with information necessary for the improvement of the individual school but also of the education policy as a whole. The aim is to enable:

- the promotion of the culture of measuring while stressing progress and development,
- education process to become results oriented,
- increasing accountability of all stakeholders in the educational process,
- involvement of the public, the providing of information to parents, students, local community, the Ministry and wider professional public on the work conditions in the school and its achievements

- comparison between schools located within the same administrative unit as well as the comparison between different administrative units.

The School Report Card (*prosvetni*) was introduced in 2011. Use is optional, and it is thus only partially implemented. At the beginning of 2017, the School Report Card was integrated with the Education Information System of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (see <http://opendata.mpn.gov.rs>)

Box 23: Challenge of large numbers of students and different student groups (Turkey)

In 2015, **Turkey** officially approved an Education Framework. It sets out 14 areas, including main students gains, educational environment, social partners' participation, student achievement and transitions, and monitoring activities. The challenge is to design quality assurance approaches appropriate for a system of 17 million students, including 500,000 Syrian refugees. Education officials are very sensitive to the needs of specific student groups, including those at risk of early school leaving. They intend to develop alternative assessment approaches, to complement traditional testing, to capture a well-rounded picture of the student within his/her context and across a range of skills.

Multiple measures of school and student performance help to ease the high stakes associated with high-visibility school evaluation and student assessments. Different measures allow for a variety of perspectives on school performance and together, provide a more accurate picture of performance, and help highlight priorities. **Portugal** includes in its published data the progress toward goals to reduce early school leaving. **Slovakia** and **Spain** formally include PISA data in their quality assurance mechanisms, whereas most countries refer to PISA as a basis for reflection, but do not include them in their own quality assurance mechanisms.

To ensure that measures improve validity and reliability of quality assurance, systems should consider how to weight different mechanisms, and how to ensure that complementary measures increase synergy.

Box 24: 'Value-added' data (Slovakia)

In 2015, for the first time, **Slovakia** provided secondary schools with data on their "value-added" for pupils, accompanied by data showing progress between their school entrance (Testing-9) and school-leaving examinations. The National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements (NUCEM) and the State School Inspection (SSI) are currently preparing proposals and models for setting other school quality indicators that would reflect the context of these cognitive measurements and school and individual pupil results. These indicators will include, for example: school climate, teaching staff climate, students' motivation, and classroom climate.

Box 25: Looking beyond academic achievement of learners (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, there is a focus on more holistic outcomes and social cohesion, looking beyond students' academic achievement. This is particularly important in the post-civil war context. They emphasise that it will be important to build capacity of all stakeholders, and to share good practices from other countries or across municipalities to help generate new ideas regarding effective quality assurance mechanisms in these areas. Students and parents should also have an opportunity to share their views on recent decisions or possible changes in the educational process.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that countries take note of the **eight guiding principles** when reviewing their quality assurance mechanisms for school education. Furthermore, it is recommended that:

At European level:

- Countries continue to take opportunities for **peer learning** and peer counselling in order to reflect on and refine their own quality assurance approaches;
- Discussions between countries continue in order to **take forward the achievements of the ET2020 Working Group Schools** on the particular challenges and opportunities related to quality assurance, especially as regards generating, interpreting and using data at different levels and related capacity-building;
- The impact of this work is **monitored** in order to assess its usefulness in policy development and guide future co-operative work;
- Recommendations on quality assurance are coherent with other recommendations on the **governance** of school education;

At national level:

- New quality assurance approaches should start from the **strengths** of schools and school education systems and be developed and monitored from there;
- In considering new approaches, it is useful to make some tactical planning, particularly in being prepared for the reaction of **stakeholders** and that:
 - A stronger, two-way **dialogue** between stakeholders should be envisaged, particularly regarding data;
 - **Incentives** for teachers and school leaders to be 'agents of change' should be considered along with a strategy for generating a culture of trust;
 - **Schools outside of the mainstream system** should be involved in this dialogue and the specific needs of **alternative pedagogical approaches** should be taken into account.
- **School self-evaluation** should be strengthened, including capacity-building for school leaders and teachers; learning from other sectors that have regularly engaged in internal monitoring; and developing tools where appropriate;
- The role of school **inspectorates** should be to facilitate improvement for example through follow-up with schools in identified needs and through disseminating good practices.
- **Coherence** of quality assurance mechanisms with other relevant policies should be ensured.
- Countries should take a forward-looking perspective: not dwelling on past needs but acting towards a **vision of the future**.

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Continuity and transitions in learner development

Output of the ET2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18

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1. About

ET2020 Working Group on Schools

Under its current mandate, the ET2020 Working Group on Schools¹ examined successful and emerging, or potential new, policy developments in Member States. These concern the governance of school education systems that can support and improve quality, inclusion and innovation. They focused on the capacity for systemic change in the four key interlinked areas: 1) quality assurance for school development; 2) continuity and transitions for learner development; 3) teachers and school leaders; and 4) networks.

Continuity in learner development

Recent research has highlighted that learner pathways can be fragmented in a number of ways, leading to a risk of underachievement and possible drop-out from school. Transitions between levels and types of schools require consideration as they can be a moment where problems arise but also may reveal symptoms of other issues. Pathways encounter different ways of learning and being and this can be positive for learners, if these pathways are sufficiently flexible and provide appropriate guidance and support. The collaborative work of teachers and school leaders should also be accompanied by appropriate mechanisms for generating and sharing data within and between system levels, and by targeted support to learners with special needs to complement an inclusive approach to support all learners. There is a common challenge for policy makers to find effective and sustainable ways to address these issues.

This report

This report sets out guiding principles, or key policy messages, for policy development within a context of recent research in this area of school education. These principles are further illustrated with examples from countries, as shared and discussed by representatives of European ministries and stakeholder organisations as part of their task as members of the Working Group.

The content comes from a series of meetings held in Brussels, a research (member self-reporting) exercise, and a Peer Learning Activity. The report was compiled and edited by Laurie Day (Ecorys) and Hannah Grainger Clemson (European Commission) in January-March 2017 with review and validation by members. It was subsequently updated in July 2017 and April 2018.

¹ Representatives from all Member States, EFTA and Candidate countries, plus social partners and stakeholder organisations.

2. Guiding Principles

2.1 Values

Even though action to support continuity in learner development can move between more formal or less formal implementation, and also within and outside the school, a clear vision at policy level of how that learner development should happen is essential.

The perspective of the Working Group members is that learning is a prerequisite for positive growth and development at all levels within the system, and that the role of effective school education systems is to balance two sets of priorities for each learner, taking into account their aspirations and building on their strengths:

- To develop the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for an active role in work and life in society (both now and in the future); and,
- The personal development of the individual and their relationships with others;

The Working Group asserts that it is necessary to recognise teachers and school leaders as learners, and schools as learning organisations.

There are key areas for policy work to achieve continuity in learner development: bridging transition points between levels of education and facilitating transition between types of education; effectively generating and sharing data with appropriate mechanisms (how to measure and communicate); and the appropriate use and reporting of data analysis by different stakeholders to support learner decision-making.

Being ‘inclusive’ as a system does not mean solely taking a universal approach to all learners. It is also important to invest in targeted support to learners with additional needs, including individualised approaches to those at particular risk (*see Figure 2, Section 3.1.3*).

Within all of the guiding principles for policy development, it is implicit that:

- i. Striving for inclusivity and flexibility (as far as the system will allow) is important in order to support all learners and their multiple pathways;
- ii. Shared accountability is important to bring in all relevant stakeholders; building mutual trust and understanding; articulating common aims and standards, and aligning budgets and decision-making structures, with the learner at the centre;
- iii. The capacity and role of teachers and school leaders is crucial for schools to have a clear strategic vision and leadership in order to guide and fully support learners and effectively communicate with other practitioners and stakeholders.

2.2 Guiding principles

1. **EARLY YEARS:** High quality learning experiences should be available to all children from the beginning of their lives as a foundation for lifelong learning².
2. **LEARNER AND PARENT CHOICE:** Pupils and families should be supported with guidance and participatory decision-making in navigating pathways between levels and types of school education, and between school and future education and employment.
3. **INTER-INSTITUTION COLLABORATION:** Systems should have structures and mechanisms to support collaboration across institutions and between actors, focusing on transitions between levels and types of education.
4. **TEACHING AND LEARNING:** Appropriate curricula and teacher pedagogical approaches should help bridge transitions and foster learners' growing sense of responsibility for their own competence development and future lives in society.
5. **ACCESS AND INCLUSION:** Systems should ensure sufficient flexibility to include and integrate pupils who enter or leave at different stages, or who have difficulty in accessing formal education.
6. **SHARING DATA:** Relevant learner data should be shared between institutions in both directions, as part of an ongoing dialogue to ensure continuity and progression in learning and continued support for competence development.
7. **DIFFERENT TYPES OF DATA:** Information from quantitative and qualitative assessment and reporting mechanisms should be used to help construct a holistic understanding of learner development and progression.
8. **APPROPRIATE LEARNING CONTEXTS:** Supportive, varied and inspiring learning environments and contexts – relevant to the stage of development and different learners – should be created and reviewed.
9. **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:** Schools should have the capacity to engage with different stakeholders to provide social and emotional support to learners, including during the period of transition between levels of education.
10. **SUPPORT TO 'AT-RISK' LEARNERS:** Targeted strategies and resources should be used to identify and support vulnerable learners at the earliest opportunity – this school information should also be fed back at regional/national level to support policy-making and strategic investment for pupils at risk.

² European Union Council's (2009 /C 119/02) strategic priorities for lifelong learning, include: (a) The personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens, and (b) Sustainable economic prosperity and employability, whilst promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue.

3. Context

3.1 Policy and research context

The learning pathway - from early years and through schools to post-compulsory education - is ultimately a personal one, involving the needs and experiences of the individual learner. These transitions inevitably necessitate co-ordinated action at system level, however, and the planning and organisation of education provision within European countries has profound consequences for the opportunities and risks that learners face as they progress.

3.1.1 Recent research

International studies have demonstrated that the continuity between different stages of education has a significant bearing on learner development. Continuity in the curriculum and teaching methods was one of three sets of factors associated with effective pre-school to primary transitions in a recent longitudinal study, alongside social and institutional adjustmentⁱ. These findings are mirrored in studies of the primary to secondary transition stage, highlighting the need to maintain sufficient flexibility in the curriculum to maintain and develop learners' interests and to provide meaningful feedback on their progressⁱⁱ. Conversely, poor transitions can occur as a result of 'systems mismatch' – where two otherwise well-functioning systems suffer from a lack of synchrony, to the detriment of the learner experience.ⁱⁱⁱ

Transition from primary to secondary school is a key point at which students who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage are most likely to fall behind their peers. Research indicates that students from lower socio-economic groups often require greater support to prepare them for the changes in learning environments and academic expectations at secondary school. Furthermore, studies from the Europe and the USA have documented the phenomenon of "summer learning loss" – the dip in academic performance that can occur over summer vacation periods, while students are not engaged in a structured learning environment^{iv}. Taken together, these factors can serve to widen the gap in achievement, according to learners' socio-economic backgrounds, or where other disadvantages, such as familial, health, or linguistic factors are present.

Transitions between types of education can also represent a critical stage at which systems offer greater or lesser flexibility to learners. The early assignment of learners to clearly defined academic or vocational tracks is one such stage at which transitions can have far-reaching consequences for the learning pathway and subsequent accreditation. Research has shown that greater flexibility within VET is a priority within some national education systems, and that pedagogies such as work-related learning and personal and social skills development can have a positive impact in preventing ESL^v.

3.1.2 Structural considerations

At a national level across Europe, responses to supporting transitions are shaped by a number of considerations, which relates to the differences in how education provision is structured and funded. This is coupled with an overall expansion in the compulsory phase in most European countries over the past 20 years, although the starting age for publicly funded education still ranges from 4 to 7 years old, with the total duration ranging from 9 to 13 years^{vi}. Perhaps of greater significance, however, is the internal organisation across educational levels. European countries can be grouped according to three “most representative” types of systems (Figure 1).

Figure 1: European education systems – working models

Model	Description	Country coverage
Single structure education	Education is provided from the beginning to the end of compulsory schooling, with no transition between primary and lower secondary education, and with general education provided in common for all pupils.	IS, NO, SE, DK, FI, EE, BG, RS, BA, HR, SI (CZ, LV, HU ³ , SK ⁴)
Common core curriculum provision	After successful completion of primary education (ISCED 1), all students progress to the lower secondary level (ISCED 2) where they follow the same general common core curriculum.	UK, IE, PT, ES, FR, BE, IT, CY, EL, TR, PL, RO, MT
Differentiated lower secondary education	After successful completion of primary education, students are required to follow distinct educational pathways or specific types of schooling, either at the beginning or during lower secondary education.	DE, NL, AT, LT, LU, LI

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams

The challenge of continuity takes on very different dimensions according to whether or not ISCED levels are split by primary and lower secondary phase, and the age at which students choose between academic and vocational tracks. Indeed, transitions between types of education

³ In Hungary, after successful completion of primary levels, the secondary level schools also follow the same national core curriculum and learners have to choose an appropriate secondary school. In this respect, Hungary considers itself covering all three models.

⁴ In the Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary, and Slovakia, compulsory education is single structure up to the ages of 14 to 16. However, students in these countries can enrol in separate establishments providing both lower and upper secondary education at key stages in their education between the ages 10 and 13.

institution can also represent a critical stage at which systems offer greater or lesser flexibility to learners, with varying degrees of learner choice⁵.

3.1.3 Key structural elements

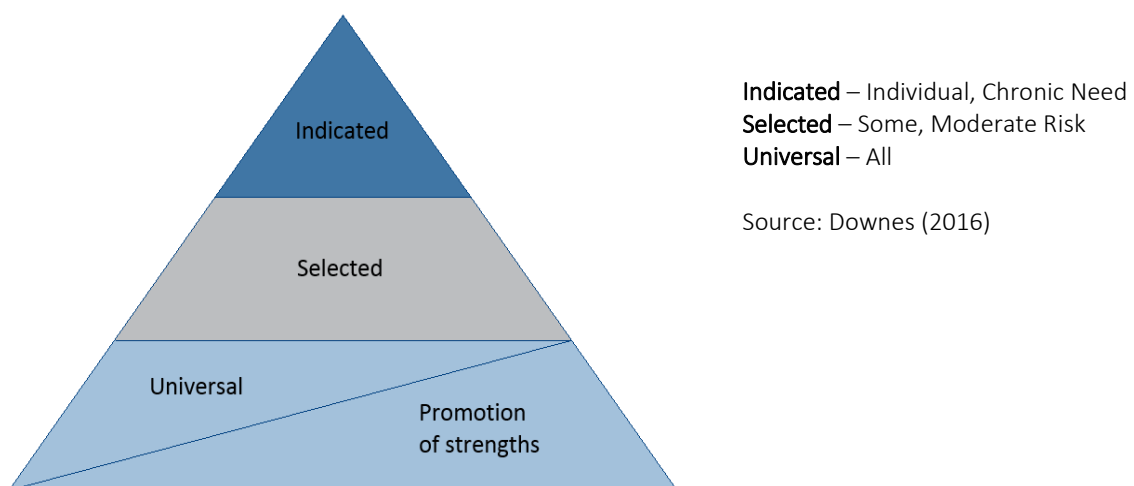
Key structural elements influencing learner continuity include, but are not restricted to:

- school admission policies, including catchments, access and entry examinations;
- ability grouping;
- school year or grade repetition;
- curriculum, inspection and accreditation frameworks;
- extent of school autonomy; and,
- the relationship of publicly funded education to private and alternative provision.

Any combination of these factors means a need for a differentiated response at a country level. This report provides a basis for considering these elements and opportunities for system development, whilst acknowledging the diversity of system models.

Action at policy and regional/local level can be directed to different learner groups (see Figure 2): all learners (universal strategies); specific groups (selected or ‘targeted’ strategies) and particular individuals with additional needs or ‘at risk’ (indicated or individualised strategies). This should be taken into account when reviewing policy.

Figure 2: Multidimensional strategies in place for meeting individual needs at different levels of need/risk for transition



⁵ In Germany, a binding decision on the choice of school attended and/or course of education pursued in lower secondary education (general or more vocational) is made in grade 4 to 6, with the age varying between Lander. In Romania, pupils are assigned to an academic or a vocational school between the 8th and 9th grade based on exam results and average marks in the final year of study.

3.2 Working process

The formulation of guiding principles and accompanying examples of policy development was carried out in four ways:

Review of existing research and literature

A background paper of international sources exploring work concerning the topic was created for the Working Groups members.

Working Group meetings, Brussels

Using a blend of sub-group discussion, reporting, and full group reflection, the members explored the topic from different perspectives in working sessions at two two-day meetings. Input was received from guest experts⁶, Working Group members sharing case studies from their countries, and guest organisation representatives⁷.

Survey to member countries and organisations

Working Group members completed a survey designed to prompt investigation and reflection by respondents on policy developments their school education systems. Participants from 24 countries⁸ and 3 associations completed the survey, which was summarised into a report for internal use by the Working Group to inform their work under the mandate.

Peer Learning Activity

The policy challenges and principles set out in this report were developed in depth by 9 countries and 2 organisations attending a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on 'Continuity in learner development', hosted by **Portugal** (14 – 17 February 2017). This PLA focussed on system-level responses that can work towards continuity, with positive outcomes for learners and enable members to critically reflect on the integration of system actors, processes and mechanisms.

⁶ Dr Paul Downes (Dublin City University), on '*Developing a School System Governance Framework to Promote Quality for Transitions*' and Jean Gordon (Universal Education Foundation: Learning for Well-Being) on '*Joining the dots in learner development*.'

⁷ European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, European Parents Association, and Organising Bureau of School Student Unions.

⁸ CY, ET, FI, BE(FL), BE(FR), DE(Hesse), EL, IS, IE, IT, LV, MT, NO, PT, MK, RO, SK, ES, SE, CH, and UK(NI)

4. Principles in action

This section expands on the guiding principles for policy development relating to continuity in learner development, incorporating discussion points and country examples contributed by members of the ET2020 Working Group on Schools.

4.1 Early years transition

High quality learning experiences should be available to all children from the beginning of their lives as a foundation for lifelong learning.

Educationalists and policy makers are increasingly acknowledging that learning pathways start with the early years, and that any provisions for formal schooling must also take into account these important first steps in children’s cognitive, social, physical and emotional development.

There is substantial evidence that investing in the early years achieves greater returns than at any other educational stage, although the size and durability of the benefits vary considerably between programmes^{vii}. High quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is associated with children’s healthy social and emotional development, and with the acquisition of speech, language and literacy competences, as well as creativity and critical thinking skills^{viii}. It is also associated with improved outcomes during later educational stages, and in reducing the risk of ESL^{ix x}.

Many countries take this into account. For example, the Education Act in the **Czech Republic** offers all children an opportunity to start pre-school education from the age of two and pre-school education is mandatory for children from the age of five. At the same time, however, it must be recognised that 1 in 20 pre-school age children across Europe do not participate in ECEC⁹. While the effort to widen participation in ECEC remains a policy objective, it is parents who ultimately hold the responsibility for determining the most appropriate education and care for their children at this stage, therefore support must also be extended to families choosing to raise their children at home.

Supporting pre-primary to primary transitions

Flexible and high quality ECEC is rapidly becoming “...a constitutive part of the education and training system” within European countries, and at European policy level^{xi}. This shift is apparent

⁹ The EU-average pre-school participation from the age of 4 to the starting age of compulsory primary education was 94.3% in 2014. See 2016 Education and Training Monitor (Table 3.1.1)

https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016_en.pdf

from the growing number of European countries adopting a unitary system, whereby ECEC is organised within a single phase, typically under the Education Ministry¹⁰.

A stronger continuum presents new opportunities for the alignment of staff development, curricula and outcomes frameworks, and softening transitions from pre-primary to primary stage. A number of European countries have undertaken initiatives in this area (Box 1).

Box 1. Strengthening links between ECEC and primary education (Ireland)

In **Ireland**, a developmental initiative with preschools and primary schools was launched in early 2017 to establish the ‘enablers’ for improving transition in children’s educational journeys. Although the main objective was to enhance the transfer of information between preschools and primary schools, the initiative will feed into a redevelopment of the primary curriculum including the curriculum experienced by children when they make the transfer from preschool into primary school. This wider curriculum review and development will ensure better alignment between the primary school curriculum and the early years framework and consider opportunities for shared CPD.

The project was led by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), a statutory agency of the Department for Education and Skills. A developmental approach was emphasised from the outset, based on consensus-building with teachers, parents and children. This was enabled by the representative structure of the Council, which includes nominees from the ECEC and primary education sectors.

Learning from the initiative has the potential to feed into a number of aspects of policy development, including ongoing work in reviewing programmes in the higher education sector to incorporate policy developments related to the preschool to primary school transition into courses for practitioners. Monitoring and evaluation is also planned to understand the impact of transferred information on experience and outcomes for children.

ECEC as a supportive foundation for disadvantaged children

ECEC has a particular role to play in improving the educational chances of children and families experiencing disadvantages, starting in the early years. For example, OECD data shows that early years education can push-back one third of negative effects of low socio-economic status, using a ‘reading engagement’ approach towards early literacy development^{xii}.

ECEC can also provide a supportive environment for the integration of migrant children, by providing an early start to multilingual teaching and learning. In Norway, for example, children aged 4 and 5 from migrant backgrounds benefit from 20 hours free early childhood education

¹⁰ BG, DK, DE, EE, ES, HR, LT, LV, AT, SI, FI, SE, and UK

called 'free core time'. This measure results in 15% higher participation in ECEC and better results on mapping tests in 1st and 2nd grade for minority language children compared to city areas where no free core time is available.

Box 2. Tackling social disadvantage at the pre-primary stage (Slovakia)

In **Slovakia**, the Ministry of Education has legislated the introduction of a contribution for students from socially disadvantaged environments, to support their upbringing and education (Decree No. 649/2008). Furthermore, pre-primary education is free of charge one year before learners start compulsory education and also for children who come from socially disadvantaged families who receive material need benefits (subsidies for food and school supplies). These measures¹¹ are intended to raise participation in kindergarten education, at pre-primary stage.



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development through Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) include:

- **Reducing charges in order to widen access and uptake**, so that as many children as possible stand to benefit from the potential continuing education and social gains of high quality ECEC, while recognising parents' rights to exercise choice at the pre-school stage;
- **Reviewing curricula** to facilitate continuity from ECEC through primary stage, which may require strategic direction at a national policy level; and,
- **Shared practices and professional development opportunities**, enabling school education systems and stakeholders to learn from, and be coherent with, effective ECEC pedagogies.

¹¹ Measures also include financing an additional educator in Roma classes for some hours per day. Italian and Hungarian national communities in ethnically mixed areas have the right to education in their respective language. The Constitution also protects the status and gives special rights to members of the Roma community who live in Slovenia.

4.2 Learner and parental participation and choice

Learners and families should be supported with guidance and participatory decision-making in navigating pathways between levels and types of school education, and between school and future education and employment.

The participation of learners - and their parents or carers - in decision-making affecting their education is a key principle of learner development, from 0-18 years and beyond. First, it is important to acknowledge that learner voices and the entitlement to an education are both fundamental rights, as set out in international^{xiii} and European laws^{xiv}¹². Research findings suggest that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is having an impact on domestic education policy^{xv}.

Learner 'voice' is a prerequisite for creating a school culture within which young people feel valued, and able to make a difference. Effective participation requires willingness on the part of school leaders to share some decision-making responsibilities with young people on meaningful issues relating to the running of the school, and to provide a suitable infrastructure in the form of school councils or other decision-making bodies. It also requires suitable mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and feed back the results of learner participation, so that learners are able to see that their views are taken seriously, and acted upon, and can hold school leaders to account^{xvi}.

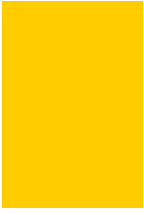
There is an abundance of practice and research examples showing that even very young children can participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their education (individually) and in the everyday running of schools or kindergartens (collectively)^{xvii}. Recent research conducted at European level found that comparatively few European countries have mechanisms in place to support child participation at pre-secondary stage, however, and fewer still within ECEC, although forums for participation are in much greater evidence at secondary stage^{xviii}.

Exercising choice over educational pathways

The ability to exercise choice requires some degree of flexibility in education systems to accommodate individual learners' needs and aspirations, and to balance this with the needs of the labour market and the skills demanded by employers.

The degree of choice exercised by learners is subject to change throughout their educational journey. While parents hold the balance of decision making responsibilities at ECEC and primary stage, young people usually exercise increasing influence over decisions about upper secondary

¹² The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrined the right for children to express and have their views heard in all matters affecting their lives, in accordance with their age and maturity. The child's right to be heard is also Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.



pathways and qualifications. The views of learners, parents and schools are not always harmonious, however, and what is supposedly in the child's best interests can be a contested area.

Choices are possible - to a varying degree - within more or less centralised systems. In some countries, educational trajectories are prescribed to a much greater extent¹³. In other European countries, deregulation and school autonomy, and curriculum diversification have sometimes helped to ensure that educational provision is more responsive, and demand-led¹⁴. In the **UK (Northern Ireland)**, for example, all secondary schools must offer a balance between 'applied' and 'general' courses, either in-school or in collaboration with other schools or Further Education colleges. These categories ensure that a range of skills are recognised and rewarded through formal qualifications in all schools. It also helps to signpost pathways into both academic and professional/technical routes to learners from age 14.

In **Germany**, vocational and academic tracks follow different institutional pathways, and so the transition from primary to lower secondary education has particular significance for the curricula to be followed. In practice, however, the primary schools usually assess the learner aptitude for certain types of secondary schools in consultation with the learner and their parents. The final decision is typically taken by the school or school supervisory authority, and ideally with active parental involvement. Differences in approach can exist between Länder.

Beyond choices about schools and qualifications, some approaches place a stronger emphasis on learners' participation in everyday decision-making. In **Portugal**, school autonomy projects allow schools to develop innovative ways of giving higher levels of autonomy to the learner. Schools in **Italy** are also able to devise ways to increase student participation in the life of the school.

Box 3. Cooperative and democratic model of schooling (Portugal)

The modern school movement in **Portugal** is based on the principles of "cooperative and democratic organisation". The school objectives are set by the ministry and follow the national curriculum, but the institutional approach is determined by individual schools, which have autonomy to recruit and train teachers according to their specific pedagogical approach.

Unique among these schools is the Escola da Ponte. The school was established in 1976 in São Tomé de Negrelos by group of teachers who wanted to put their vision for education into action. It spans the 3-15 age range, and offers a truly child-centred approach to learning and school organisation. The learners hold a high level of autonomy and responsibility, negotiating what to learn and how to learn, using a fortnightly plan. The tutor (teacher) is a bridge between the school and the family, providing feedback or help where this is needed. The model is underpinned by continuous self-evaluation, which part of the learning process.

¹³ Including: DE, NL, AT, LT, LU, and LI.

¹⁴ Including: IS, IE, FI, IT, EL, NO and ES.

The role of information, advice and guidance

High quality guidance counselling can play a role in preventing educational disengagement, by ensuring that learners make informed and realistic choices at key stages in their journey^{xix}. This is a particular priority upon transition to upper secondary vocational education, which often corresponds with an increased risk of early school leaving due to a mismatch in learners' expectations of their chosen pathway¹⁵. Individual coaching or guidance counselling can also counteract feelings of low self-esteem, inadequacy or failure among learners who have early experiences of educational under-achievement, and help to reactivate learners' motivations^{xx}.

It is important to acknowledge the competence of parents and families, as well as the competence of educators to promote sound outcomes for all children. European countries have developed a variety of approaches to support learner and parental choices, through the provision of information, advice and guidance services at different stages within the education system:

- In **Greece**, a multi-stakeholder approach has been taken to develop and disseminate the national Career Programmes. This involves collaboration between school units, other Career and Counselling Centres, Universities, Research Institutes, and NGOs.
- In **Spain**, there has been an emphasis on measures to simplify the curriculum and to make available learner pathways more transparent and clearly signposted¹⁶. Similar steps were taken in the UK (EN) to substantially consolidate the number of courses and to disband the previous credit-based system, which was considered to be confusing.
- In **Malta**, there is a different relative emphasis to the guidance provided at each transition point. In the early years there is an emphasis on emotional security, from primary to middle school reassurance and emotional support, and middle school to secondary is more career-orientated.

The Finnish system is based around a comprehensive guidance offer, starting from an early age, and including both universal and targeted provision (Box 4).

¹⁵ In the Netherlands, for example, a national survey of 1,700 young people who had left education without a qualification found that most had left upper secondary VET schools, because they felt in hindsight that they had made the wrong decision. (Cited in: GHK (2011)).

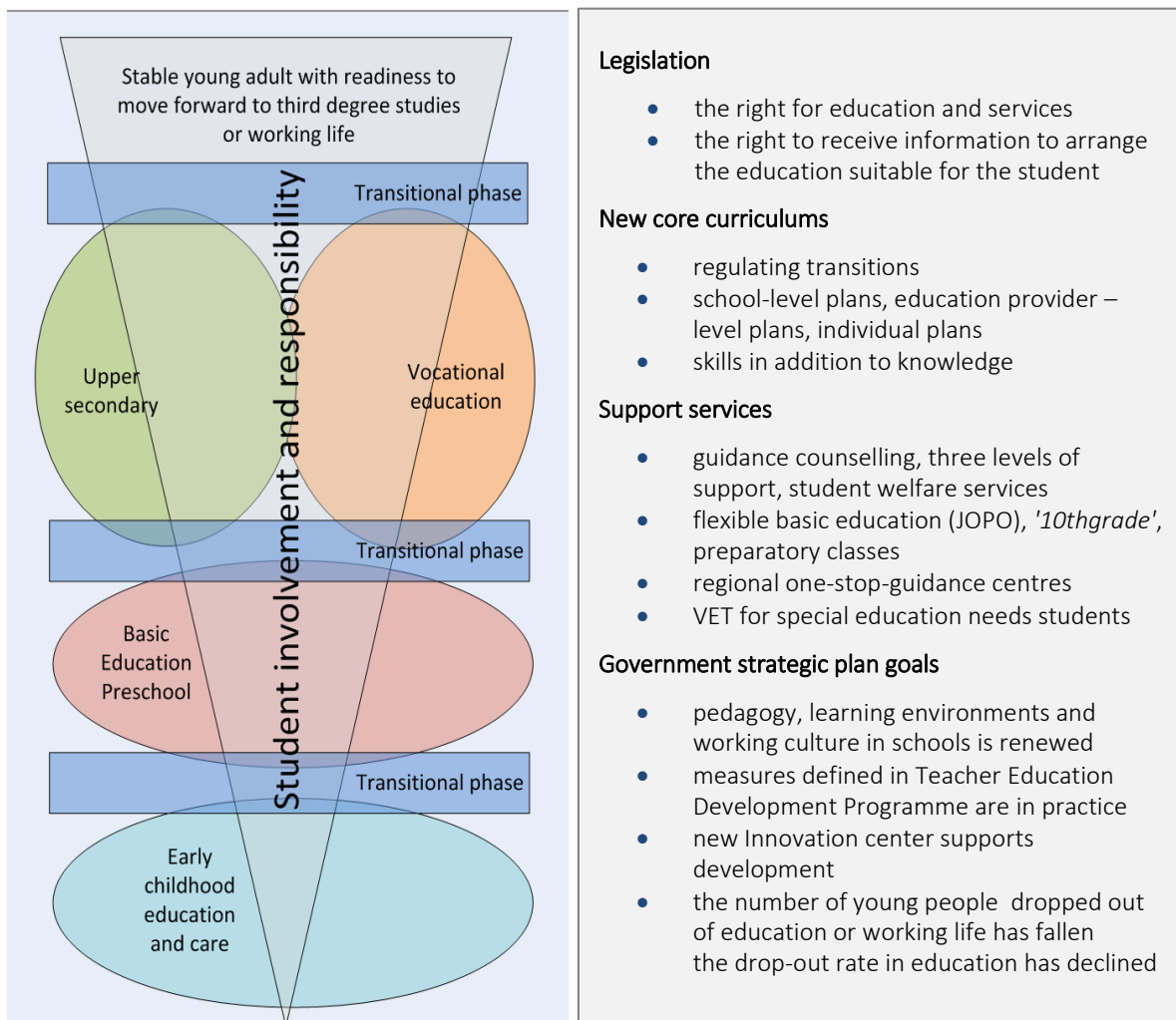
¹⁶ These are set out in the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, which modified the former 2006 Education Act, and was introduced during the academic year 2014/2015.

Box 4. Integrated national system of guidance and learner support (Finland)

Finland has a three-tiered support system based on learner needs (general, intensified and special), which incorporates universal pupil welfare services, guidance, counselling and individually adapted curricula for learners with special educational needs.

A key feature of the Finnish system is that guidance counselling starts in the first grade when children are seven years old. A strengths-based approach is advocated, which recognises that children have growing responsibilities and autonomy throughout their education (Figure 3).

Figure 3: National education system in Finland – a visual representation





Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development through pupil and parental guidance and participatory decision-making include:

- **Establishing appropriate support structures and pedagogical techniques to build learners' autonomy and responsibility;** developing personal, social and civic competences alongside and within academic learning. This should be from an early age, and these structures evolve with the growing capacities of the learner.
- **Signposting of different learner pathways and educational options:** providing clear and accessible information in a variety of formats, including written materials for learners and parents from minority linguistic and cultural background.
- **High quality careers advice and guidance** in schools: tailored to the needs of the individual learner and from an early age; and contextualised, involving local employers, NGOs and universities.

4.3 Collaboration between institutions

Systems should have structures and mechanisms to support collaboration across institutions and between actors, focusing on transitions between levels and types of education

Collaboration between educational institutions is an essential part of the continuum for learners. It is particularly important at the stage when learners move between different levels of education and when they often also experience a change in institutional setting. These transition points therefore represent both a change in learning environment (see also Guiding Principle 5), and in curricula and teacher pedagogical approaches (see also Guiding Principle 6).

Effective collaboration requires strong mechanisms to ensure that there is a flow of information between educational institutions and a clear mutual understanding of responsibilities. The 'sending' institution holds the key insights to the learner and is often best placed to lead on transition planning, although shared accountability is essential to ensure that the process is as seamless as possible and the flows of information are in both directions.

Members report that a number of their countries have tested the approach of requiring all education institutions to develop a 'transition plan'. This is typically a formal document setting out the institutional aims and objectives regarding learner transitions, and the support that is in place for learners' academic and social development. This document has the advantage of formalising arrangements, and avoiding the risk that responsibilities for transitions can otherwise become too implicit, with a lack of managerial oversight. In **Italy**, for example, the National System for School

Evaluation requires the different levels of school: primary, lower and upper secondary schools to assess their effectiveness in supporting pupils' transition to the next level as part of school improvement, while lower and upper secondary schools are also required to assess the effectiveness of their arrangements for linking with the lower level.

More regular opportunities for interaction between teaching professionals from ECEC, primary and secondary education can help to complement the collaboration that takes place at system level (strategic planning and data-sharing), and can ensure that there is a degree of familiarity in principles, curricula and teaching practices deployed in the classroom (see also Guiding Principle 6). This can be as much a question of trust and professional relationships as one of data-sharing.

Box 5. Teacher pedagogical exchanges – primary and lower secondary (United Kingdom(Northern Ireland))

In the **United Kingdom(Northern Ireland)**, the introduction of a shared skills framework – The Entitlement Framework – has provided a focal point for a programme of teacher exchanges and joint professional development. They found that lower secondary level teachers welcomed having regular opportunities to see how primary level teachers address literacy and numeracy through all subjects, working with mixed ability groups, and how assessment is undertaken against the framework at primary stage. The experience had challenged secondary school teachers' expectations for their incoming pupils, as well as helping to build mutual trust and understanding between professionals.

The structure and geographical organisation of educational institutions can serve to enable or hinder collaboration. The highest level of integration is often found where ISCED levels are grouped in the same or similar institutional setting. These arrangements can help to avoid the 'jolt' associated with the transition between different institutions. In Italy, this grouping is achieved using comprehensive institutes across primary and lower secondary education. In the UK, school deregulation has seen the emergence of Multi Academy Trusts, grouping networks of primary and secondary schools under a shared governance and management structure. The Trusts also have powers to set curricula. Steiner Waldorf schools usually span multiple educational stages, as described in Box 6 below.

Box 6. Integrated primary and secondary provision (Steiner Waldorf schools in Europe)

In the Steiner Waldorf system, formal schooling usually starts between ages 6 and 7. The oldest kindergarten children are offered special programmes to prepare them for transition to school, and forms of cooperation are established between early years and primary education¹⁷.

¹⁷ These can be either formal or informal and can be organised as follows: Steiner Waldorf early years settings and Steiner Waldorf schools represented in the same national federation (FL, NL, BE, LU, UK, SP, IT, CH, AT, HU, HR, SI, SK, LV, EE); Steiner Waldorf early years staff and Steiner Waldorf school staff part of the same faculty of teachers

Steiner Waldorf schools offer their own secondary school wherever possible. In **Germany**, for example, Steiner Waldorf schools are comprehensive schools and cover classes 1-12/13, removing the need to change schools when entering lower or upper secondary education. The possibility to offer secondary provision within the same institution mainly depends on the legal context in a given country. Where the upper secondary school is legally distinct, the Steiner Waldorf school is often co-located to provide similar benefits in terms of close cooperation.

A cluster structure can provide similar benefits for inter-institutional collaboration and networking. The Programme for Priority Intervention Educational Areas (TEIP)¹⁸ in **Portugal** is one such example (Box 7).

Box 7. School clustering to manage transitions between educational levels (Portugal)

In **Portugal**, schools within the TEIP programme are grouped in clusters to promote a seamless transition between different levels of education. Most schools are grouped including the ISCED 0-3 levels. Both regular and specialised educational provision is available within each cluster, to allow for differentiation according to individual learners' needs¹⁹. Transition is an established criterion within the external evaluations carried out by the Inspectorate of Education. Whenever a weakness is identified, schools develop improvement plans with measures to reinforce better transitions and articulation between teachers. One of the areas of the improvement plans developed by schools is management and organisation, under which measures are frequently implemented to 'soften' the transition between levels.

One of the main challenges has been to overcome communication gaps between teachers from different cycles and/or to build a consistent approach rooted in a local identity. Intensive ongoing collaboration is therefore a central principle of the TEIP programme, involving frequent joint projects and ongoing CPD to maintain open dialogue and learning.

Inter-institutional collaboration can be challenging to achieve in school education systems, for example where there are challenges relating to school closure or under-supply, or where provision is organised across geographically dispersed or predominately rural areas. In **Malta**, state schools are non-continuous, and learners have to change school after their primary schooling, middle school and secondary school. In most cases this means that they have to change locality. Consequently, there is a greater emphasis on ensuring that learners and their parents or carers

(NO, NL, BE, LU, UK, SP, IT, CH, SI, EE, UA); Joint weekly conferences: (NL, BE, SP, IT, CH, SI, CZ, LV, EE); Joint seminars (FL, NO, parts of DE, BE, LU, SP, CH, SI, CZ, EE).

¹⁸ Further information on the TEIP programme is provided on the European Commission School Education Gateway: <http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools/detail.cfm?n=434>

¹⁹ Alternative Curriculum Paths (PCA), the Integrated Programme of Education and Training (PIEF), Vocational Courses, Specialized Artistic Courses and Professional Courses.

are psychologically prepared, as well as attending to other support infrastructure including suitable transport provision.

A much wider range of stakeholders is involved in learner transitions than schools alone. Collaboration is important with pupils, parents, teachers, educational providers and social partners, although there is invariably variation in the profile of different organisations that are involved at each educational stage. Some European countries have developed cross-sectoral approaches involving co-located multi-disciplinary teams, in an effort to overcome fragmentation and to develop a ‘multi-faceted’ response^{xxi}. This might include where teachers work alongside health or social workers, with outreach support where this is needed.

Box 8. Multiple stakeholder collaboration for learner development (Norway)

In **Norway**, the national quality assurance system, introduced in 2004, requires the cooperation of all stakeholders, including social partners, national parents’ committees, national authorities, and school leaders and pupils, who participate in analysing data from tests, exams and user surveys. The Norwegian national system for Quality in Kindergarten (ECEC), implemented in 2016, also relies on dialogue and quality assurance mechanisms involving all stakeholders.



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development - inter-institutional collaboration - include:

- **Requiring all schools and ECEC providers to develop and review transition plans for their learners:** this creates an accountability mechanisms for transition at an institutional level. This could also require:
 - an outline of differentiated support for learners with additional needs;
 - planning relating to health, wellbeing, and family support in order to strengthen multiple stakeholder accountability and achieve collective ownership of children and young people’s outcomes at different developmental stages.
- Creating regular opportunities for **school leaders, teachers and other education professionals** from ECEC, primary and secondary institutions to **jointly plan and reflect upon their practice** for a common understanding of the key principles, processes, working protocols and outcomes from effective transitions.
- **Clear priorities within national inspection frameworks** to strengthen the emphasis on continuity, guidance and transition, so that judgements about the quality and effectiveness include schools’ support arrangements.

4.4 The content and ways of teaching and learning

Appropriate curricula and teacher pedagogical approaches should help bridge transitions and foster learners' growing sense of responsibility for their own competence development and future lives in society.

School systems require flexibility to ensure the continuing relevance of teaching methods for learners at different stages, and to ensure that learning content is inspiring and accessible to learners with a diverse range of needs. In addition to subject knowledge, teachers require appropriate conflict resolution skills, diversity awareness, and bullying prevention approaches, to maintain a positive school and classroom climate (see also 4.8).

It is important that work in this area offers a continuum between stages of education^{xxii}, and uses common language and concepts of child development that are relevant for and valued by educators across all ISCED levels. Such curricula might be reinforced through teacher exchanges and joint training and continued professional development (CPD).

European countries have often used a combination of national legislation and standards to improve continuity. In Iceland, for example, the principle of equipping teachers to train across all levels is enshrined in law²⁰, although large scale implementation has yet to be realised. In the **United Kingdom(Northern Ireland)**, a programme of teacher professional development brings together primary school teachers and lower secondary teachers with a focus on literacy and numeracy skills development and assessment, while Denmark has introduced common objectives for school subjects, which span all stages of education. In **Belgium(French community)**, a competency-based approach has been developed, extending upwards from ECEC to secondary stage (see Box 9).

Box 9. Ensuring curricular and pedagogical continuity (Belgium(French community))

In **Belgium(French community)**, transitions between ECEC and primary education are facilitated by a common framework for initial competencies (“socle commun de compétences initiales”), involving collaboration between teachers in pre-school and primary school. The framework stipulates that each school should set up a piloting plan for a period of six years, and that this plan should include, among other measures: strategies to support pupil achievement, and mechanisms to avoid the need for school year repetition, and to prevent early school leaving. Transition to secondary education continues via the pedagogic continuum, which covers eight years from the first year of primary school to the second year of secondary school.

²⁰ Art. 16 in the Preschool Act no. 90/2008 and Art. 5, 6, 25 and 40 in the Compulsory Act no. 91/2008.

European countries have adopted a range of methods to monitor and evaluate their curricula at pre-primary and lower secondary stage at national, regional and institutional levels to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness in supporting learner development (Box 9). These assessments often make reference to OECD guidelines alongside national criteria.

In **Sweden**, pedagogical approaches are regularly evaluated. At a national level, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate conducts supervision of all municipal and independent schools, from preschool to adult education. At a provider level, the Education Act stipulates that every school shall continuously review and adjust their curricula.

Core curricula in **Finland** are prepared in wide cooperation with all the key stakeholders – including learners. The process includes various stages where their involvement is essential. For example, the draft curriculum guidelines go through a public commentary round, where feedback is collected from learners. Learners must be involved in the development of local curricula, while national student organizations have representation in the upper secondary education steering group. A similar approach is taken in **Ireland**.

Box 10. The inclusion of Roma pupils (Slovakia)

The project “Innovative education for primary school pedagogic employees aimed at increasing their intercultural competence in education of Roma pupils” was a partnership between the Slovak National Institute for education and the Council of Europe, co-financed by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area and the government budget of the Slovak Republic. Its objective was to support the process of intercultural and inclusive education at schools and included educating primary school teachers in the Romani language, culture and history of Roma.

A new Erasmus+ project “Innovation of Romani language didactics for inclusive education of pupils from a disadvantaged environment” is a cooperation between the Institute for Education, the Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue (Lillehammer) and the Seminar of Romani Studies (Department of Central European Studies, Charles University, Prague). The aim of the project is to promote and develop education in the Romani language as one of the main tools of applying the inclusive method in primary and secondary schools with pupils from Roma communities. The project reflects the latest trends in inclusive education from abroad, especially from the **Czech Republic** and **Norway**.

The importance of Vocational and Educational Training (VET)

Differentiated pathways between mainstream education and VET are a particular feature of some education systems. Whilst not necessarily problematic, these differentiated systems also need to find a way to maintain flexibility. This might entail providing greater variety within VET curricula, to include arts, citizenship and social and emotional learning.

In the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the first year of secondary education in VET schools has a large representation of general subjects. The aim is help learners acclimatise to the

vocational system and to provide opportunities to transfer between systems if this is necessary. The diverse curriculum is also intended to build socio-emotional competencies. There is a similar emphasis on flexibility in the first year of secondary education in vocational schools in **Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden and Finland**.

During 2016-2020, **Slovakia** will run a national project to implement a dual system of education in all appropriate learning and study fields. This will include the participation of nearly 1500 employers and 300 secondary vocational schools within 8 self-governing regions. (Further information available at www.dualnysystem.sk).

More fundamentally, many European countries are addressing difficulties with the lower status afforded to VET pathways. This lack of parity in status is sometimes reflected in the restricted options at post-compulsory stage, with VET courses offered at a limited number of specialist higher education institutions. Some countries have addressed this issue with a combination of awareness-raising campaigns; reforms to strengthen VET qualifications; and measures to facilitate a stronger role for local government and social partners. In **Norway**, the Ministry of Education is working with municipalities to raise the profile of VET. This is in response to low completion rates for vocational qualifications (the 'journeyman's certificate'), despite 50% of learners participating in VET at upper secondary stage.

Meeting learners' needs for the digital world: age-appropriate support

Curriculum development must also take account of wider societal and technological changes, including the growing significance of the internet and mobile technologies to children and young people's lives both inside and outside of school. Research shows that children in Europe are going online in increasing numbers from an earlier age, with more widespread access to mobile technologies and social media membership, and that this has profound implications for their peer relationships, social norms and identity formation^{xxiii}. This calls for age and development-appropriate pedagogical responses to be co-constructed across levels.

The digital world provides new opportunities for learners as creators and curators of educational content^{xxiv}, while the digitalisation of learning resources provides an example of how these technologies have been harnessed by schools and NGOs to widen educational access and inclusion²¹. At the same time, digitalisation presents new challenges for safeguarding and child protection. There is a greater onus on schools to ensure that children's online lives are factored into curriculum development and learner pathways in an age-and development appropriate form and that teachers are equipped with the tools to support learners in these contexts. For example, in **Ireland**, the Department has developed a Digital Strategy and there is ongoing work on teacher competences in the context of this strategy.

²¹See for example the work of the European Commission in relation to ET2020: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/education-technology_en



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development through curricula and teacher pedagogical approaches include:

- **Creating opportunities for interaction and exchanges between teachers and support staff** working at different levels within national school education systems, to build familiarity and trust, and to develop a common language of learner development. This might include joint initial teacher training, classroom observations, or joint training and continued professional development (CPD).
- **Developing competency frameworks that span ISCED levels**, and which can reinforce continuity in the curriculum. These can be strengthened by cooperation at a national or regional policy level between Ministries and National Inspectorates tasked with monitoring educational standards for ECEC, primary, and secondary stage education.
- **Informed consultation with learners, parents, NGOs, employers and social partners** as a multi-stakeholder approach to curriculum development with an appropriate level of challenge and debate.
- **Providing a choice of different learner pathways, including a stronger and more appealing range of VET options**, on a parity of status with general educational qualifications. This might require a combination of awareness-raising campaigns to challenge negative social perceptions of VET; qualifications reforms, and measures to facilitate a stronger role for local government and social partners in developing VET routes into local labour markets.

4.5 Access and inclusion

Systems should ensure sufficient flexibility to include and integrate pupils who enter or leave at different stages, or who have difficulty in accessing formal education.

Whilst it is important to ensure continuity in learner development between levels of education, individual pathways are often non-linear, and can be subject to disruption at any stage. This might include periods of missed schooling for health or family reasons, or where young people are leaving institutional care. More mobile or transient populations such as Roma and migrant families also have distinct needs arising from their inclusion within school education systems at ad hoc points. It is important to ensure that systems are sufficiently flexible and responsive to all learners at these 'moments' of risk.

Supporting the inclusion of newly arrived migrant children

European countries have received growing numbers of new migrants and refugees in the wake of the crisis in **Syria** and other humanitarian crises. The situation of newly arrived migrant children presents specific challenges for education systems. OECD data show that first-generation migrants underachieve relative to their peers in reading and maths, albeit with wide inter-country variations^{xxv}. Research indicates that the timing of entry into preschool and school, plus selection mechanisms such as differentiated school tracks, all present barriers to young migrants^{xxvi}, alongside challenges arising from the residential segregation^{xxvii}.

In response, European countries have adopted varying approaches to support the inclusion of newly arrived migrant children within the school system. These have ranged from a phased process involving an initial period of separate education in reception classes, to direct ‘immersion’ within mainstream schools. While there is evidence demonstrating the value of multilingual approaches to teaching and learning^{xxviii}, challenges remain in building the capacity of schools to support often linguistically and culturally diverse groups of learners. **Sweden** and other countries have established a type of national centre, with some success (Box 11).

Box 11. Building capacity to support the school inclusion of migrant children (Sweden)

In **Sweden**, the Education Ministry has financed the National Centre for Swedish as a Second Language ([The National Centre](#)) at Stockholm University to support municipalities and schools with the integration of newly arrived migrant learners. The National Centre provides a link role, brokering access to advice, pedagogical tools, and training. The staff at the National Centre have advocated for a ‘whole systems’ approach, based on collective responsibility.

One example of the model in action comes from a municipality in south-eastern **Sweden**, which contacted the National Centre following concerns about the shortfall in teachers with the necessary competences to support newly arrived migrants in local schools. The National Centre responded with a programme of in-service training for schools, based on a ‘content and language integrated approach’ to learning, which was rolled out in blocks of training for teachers across the locality. The approach was deemed to have been a real success, with more appropriate learner support in place and demand for training from other municipalities^{xxix}.

In **Italy**, newly arrived migrant learners who do not have the language of schooling may receive Personalised Teaching Plans. Such plans contain all the measures to be put in place to facilitate inclusion including the duration of the classes in the language of schooling, the support given to learn Italian as a second language, the temporary compensatory and dispensatory educational measures adopted, the attainment levels and the criteria for formative and summative assessment.

Turkey has received an unprecedented number of newly arrived migrant learners, fleeing conflict in war torn countries. At January 2017, an estimated 900,000 children of school age (5-17) were registered under the temporary protection regime, of whom 507,000 were enrolled at school²². Despite significant efforts to make school places available, nearly two thirds of these children (64%) have been enrolled in temporary education centres. The Ministry has faced significant challenges in managing the transition into mainstream classrooms with language support, while absorbing the extra demand for places within the system.

Support for deferment or re-engagement in education

More widely, a number of countries have introduced flexible approaches for learners to skip a year or to defer starting school, where certain preconditions are met (see Box 12). This model can have the advantage of allowing learners to progress at an appropriate pace, and to avoid school year repetition, which is a known risk factor for early school leaving in some countries.

Box 12. Flexibility to (re)join and progress within mainstream schools

In **Portugal**, special programmes have been introduced to reinsert learners to the education system, following periods of missed schooling. The Portuguese Integrated Programme for Education and Training (PIEF) allows students to begin and finish the programme at any moment of the academic year, and to re-enrol on a mainstream pathway. This re-insertion is important, as learning Portuguese, Maths and English is a requirement within the curriculum.

In the **United Kingdom(Northern Ireland)**, work has been commissioned to assess the practicalities of allowing deferred entry to school for the first time. The statutory curriculum sets out only the minimum content required to be delivered. The content of the individual school curriculum is directed at school level and can be shaped to meet the needs of the specific intake of pupils.

‘Second chance education’ schemes provide another option for young people seeking to re-engage with formal education having left before achieving an upper secondary qualification. A review of second chance provision in Europe showed that these schemes generally experience greater success where they emphasise their distinctiveness from mainstream school, while at the same time providing an opportunity for learners to work towards recognised qualifications^{xxx}. Other success factors include having roots in the local community, access to social support networks, and strong links to the local labour market, including opportunities for project-based learning, and engaging with employers.

²² Source: <http://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/www/suriyeli-ogrencilere-yonelik-koordinasyon-toplantisi-duzenlendi/icerik/589> (05.01.2017)



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development by integrating pupils include:

- **Provision of specific in-service teacher training in assessment and observation, and shared access to resources for clusters of schools**, in order to manage the inclusion of newly arrived migrant learners, who may have missed periods of schooling, and/or have experienced psychological trauma.
- **Developing whole school approaches to support cultural and linguistic diversity**, by adopting good practices in multilingual teaching and learning, and valuing languages other than the language of instruction as an educational resource within the classroom.
- **Promoting flexibility in the duration and entry points of study courses**, by providing learners with the options to enter and leave a course at different points and assessing the possibility of differing entry routes to education. This might include the use of tools to validate prior learning and taking non-formal educational outcomes into account, for examples. those gained through volunteering or youth work settings outside of school.
- **Reviewing the range of high quality alternative education provision**, where mainstream school does not provide the most appropriate option for learners. This might include second chance education schemes; pedagogical and psychological support for home educated learners and their families, and for learners who are in institutional care.

4.6 Sharing data

Relevant learner data should be shared between institutions in both directions, as part of an ongoing dialogue to ensure continuity and progression in learning and continued support for competence development.

Data sharing between educational institutions takes place for range of purposes. While there is often a primary focus on sharing ‘hard’ attainment data, other developmental and contextual information can also be valuable for understanding learner transitions. Many European countries have legislated to ensure that schools receive a minimum level of standardised information on individual learners upon completion of each stage of their schooling (Box 13).

Box 13. Standardised information sharing – individual learner record or passport

Pre-school to primary (Estonia)

In **Estonia**, preschool institutions issue a ‘readiness for school card’ to children who have completed the curriculum, as a child development record. It is the competence of the parents to submit the card to the institution where the child will commence their compulsory school education. The card helps the primary school teacher to understand the child’s individuality and their development needs, and to plan cooperation with parents and support specialists.

The approach is greatly assisted where there is effective communication between preschool and school teachers. Acknowledging this, the Estonian ministry aims to further improve placement and joint training opportunities for preschool and school teachers, and to issue tools and guidance materials in the field of child development and transitions.

Primary to post-primary (Ireland)

In **Ireland**, transition from primary to post-primary education is facilitated by an Education Passport and supporting materials, developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), which follow the learner. These arrangements are underpinned by a national Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Lower to upper secondary (Italy)

In **Italy**, lower secondary teachers normally provide pupils with a written advice about the pathway that is considered to be the most suitable to them, which is shared with upper secondary teachers. Beyond this, it is largely at the discretion of individual secondary schools to establish further measures to facilitate transition.

A ‘data continuum’ throughout educational phases is a significant asset for understanding what makes for effective transitions, and for quantifying the success factors and barriers to progression. This implies a need for longitudinal data collection, which in turn requires consistency in how learner data is captured at the different educational stages or levels. The transmission of information should be multi-directional, so that progress data flows back from secondary to primary school, and/ or from primary to ECEC, to close the feedback loop and allow for continuous improvement in how learner development is captured and recorded.

Inter-institutional data sharing is often more developed within European countries where it has a ‘remedial’ purpose: tracking learners at risk of school exclusion, underachievement, or early school leaving. In **Denmark**, primary school teachers note “points of observation” if the learner is not making adequate progress in the Danish language or mathematics, and this information is shared upon transition to secondary level. In **Sweden**, a national guarantee (‘Läsa, skriva, räkna-garantin’) stipulates that data must be shared appropriately for learners at risk, to bridge the gaps between ECEC, primary and secondary, while **Portugal** has adopted a comprehensive national tracking system to monitor risk of early school leaving throughout the educational continuum.

A number of European countries have developed a centralising function for learner data, to facilitate appropriate access and to minimise the burden on schools:

- In **Spain**, piloting has taken place of a centralised single record for learners, accessible by each educational institution, with the aim of reducing the administrative costs related to sharing data on learner progression. This tool allows for access to quantitative progress data, with qualitative monitoring to be added.
- In **Belgium(Flanders)**, a national data warehousing project has been established, to gather and analyse information on learners' development and progress through their nursery and primary education.
- In **Greece**, '*Myschool*' is a nationwide database that supports the school units and the educational structures. It provides data from preliminary to high school education for all types of schools including private primary and secondary education which contributes to the monitoring of learners' pathways.

A holistic understanding of transitions often goes beyond what schools are able to capture and collect, and might also require collaboration with health and social sectors.

Data protection considerations

Ethical and data protection requirements play an important role in regulating information sharing between educational institutions. In **Belgium(Flanders)**, national legislation stipulates that primary schools should transfer only information that is relevant to the continuity of care of individual learners, to support secondary transition. In practice, however, data transmission is significantly influenced by parental consent. Many schools will consult with parents to develop protocols, and their permissions are required to share more than basic progress data.

In **Ireland**, Section 28 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) states that personal data - or information extracted from such data – may be given to another body (prescribed by the Minister) if the holder is satisfied that it will be used for a relevant education and training purpose only.

The risk of stigma associated with data sharing must also be taken into account. Sharing of information about past challenging behaviours or teacher perceptions can present a risk of 'labelling' individuals as trouble-makers, resulting in prejudiced treatment^{xxxii}. Learners should be aware of what information is shared about them, and how this will be used to inform judgements about their progress and the support or sanctions they receive.



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development through the sharing learner progression data include:

- **Incorporating health and wellbeing, social and emotional development, and social and civic competence** in the data that is captured in relation to learner development, where these aspects are not currently reflected.
- **Establishing clear requirements on the appropriate and timely sharing of learner data**, so that both institutions can plan accordingly.
- **Establishing transparent guidelines regarding learner and parental consent for data sharing** between education institutions, within the scope of existing national legislation for information governance, so that the learner and their parent or carer are aware at all times of what data is held, by whom, and for what purpose.

4.7 Different types of data and tools

Information from quantitative and qualitative assessment and reporting mechanisms should be used to help construct a holistic understanding of learner development and progression.

Most European countries have established frameworks that incorporate both internal and external quality assurance mechanisms, with the aim of assessing:

1. the performance of the education system overall;
2. the quality and performance of individual schools; and,
3. judgements about individual learner progress and attainment.

Well-functioning quality assurance approaches are clearly focussed on supporting learner development and school improvement, and seek to achieve coherence across different mechanisms that have been developed to meet the demands of all relevant stakeholders²³.

²³ A more detailed consideration of Quality Assurance as a topic for the ET2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18, including the proposed “eight guiding principles”, can be found in the companion document to this report.

International, longitudinal and research data (system-level)

At a national level, many European countries make use of data from international comparative studies to understand trends in learner attainment, and to benchmark. This includes Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). European level monitoring and evaluation, including with regard to ECEC also forms an important source of trend data to understand strengths and weaknesses within the system.

Data from standardised tests alone cannot be used as the basis of judgements about effectiveness, however, and most countries also use these data in conjunction with evidence from school inspections, school self-assessment, evaluations of special projects, and teacher and learner surveys, to ‘triangulate’ and provide a more nuanced understanding of the functioning of the system.

- Longitudinal data is often needed to track and identify where the movement (of learners) through systems is expected or unexpected; to identify potential systems blockages, and to understand the trigger points for under-achievement or drop-out.
- Primary research with teachers parents or carers is often necessary to explain trends in the data – especially where this requires an understanding of parental or learner motivations or behaviours driving participation. For example, this might relate to the take-up for ECEC, subject or school choices, or where there are high rates of early school leaving.
- Bespoke small scale trials, pilots or cohort studies can be invaluable in providing sufficient depth of understanding when testing the relative effectiveness of different policy tools or levers, such as funding mechanisms, incentives, or information, advice and guidance (e.g. careers guidance).

Trust and openness, along with a willingness to independently evaluate policy decisions and to disseminate the results, are critical to creating culture of self-improvement at all levels within the system. To these ends, ministries in some European countries have commissioned their own research to better understand specific issues pertaining to transitions (Box 14).

Box 14. National level transitions research – understanding the system (Slovenia and Finland)

In **Slovenia**, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport opted to be part of the OECD transition research project in 2016. This revealed unexpected challenges around the transition from pre-school to primary. Although levels of enrolment in ECEC are high in **Slovenia**, an increasing number of parents have been using the flexibility to postpone their child's enrolment to the first grade (at age six)²⁴. Further research has been commissioned to understand parents' motivations, and to identify whether additional campaigns or information might be needed²⁵.

In 2017, the amendment of the Kindergarten Act was the subject of intense debate; in particular regarding the measure that would provide even greater involvement for children who do not attend kindergarten in the last year before starting the school.

In **Finland**, a consortium led by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre and including representatives from the education ministry and research institutes has embarked on a research project. The rationale is to better understand the success factors within children's educational transitions, with the aim of strengthening cooperation between government funded projects, and to avoid duplication of effort. There is a commitment to use the results to review the place of transitions within the curriculum at national and local levels.

Evaluating transition processes (school level)

At an institutional level, the use of formative evaluation can often provide important feedback loops to improve the regularity with which information is passed between institutions (see also 4.6), while also evaluating *processes* as well as outcomes. The self-evaluation completed by Head teachers in Sweden is one example of how this process of formative self-evaluation can be used to review and improve school collaboration.

Box 15. Factoring transitions into schools' self-evaluation (Sweden)

In **Sweden**, a reform came into effect on 1 July 2016 to increase the co-operation between the preschool class and compulsory school. This reform includes a clarification of laws Lpfö 98 and Lgr 11 on transition and co-operation. The Swedish National Agency for Education NAE has developed and rolled-out a self-evaluation form for schools, which is designed for the transition between the preschool class and compulsory school. Head teachers are responsible for completing the form, which evaluates: what has worked well and what needs to be developed;

²⁴ The Basic School Act in Slovenia stipulates that parents must enrol their children in the first year of school if they will turn six years old in the calendar year they start attending. According to the same act, the first year of basic education may be postponed for one year. The criterion for postponement is the level of readiness for school. A relevant committee made up of a physician, a school counsellor and a teacher is responsible for making this assessment, but the final decision is taken by the school Head teacher.

²⁵ The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is planning independent research with parents and teachers on this subject, in co-operation with The Educational Research Institute of the Republic of Slovenia and National Education Institute Slovenia.

stakeholder co-operation (with guardians, involved actors); and asks for further information on support or transition and the ability to meet the needs of the learner.

Understanding learner progress and development

Formal learner assessment has a significant role to play in transitions, as this is a mechanism through which learners are assigned to, or choose, different pathways. The position of formal assessment varies between countries where the end-of-primary test results are critical in determining the child's secondary school options (e.g. **Germany**), and countries where the primary to secondary transition is based on teacher assessment or portfolio evidence (e.g. **Croatia**).

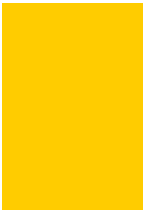
A portfolio-based approach can provide a more holistic and contextualised overview of learner progress and development, beyond formal academic attainment, but brings certain challenges with regard to data collection and review. In **Estonia**, for example, piloting of portfolio-based assessment was met with some resistance from teachers, due to the additional time and administrative requirements of compiling the evidence for assessment. The pilot also underlined the need for robust and transparent criteria for assessing and grading qualitative learner evidence, due to the inherently more subjective basis for interpreting the data.

Some countries make use of qualitative measures of wellbeing, although these are often non-formal, and less systematically implemented. In **Slovenia**, for example, some primary schools take learner wellbeing into account within self-evaluation, although this is not mandatory and reporting practices vary considerably. In **Denmark**, the Ministry of Education funds an annual survey of student wellbeing, including learner and teacher perspectives, which schools are invited to complete on a voluntary basis. In the **United Kingdom(England)**, the national inspection framework was updated to include a judgement on schools' efforts to promote learner wellbeing, although performance on this criterion does not influence the overall grade.

Monitoring learner pathways

Individual countries vary in the extent to which they gather data on learner pathways across different stages of education. Some countries such as **Iceland** and **Portugal** have established data collection systems that allows for tracking throughout the compulsory education phase. Monitoring and evaluation of learner pathways also plays a central role in the education policy in **Greece**, with a specific database ([HFAISTOS](#)) established by the Education Ministry to record data for students with disabilities and/or special education needs.

Belgium(Flanders) has identified a priority to develop a similar data warehousing tool to enable a more robust tracking and analysis of pathways for learners with special educational needs, following legislation concerning special needs education in September 2015, which covers pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Decree has reportedly been hindered to date by the lack of available quantitative and qualitative data.



These systems are by no means universally established, however, and many countries lack an equivalent single record enabling the systematic monitoring and reporting on learner pathways. Solutions are sometimes developed at the local level, therefore, with some municipalities managing very comprehensive data collection. In the city of Antwerp, for example, the municipal authority has established a multi-sectoral partnership and organises its own data gathering across a range of indicators, including learner well-being, and risk of early school leaving.



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development with quantitative and qualitative assessment and reporting tools include:

- **Periodically reviewing quality assurance mechanisms**, specifically regarding their support to learner development and school improvement at each educational stage. This might imply a need for adjustment, where different quality assurance tools create unintended behaviours.
- **Making systematic use of small scale trials and pilot programmes**, to test and evaluate different parts of the education system, alongside longitudinal tracking to understand trends in learner participation and achievement across ISCED levels.
- **Making balanced and appropriate use of data from international comparative studies** such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, to understand trends in learner attainment, and creating forums within which these data can be discussed and debated without fear or stigma.
- **Diversifying assessments of learner development** to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods, and that measures of social and emotional wellbeing and belonging at school are taken into account alongside academic attainment.

4.8 Creating appropriate contexts for learning

Supportive, varied and inspiring learning environments and contexts – relevant to the stage of development and different learners – should be created and reviewed.

Research has shown that the school climate exerts a strong influence over learners' development^{26xxxii}. A major study from the **USA** concluded that school safety, connectedness and peer support were predictors of learners' social and emotional wellbeing at upper primary and

²⁶ School climate is generally understood to mean the "quality and character of school life", including both the physical and social aspects of the school environment.

lower secondary school^{xxxiii}. A further study found a strong association between the quality of teacher-learner relationships and learner behaviour and adjustment at school^{xxxiv}.

The school climate can present risks as well as opportunities, where there are issues relating to school organisation, such those relating to discipline, access and inclusion. There is evidence that bullying and discrimination can become institutionalised, where social norms go unchallenged or are inadvertently reinforced by teacher attitudes^{xxxv}. One review concluded that 85 per cent of school bullying episodes involved onlookers and bystanders, and that the wider psychological effects of school bullying are likely to have been underestimated^{xxxvi}.

Learner development is not limited to the classroom environment, and effective partnership working is needed to ensure that learners have access to appropriate creative, cultural and civic learning opportunities outside of the school. This implies ‘real world’ experience, through study visits and informal or non-formal education. Research has shown that an early introduction to concepts of working life and careers education can also be beneficial, with a potential role for local employers and social partners from primary school stage to provide contextualised experiences relating to the local labour market^{xxxvii}.

Schools also require effective strategies to support parental engagement in their children’s learning and development, to ensure that home learning environments are recognised, valued, and supported through the work of the school^{xxxviii}. Family learning, educational outreach, and language schemes can engage and empower parents at each stage of the learner’s journey.

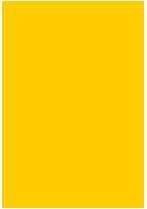
Supporting the transition between learning environments

It is important for schools to recognise and take into account learners’ evolving developmental needs and capacities, and to provide appropriate structures for young people to exercise their growing autonomy, whilst maintaining a functioning learning environment.

ECEC to primary

European countries have encountered a common challenge in ensuring that learners have the opportunity to benefit from high quality ECEC, while avoiding the introduction of formal instructional teaching methods prematurely. The pressure to make early years settings more like primary school can arise for a number of different reasons, including parental anxieties about children’s academic progress. Relatedly, parental decisions to delay the start of formal schooling can arise from beliefs about the benefits of remaining in a play-based learning environment. The concept of the “school-ready child” can be problematic in this respect, where it is structural issues within the school rather than the child’s adjustment that pose a barrier.

In **Slovenia**, the kindergarten curriculum and basic school syllabus each identify common goals, but in practice the teaching methods have evolved quite differently, with a less learner-centred approach at primary stage. Although basic school and pre-school teacher cooperation was proposed some 20 years ago in a government White Paper, implementation has been challenging.



For example, there are occasions in first grade where there is another teacher beside the class teacher but not the pre-school teacher like it was pledged and originally intended. A combination of austerity measures and a lack of geographical proximity of schools and kindergartens have made this intended cooperation harder to achieve. However, the Ministry is exploring alternatives, including a continuation of elements of the kindergarten curriculum into the first year of primary, to smooth the transition.

Primary to secondary

The transition to secondary level is often characterised by a stronger emphasis on teacher authority, larger class sizes, ability grouping, and multiple subject teachers^{xxxix}. Secondary level education corresponds with the start of adolescence, and tensions can arise where disciplinary methods come into conflict with young people's growing needs for independence. A recent study from Ireland found that there was a significant dip in learners' opinions of how fairly they were treated by teachers, between the upper primary and lower secondary stages^{xl}.

Some countries have legislated to allow for greater flexibility at lower secondary level, to preserve more of the valued characteristics of primary schools. This has usually been accompanied by measures to increase levels of school autonomy. In **Portugal**, for example, 'autonomy contracts' allow schools to exercise control over 25% of their curriculum time. Regulatory reforms in Spain have afforded schools similar levels of discretion (Box 16).

Box 16. Adjusting the lower secondary learning environment (Spain)

In **Spain**, high rates of early school leaving at lower secondary level have highlighted that the transition is problematic for some learners, albeit with significant improvements in recent years. It is reported²⁷ that this is a multifaceted issue relating not only to educational, but also social factors. These challenges also relate to the learning environment, as some learners find it more difficult to move from a small, self-contained classroom to a more heterogeneous school with an increased expectation of independent academic performance.

As a way to facilitate transition from primary education, education authorities or schools may adopt specific organizational measures within the first years of secondary stage, such as the grouping of subjects of this year into knowledge areas. These regulations²⁸ further authorise education authorities to exceptionally allow teachers to teach more than one subject, in order to reduce the impact of moving to a school setting where there are much greater numbers of teachers per learner.

²⁷ See on Early School leaving:

<http://www.mecd.gob.es/dctm/inee/documentos-de-trabajo/abandono-educativo-temprano-2.pdf?documentId=0901e72b818e38f4>

²⁸ See the Organic Law of Education, arts. 24 and 26.3

Learner adjustment to the school climate has sometimes been assisted by schools adopting clearer structures to support learner participation in decision-making about school life and disciplinary policies. The 'Rights respecting schools' programme in the **United Kingdom** provides an example (Box 17).

Box 17. Rights respecting schools (United Kingdom)

The 'Rights Respecting Schools Award' ([RRSA](#)) was developed by Unicef as part of an ongoing programme of work with schools across the **United Kingdom**. The award takes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a starting point and provides a framework for the implementation of rights-based approaches at an individual school level.

The model is based on three levels of accreditation, starting with a 'Recognition of Commitment', which requires the school to demonstrate that children and adults are working together to develop a whole-school rights respecting approach with head-teacher endorsement, through to Level 2, where the school is assessed as having embedded UNCRC into its ethos and curriculum. The Award has achieved widespread take-up, with more than 4,000 schools working towards the award across the country, covering 1.5 million children.



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development through attention to learning environments include:

- **Encouraging inclusive school policies to build positive and supportive school climates**, zero tolerance of bullying and discrimination, and creating opportunities to develop teacher-learner relationships. The latter might include summer school transition schemes, residential visits, and teacher engagement in after school enrichment activities.
- **Developing a broad base of partnership-working for schools**, to make the most of assets within the local community, to ensure that learners benefit from developmentally appropriate civic and cultural educational experiences outside of the classroom.
- **Valuing and preserving play-based and non-formal learning**, with active engagement from parents; starting with the kindergarten environment at ECEC stage, and continuing into primary education at the start of formal schooling.
- **Preserving valued characteristics of primary schools in lower secondary school learning environments**: for example, gradual transition from single teacher to multiple teacher learning contexts, grouping subjects into broader thematic areas, and maintaining time for project-based learning within the timetable.

4.9 Social and emotional support to learners

Systems should have the capacity to engage with different stakeholders to provide social and emotional support to learners, including during the period of transition between levels of education.

Learners' developmental needs are multi-faceted, and go beyond the need for support with academic attainment alone. Individual social and emotional wellbeing is influenced by a wide range of factors, including the quality of peer, family, and teacher relationships; physical health, including exercise, diet, nutrition and sleep, and feeling safe^{xli}. School safety includes physical and socio-emotional safety, and substance misuse avoidance^{xlii}.

The development of social and emotional skills have a direct impact on teaching and learning. Young people are more receptive to learning when they are able to control their emotions, empathise, and relate to their peers and teachers, while conversely high levels of academic pressure, bullying and negative peer influences can hinder individual learners' progress. A study of 1800 learners aged 11-14 in **Australia** found that support from peers was the strongest predictor of social and emotional wellbeing, while school connectedness and feelings of safety were also significant. These influences continued into the first two years of secondary school^{xliii}.

The 2012 PISA^{xliv} study included an indicator on young people's sense of belonging and inclusion at school,²⁹ which allows for benchmarking across European countries, although the measure is comparatively under-utilised within educational policymaking.

European countries have developed a variety of mechanisms to support social and emotional development, and to plan for continuity in provision across different levels or stages of education. The role of school counsellors is particularly well-developed within Scandinavian countries, where all young people have access to social and psychological support alongside academic support within schools, typically starting at primary stage.

Box 18. Support specialist services (Estonia)

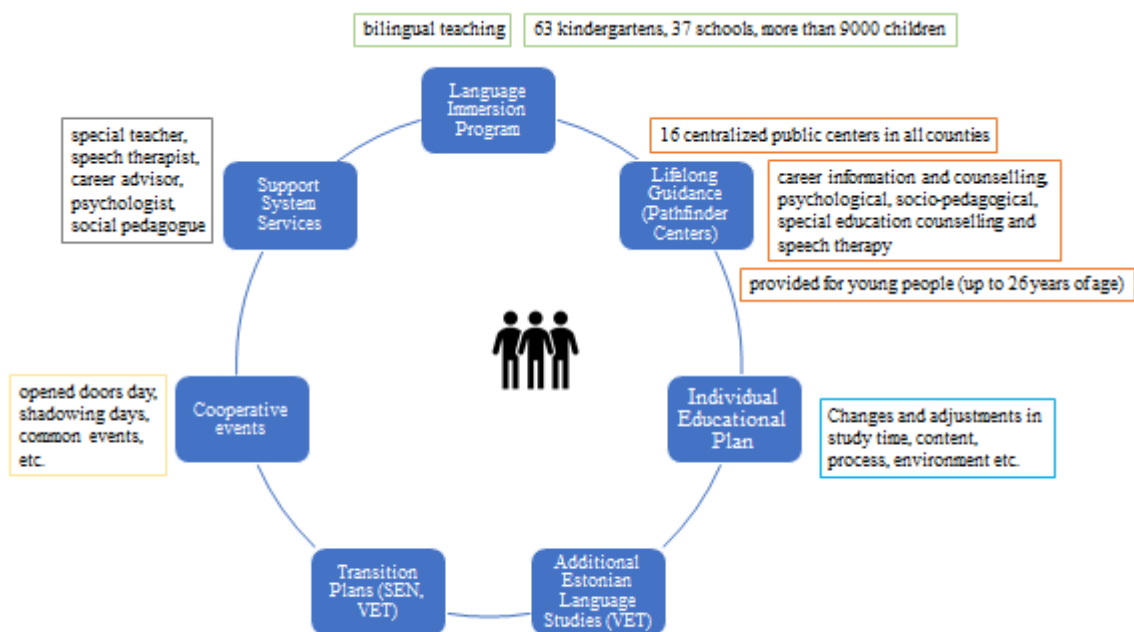
In **Estonia**, Support Specialist Services (SSS) are available to learners in every school. These multi-professional teams typically include a special teacher, speech therapist, career advisor, psychologist, and a social pedagogue. They have been supported with the creation of 16 new Lifelong Learning Guidance (Pathfinder Centres), representing one per county (Figure 3). Since these reforms were introduced, 1 in 3 secondary school learners in **Estonia** is believed to have received guidance counselling, and the early school leaving rate has reduced to just 1.5%, which is one of the lowest rates in Europe. The main challenges of the new system related to implementation at a school level. In practice, schools had varying levels of existing infrastructure

²⁹ The statements include: "I feel like I belong at school", and "I feel like an outsider (or left out of things at school)", which are asked using an Agree / Disagree scale.

and resources, meaning that some faced a significant task to provide the required level of support for the SSS teams.

The main development areas identified by the ministry included the need to achieve better quality data on young people’s needs, to improve the responsiveness of the system, and to engage teachers as partners in delivering the new support system.

Figure 4: Estonia – multi-dimensional system of learner support



Estonia

In **Slovenia**, particular attention has been given to how learners’ needs are first identified at pre-primary stage, to enable planning of (social and emotional) counselling support³⁰ upon transition to primary school. The specific arrangements are determined by the governance arrangements (Box 19).

Box 19. Universal access to school counselling upon transition to primary school (Slovenia)

In **Slovenia**, the school counsellors perform three related and often entwined types of activities: direct support and intervention, development and prevention, and planning and evaluation. They are routinely involved in the transition from preschool (kindergarten) to primary school, to ensure that learners’ wider developmental needs are addressed.

³⁰ ‘Counsellors’ refers here to professionals who specialise in psychological support, and should not be confused with ‘Careers Guidance Counsellors’.



The model is organised differently according to schools' governance and funding arrangements. It is up to the local authority to decide what kind of organisation between ECEC and school they will opt or decide for. An important characteristic of kindergarten is if it is organized as a unit of the basic school – i.e. it is associated with the school (vrtec pri šoli - 'kindergarten at the school') - and is also typically located in the same building. The head, administration and the counselling service are in this case shared and fall under a common management structure³¹. This is seen as a great advantage for children and usually means a smoother transition because the children are already familiar with the environment, the building itself, teachers and counsellors. In some schools, the kindergarten and the first years of school may be located very close together. This situation is more common in rural areas and smaller towns. In 2014/15, 27 % of children were enrolled in kindergartens at the school, 72 % were in 'independent' kindergartens (SORS, 2016).

Aside from additional support, the simple provision of stable learning environments with a degree of staff continuity, was put forward by members as a way to help young children to develop the relationships and trust necessary to comfortably explore and learn from their surroundings.



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development with an investment in social and emotional support include:

- **Investing in programmes of study from an early age to develop learners' social and emotional skills**, starting early in ECEC and continuing into secondary education. This might include targeted peer support and mentoring, where learners are identified as being at higher risk of developing psychological difficulties.
- **Directly monitoring and supporting learner wellbeing**: engaging learners in identifying helpful measures to ease academic pressure, for example by creating dedicated spaces within the school where learners can take 'time out'; and maintaining time in the curriculum for physical activity, sports, mindfulness or meditation classes.
- **Reviewing the provision of psychological support at each educational stage**, to ensure continuity and to avoid gaps. This might include a minimum guarantee of access to a psychologist for all young people who need one, and clustering of different support structures within multi-agency teams to serve schools across a given local area.
- **Greater importance of social and emotional development in school inspections.**

³¹ Public kindergartens may be established if the inclusion of at least ten groups of children is guaranteed. If there are less than 10 groups of children, the kindergarten may be associated with the school. This ensures a good network of kindergartens. In kindergartens at the schools, the school's head appoints his/her assistant as an educational and organizational leader of the kindergarten unit.

4.10 Targeted support to ‘at-risk’ learners

Targeted strategies and resources should be used to identify and support vulnerable learners at the earliest opportunity – this school information should also feedback at regional/national level to support policy-making and strategic investment for pupils at risk.

The factors predicting how and when learners become ‘at risk’ of negative outcomes are often complex and highly situational, involving a combination of individual needs and circumstances, socio-economic factors, and structural factors relating to the school system. These combinations of factors can take on particular significance at transition points, when learners are required to adapt to changes in familiar learning environments and curricula, which are often combined with disruption to relationships with peer groups and teachers.

Research shows that mental health difficulties; special educational needs and disabilities; family difficulties; substance misuse, insecure attachment^{xlv}; and the effects of psychological trauma (following domestic abuse, violence, or exposure to other traumatic events) are all potential factors predicting vulnerability upon transition^{xlvi}. Risk cannot be understood simply as a constellation of ‘problem’ issues, however, and learners’ abilities to cope in the face of adversity is also a question of their resilience and the personal assets they can draw upon.

European countries have developed a range of approaches to provide targeted support at transition points for learners with additional needs. Common measures include tracking and assessment to identify the ‘early warning signs’ and to share relevant information between schools (see also 4.6), and access to specialist psychological services (see also 4.9). As learners with complex needs often require a combination of different services, some countries have moved to devolve budgets to municipalities so that this provision can be planned coherently across providers and serving multiple schools (Box 20).

Box 20. Cross-sectoral and area-based support for vulnerable learners (Norway)

In **Norway**, the Ministry of Education and Research has focused on early intervention. Their objective is to identify pupils who are ‘at risk’ of negative outcomes at the earliest possible stage, to prevent escalation. This work has involved mapping key stakeholders in the field of early intervention, and supporting cross-sectoral work between education, health and social care sectors, to develop locally specific responses within each of the municipalities.

Continuity in the development of learners with special needs

Data on achievement levels of learners with special needs are relatively sparse internationally, as they are in Europe, reflecting that individual countries have varying definitions^{xlvii}. Learners from migrant or minority groups, most notably Roma children, are more likely to be placed in the 'special needs' category. This over-representation is partially explained by language, cultural differences, negative stereotypes and a lack of early childhood support^{xlviii}. Learners with special needs are routinely separated from mainstream classes and institutions, which can restrict the educational pathways available to them, and the possibilities for social inclusion.

The general trend within national education systems in Europe has been towards integration of learners with special needs within mainstream schools wherever possible, although separate institutions are funded in many countries for learners with very specialist needs.

This move towards more inclusive policies has highlighted the need to update initial teacher training and CPD programmes, in order to equip teachers to support learners with learning difficulties within mainstream classroom settings. For example, more than half (58%) of teachers responding to the 2013 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) noted that they were in need of training to support students with special needs more effectively^{xlix}.

Most countries have implemented a range of support measures, examples of which include:

- **Municipal development centres** – In **Latvia**, the Ministry funds 11 institutions with the status of 'special education development centres'. Their aim is to provide support to learners with special needs who are integrated in mainstream schools, and to build capacity and offer advice and support to teachers. Recent legislation places requirements on the centres to support minimum numbers of teachers (50) and students (50) per annum, and sets targets for numbers of information sessions delivered per year.
- **Specialist support and guidance counselling** - In **Ireland**, designated central agencies have a role in supporting transitions for learners with additional and special needs, working with schools. In **Slovakia**, professional workers of the Research Institute for Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (VÚDPaP) deliver counselling services to children, their parents and teachers with focus on problems of children in the area of cognitive, social, emotional, and school development, and in the area of vocational orientation. This work includes specialist inputs for children with special needs and their families.
- **Designated responsibilities for transition within schools** - In **Sweden**, designated special needs teachers play a vital role as transition coordinators, supporting and guiding staff in the receiving school. For learners with medical conditions, provision is also made for collaboration between the preschool and public health authorities.
- **Entitlements and personal development plans** – In **Italy**, schools have a legal duty to set in place, monitor and review individual learning plans for learners with certified special needs. These plans are devised jointly by the school, parents and health specialists, culminating in a certificate of attendance with the description of the skills developed, in case pupils cannot

obtain the diploma. In the **United Kingdom(England)**, since April 2016, learners (0-25 years) statemented with Special Educational Needs of Disabilities (SEND) must have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. The plan brings together a set of statutory responsibilities for schools; health and social care professionals, and it clearly outlines the support to be provided.

The national context within **Greece** provides an example of multiple pathways for learners with special needs, having supported a policy of inclusion over the past decade (Box 21).

Box 21. Developing flexible and supported pathways for learners with special needs (Greece)

In **Greece**, a combination of measures is provided to support the transition of learners with special needs, facilitated by close cooperation between mainstream and special schools. Following KEDDY'S recommendation³², changes to the legal framework mean that learners with special needs are able to change pathways between a mainstream or Special Education route, and the learner and their parent or carer has designated rights and duties regarding school selection.

The available study paths include:

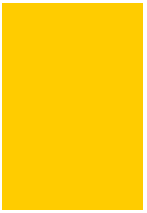
- Inclusion within classrooms in mainstream schools, supported by the class teacher,
- Inclusion within classrooms in mainstream schools, with parallel support from qualified Special Education teachers, when necessary
- Specially organised and staffed inclusion classes, which operate within the mainstream schools;
- Special Education school units; schools or departments that operate as autonomous units or annexes of other schools within certain hospitals; or,
- Education at home.

Learners benefit from curriculum flexibilities, allowing the freedom to explore curriculum themes more open-endedly. They are also entitled to suitable educational materials; theoretical and practical experiences, and specialist counselling and careers advice services.

Supporting learner development in the context of poverty and disadvantage

There are strong economic arguments for ensuring equity in education, as well as moral and rights-based ones. Research based on PISA data shows a relationship between indicators of equity and attainment¹. This, and other research, provides convincing evidence that more equitable school systems achieve better quality and higher educational standards.

³² This refers to the recommendations from evaluation of educational provision for learners classified as having 'special needs' in Greece (Law 3699/2008), carried out by the Centre of Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Support of Special Educational Needs (KEDDY).



The targeting of central educational funds provides one lever for supporting vulnerable learners. Euydice data shows that most European countries take student characteristics into account when determining their funding allocations^{li}. The criteria usually correspond with numbers of students with additional learning needs and / according to linguistic or ethnic background. In the United Kingdom(England), an evaluation of targeted funding in schools³³ showed that secondary schools achieved a statistically significant impact on the attainment of learners from low socio-economic status groups, where targeted effectively^{34lii}

School can often be a lower priority for families from low socio-economic status, behind work and health. It is necessary to provide the families with support and assistance that enables them to engage with schools effectively, and vice-versa. This means ensuring that educational and economic issues are addressed in tandem; starting in the early years, but also continuing throughout the different levels of education. Poverty and disadvantage, along with cultural influences, can be a significant factor in early school leaving, for example, where young people prioritise work and supporting their family over education and view this as an either / or decision.

The development of special educational programmes is a further way in which schools and school systems have tackled the risk of exclusion or under-achievement for learners with low socio-economic status and supported them to progress. The Complex Instruction Programme (CIP) is one example that has been trialled successfully in schools in Europe (Box 22).

Box 22. “Equal status” learning environments – the Complex Instruction Programme^{liii}

The Complex Instruction Programme (CIP) was originally developed in the **USA** as a “high equity, high inclusiveness” model, targeted at schools with academically and social diverse populations. The CIP was developed in response to the challenge that children from higher socio-economic status groups often exercise higher status within classroom settings. This can result in these learners being more vocal and gaining disproportionate access to teacher time.

To counteract this scenario, the CIP uses a pedagogical approach based on small cooperative groups. Teachers follow the principles of “equal status participation”, using familiar everyday reference points (such as board games, problem-solving) as a tool for the group work. Teachers facilitate peer group dialogue and discussion and provide encouragement.

The CIP model has shown promising outcomes with regard to attainment and progression. Hejőkeresztúr primary school in **Hungary** provides an example. While the school draws 73 per

³³ The ‘Pupil Premium Fund’ is allocated to schools in England based on the numbers of children entitled to and registered for free school meals (FSM) and children who have been in public care continuously for more than six months. Schools can use the fund at their discretion, with the purpose of closing the attainment gap between learners from lower socio-economic status families and their peers.

³⁴ The evaluation found that impactful schools met a number of criteria, rather than any individual standing out as being the most effective. The criteria included promoting an ethos of attainment for all pupils; an individualised approach; a focus on high quality teaching and individual learner outcomes; strong school leadership, and an effective use of data to inform how the funding was utilised (p.10).

cent of its learners from socially disadvantaged communities, 100 per cent go on to participate in secondary education, and 70 per cent achieve secondary level qualifications.



Measures to consider for supporting continuity in learner development and focusing on supporting vulnerable learners include:

- **Developing cross-sectoral policies and indicators** for early intervention, to ensure that accountability is shared between schools, health, and social services and youth services, and facilitate a multi-dimensional understanding of learner progress.
- **Recognising the importance of the agency of learners and families** in protecting against risk, and making provision for targeted support that focuses on building resilience and equipping learners to cope with adversity.
- **Supporting the principle of integrating learners with special needs within mainstream schools** wherever possible, taking a multi-faceted approach.
- **Updating initial teacher education and CPD programmes**, to better equip teachers to support learners with learning difficulties.

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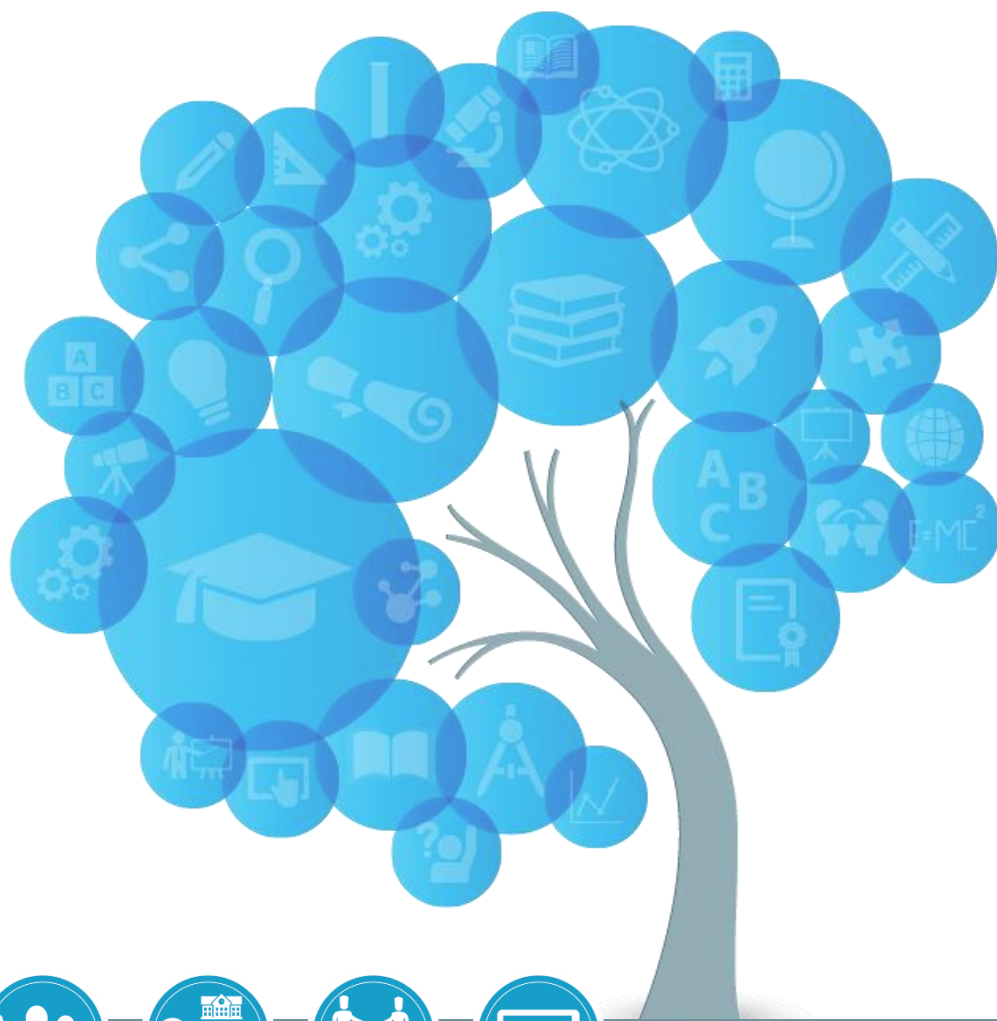
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European
Commission



Teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations

Guiding principles for policy development
in school education

Produced by the ET2020 Working Group Schools

Education
and Training

Teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations

Output of the ET2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18

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1. About

ET2020 Working Group on Schools

Under its current mandate, the ET2020 Working Group on Schools¹ examined successful and emerging, or potential new, policy developments in Member States. These concern the governance of school education systems that can support and improve quality, inclusion and innovation. They focused on the capacity for systemic change in the four key interlinked areas: 1) quality assurance for school development; 2) continuity and transitions for learner development; 3) teachers and school leaders; and 4) networks.

Teachers and school leaders

The centrality of teachers and school leaders to the learning process in schools is self-evident. However schools are organised, and whatever pedagogies may have been introduced, pupils are ultimately dependent for their academic and social progress on the expertise, energy, inspiration and imagination of the adults to whom they are entrusted. Teachers generally are motivated by this privileged responsibility, but it is not an easy challenge. Societal and governmental expectations are demanding. They may reflect priorities, such as economic imperatives, that diverge from notions of a love of learning that teachers themselves might view as paramount. There may, too, be an awkward tension between the autonomy vested in teachers and school leaders, and the accountability that might reasonably be expected of them.

Against this background, the personal and collective identities that teachers and school leaders form are critical. If teachers and school leaders are respected and feel fully integrated into the wider education system, they can be motivated to improve that system, at local level, and potentially beyond. They will feel valued and committed to their own professional development as part of a learning community. They will want to contribute positively to their successful school as learning organisation. By contrast, if there is disconnect between the aims and ethos of schools and the goals of the communities, including the wider educational system that they serve, inefficiencies and a disenchanting work force will result. Communication and dialogue to shape the direction of education policy will make a considerable impact on the well-being and effectiveness of teachers and school leaders, while trust and delegation of authority and responsibility will help progressive education policy to be implemented at local level.

¹ Representatives from all Member States, EFTA and Candidate countries, plus social partners and stakeholder organisations.

This report

This report sets out guiding principles for policy development. Based on evidence from recent research in this area of school education the principles are the result of joint reflection and exchange by representatives of European education ministries and stakeholder organisations in the ET2020 Working Group on Schools. The principles are further illustrated with examples from countries.

The content comes from a series of meetings held in Brussels, and a Peer Learning Activity. Policy examples from countries and stakeholder organisations are contributions from Working Group members. The report was compiled and edited by Jonathan Allen (Consultant) and Thomas Pritzkow (European Commission) in May-August 2017 with review and validation by Working Group members. It was updated in April 2018.

How to read this report:

This report is structured around a set of nine Guiding Principles for policies to support teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations.

The report is aimed primarily at those making and shaping policies with an impact in and on education systems. It takes a broad perspective on the governance of school education systems, taking into account not only structures, but also relationships, capacity, culture and accountability at multiple levels.

There are clearly connections, or overlaps, between the nine principles. However, each one of them addresses considerations at different levels within the education system. Moving from principle No 1 to No 9 the focus broadly shifts from the system level, i.e. (central) authorities through schools to individual teachers and school leaders. This schema is set out in Figure 3.

Chapter 1 of the report explains the context of this report by the ET2020 Working Group on Schools and how it was produced

Chapter 2 introduces the Guiding Principles and explains which values underpin them

Chapter 3 puts the principles into the broad context of current policies and research thinking, and explains how they were developed

Chapter 4 looks at each of the nine principles in more detail.

Key references are listed at the end of the report.

2. Guiding Principles

2.1 About the principles

The statements – or ‘Guiding Principles’ - presented below (Section 2.3), highlight the key policy messages from the ET2020 Working Group on Schools (2016-18). They are based on recent research, policy experiences from European countries and joint peer learning. They provide a frame for the sharing and analysis of recent developments in countries, as discussed and reported by Working Group members.

2.2 Values

The view of the Working Group has been that learning is a pre-requisite for growth and development. Improving the experiences and outcomes of all learners are consequently the central of concern in pursuit of quality in school education.

Vision at the level of national and regional policy should value and respect the role of teachers and school leaders in the education system.

It is recognised that teachers and school leaders ultimately work in their local context, albeit set in a national or regional framework of governance for the education system. Teachers and school leaders have a real and immediate setting for their work. The concept of the school as learning organisation, discussed in more detail in section 3.1.1, is considered helpful, not least because the actors identified extend beyond school staff into the local community, including parents and employers, as well as networks of schools. All stakeholders are by definition important to the success of a school and should be enabled to share and implement progressive measures.

Policy should promote team learning and collaboration among all staff. Just as values of inclusivity and embracing diversity are considered important for the development of young learners, so they apply to teachers and school leaders. Staff should be encouraged to work as a team, with distributed leadership and an emphasis on peer-learning. Staff should feel at ease with each other in an atmosphere of trust and fairness, able to turn to colleagues for advice.

Sustainable innovation and inclusion are key aspects in the consideration of the work of teachers and school leaders. It is considered important to move beyond the more traditional concept of ‘school improvement’, which has narrower connotations associated with external inspection and assessment. The wide range of influences within the system is important, so the recruitment, retention and professional development of teachers and school leaders should not be considered in isolation.

It is implicit within all of the following Guiding Principles that:

- i. **Improving the experiences and outcomes of all learners**, also including teachers and school leaders, should be the central pursuit of school education policies. It is therefore important that **policies are both inclusive and flexible**;
- ii. Policies should involve all relevant stakeholders in partnerships to **create shared ownership and accountability**. This can be achieved by (a) building mutual trust and understanding, (b) articulating a shared vision, common aims and standards, (c) aligning budgets and decision-making structures, all with the learner at the centre;
- iii. **Developing the capacity and role of teachers and school leaders** is essential for schools to provide a clear strategic vision and leadership that guides and fully supports learners, and which enables effective communication with other practitioners and stakeholders.
- iv. In increasingly complex education systems, **different levels of governance matter** and will need to interact in order to improve education both globally and locally. This scope often includes the national, regional and local levels. The capacity for both leadership and organisational learning needs to be considered at all relevant levels.

2.3 Guiding Principles on policies to support teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations²

1. EDUCATION AS A LEARNING SYSTEM: **Education should be an inclusive learning system with a key role for teachers and school leaders.**

In school education, the learning system should function in an inclusive manner that respects diversity to ensure that no school, nor individual teacher, is isolated or is unable to participate effectively. Regular review of the system, involving national and local government as well as the schools themselves, should identify and strengthen connectors across networks, but allow sufficient time for change to take place and be embedded. The system should be open and provide opportunities to engage multiple stakeholders as part of the process, including social partners, pupils and their families.

2. COHERENCE OF POLICIES: **Policy-makers should aim to achieve coherence across the system, aligning different policies directly affecting teachers and school leaders and embedding them in wider school policies, to serve the ultimate objective of ensuring high quality education for all learners.**

Ensuring coherence, or continuity, between different policies (professional development, staff careers, support measures, leadership, curricula) avoids tensions and contradictions

² See Figure 3 for a schema illustrating how the nine Guiding Principles relate to each other.

and makes systems more effective. Coherent policies should also seek to create room for experiment and innovation. Engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including social partners, in meaningful dialogue may help achieve this coherence.

- 3. SHARED VISION AND UNDERSTANDING: Shared vision and understanding, which consider national, regional and local perspectives and priorities on school policy, give direction to the work of schools as learning organisations and to the systems by which they are supported.**

Developing a shared vision and understanding strengthens teachers' and school leaders' ability to develop effective learning and teaching, and to collaborate rather than compete. Ensuring opportunities for interpretation in the local context will help teachers and school leaders gain ownership of the vision and engage with the management of change.

- 4. SETTING EXPECTATIONS: Clear expectations for the engagement of teachers and school leaders that can be set through frameworks such as standards, competence frameworks and curricula, help to define roles within learning organisations.**

These expectations can guide the provision of appropriate support, whilst maintaining freedom to take risks, develop and innovate, have ownership, and stimulate collaboration within and across areas of curriculum and school development.


- 5. SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHERS SHAPING LEARNING SYSTEMS: School leaders and teachers should be acknowledged and respected for their expertise and their contribution to developing the education system at different levels.**

Through their own endeavours as learners, teachers and school leaders act as role models, adding to the development of the school as a learning organisation. But they should also be supported in their efforts to increase capacity to work across networks of schools and professionals. Involving teachers and school leaders in the design of new initiatives and reforms from the start will help improve the system and empower staff to engage in leadership, be innovative and take as well as manage risks.

- 6. PROFESSIONAL CULTURE: Education systems can help schools develop professional working and learning cultures that motivate teachers and school leaders.**

Fostering a desire and providing capacity in schools to learn and improve together will help teachers and school leaders better adapt to changing needs of learners and society. Motivation can be influenced by internal and external factors and should be taken into account when considering the recruitment and retention of staff. Collaboration, distributed leadership and networking offer significant potential for a professional culture that supports working and learning at school.

- 7. RESEARCH, REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND ENQUIRY: Policies should support a culture of research, reflective practice and enquiry-based learning at school.**



Practice-oriented research and enquiry should be embedded along the continuum of school leaders' and teachers' professional development, including Initial Teacher Education. This will stimulate teachers' motivation and competence to engage in research with the purpose of informing and enabling action across the system. Researchers in schools, higher education institutions and other organisations should have opportunities to disseminate their work, share expertise, and exchange information and ideas.

- 8. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES, CAPACITY AND AUTONOMY: Teachers and school leaders should be supported in their professional development, autonomy and growth in a continuum spanning all phases of their careers.**

Teachers and school leaders should be trusted, supported and empowered as professionals who can be agents of change contributing to school development and who have the capacity to take responsibility and be accountable for the impact of their actions. Teachers and school leaders should be expected, enabled and encouraged to collaborate; their competences and capacities, as well as their autonomy and accountability should be considered not just individually but also collectively, as part of professional teams.

- 9. LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE: Systems should provide opportunities for school leaders and teachers to develop leadership competences that support them in strategic thinking and planning.**

Teachers and school leaders should be inspiring and be able to set priorities for self and others. They should be able, and enabled, to identify their own needs and opportunities for professional development, and to lead others in reflective practice as part of the process of change.

3. Context

3.1 Policy and research context

There is general recognition that change in education makes repeated demands on teachers and school leaders to develop new competences, and to work together in ways different to those accepted historicallyⁱ. Over recent years, considerable attention, supported by research, has been given to matters of policy in respect of teachers and school leaders.

Quality and equity in a school system require policies that enable school staff to work together constructively, and to contribute to school development. However, implementing such policies presents challenges of locus and control in systems that by past convention have been hierarchical, but are now increasingly moving towards more decentralised models, which often give more autonomy for schools and staff.

3.1.1 Recent research

Research that informs policy in Europe has explored a range of factors that influence the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders. The context of their work is now envisioned in the concept of the school as a learning community, or even more recently, as a learning organisation. In the latter model, which has gained traction in recent years, the school is seen operating at a number of levels: the individual; teams; and a level of organisation-wide practices. Together these efforts create an organic “learning culture”, characterised by a shared ethos of team working and the goal of fostering professional learning. Mutual trust is critical to the success of the model, and the capacity, freedom and time for inquiry, innovation and exploration are paramountⁱⁱ. Underpinning the model there is a strong identification of the importance of collaboration and cooperation, and of the benefits of schools being embedded in a supportive community^{iii, iv, v, vi}). The model is represented diagrammatically (Figure 1).

One implication is that professional development to a significant extent becomes local, generated from within the school and its immediate network. This perception gives rise to the “self-improving school system” of Hargreaves^{vii}, see also ^{viii}. The emphasis on flexibility and diversity is noteworthy. Parallels may be drawn from work carried out in the field of cognitive psychology on routine expertise and adaptive expertise (or “competence”), the latter being the ability to apply knowledge and skills creatively in a range of situations^{ix}. In the school as a learning organisation, in a perpetual state of change and flux, the ability to respond at a point along the continuum of routine and adaptive expertise would seem valuable for teachers in developing their pedagogical capability as learning professionals. It is also relevant to note that, while research on schools as learning organisations tends to address the consequences for schools and actors in schools, the Working Group aimed to consider the implications of the concept for governance systems and policy-making.

The model of the school as learning organisation is helpful in this context for a number of reasons:

- Schools are asked to respond to rapid changes of policy and ever higher quality expectations. The school as learning organisation engages all staff in meeting these challenges and avoids over-reliance on conventional hierarchies to ensure ownership in their implementation.
- The school as learning organisation encourages and enables teachers and school leaders to help shape policy and improve pedagogy through local research and networking that refine current practice.
- A prerequisite to success for the school as learning organisation is a culture of trust and shared commitment that supports collaborative effort. It was considered that these positive characteristics have become even more important and valuable as education systems decentralise and delegate responsibility.

This report, and the Guiding Principles, elaborate on the policies required to stimulate, support and facilitate the transformation of schools into learning organisations, and more specifically on the roles of policy makers, school leaders and teachers.

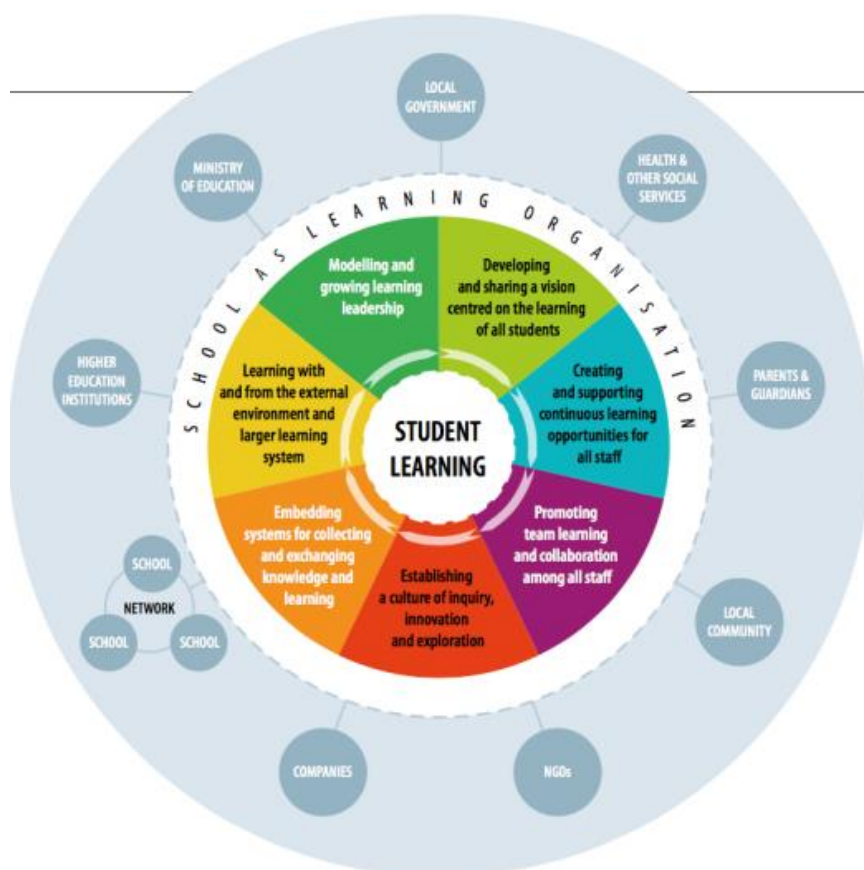


Figure 1: What makes a school a learning organisation? from OECD/UNICEF 2016, p.1^x. For a developed version of this, which was also adapted as part of the European Commission 2018 Study on Supporting school innovation across Europe, see section 3 of the Working Group’s final report, *European ideas for better learning: the governance of school education systems*.

Unsurprisingly, teacher education has been a focus of research in this context. For many reasons, not least financial, the best way of organising Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a major policy concern and priority in many countries. There has been an associated trend to higher levels of formal qualifications for Initial Teacher Education (ITE), but also a trend towards more diversified forms of professional development than were available in the past^{xi}. Teacher education can usefully be seen as an element of the more general policy objective of increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession^{xii}.

Under its 2014-15 mandate the ET2020 Working Group developed a conceptual model to describe, and argue for, policies that can effectively support the quality of teachers and teaching through a continuum of the teacher profession. This model links five interrelated perspectives, those of teachers' learning needs (a continuum of teacher education/professional development); (instrumental) support structures; career; professional competence levels; and the cultural (local) perspective of a school (Figure 2):

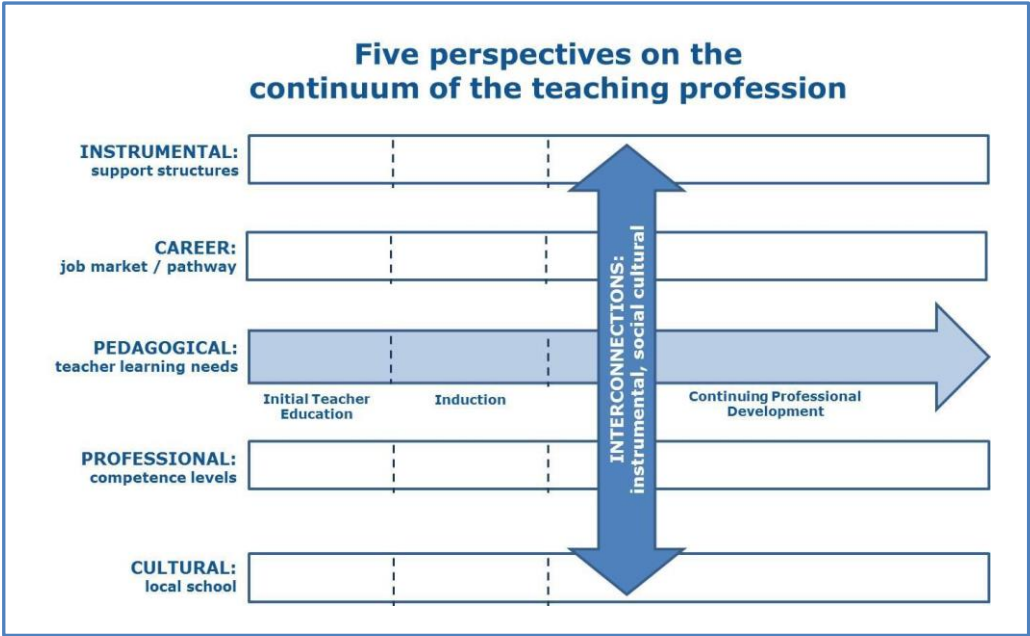


Figure 2: Five perspectives on the continuum of the teaching profession (from European Commission 2015b, p19^{xiii})

While all five perspectives matter in the context of the school as learning organisation, it is the fifth perspective that is of particular importance here: the impact of local school culture on teaching professionals at different stages of their career. From the ITE and induction stages, when local education providers and training schools support mentoring and are partners in the education of future or beginning teachers, through the wider networks of local learning communities and action research projects, energy and drive are derived from the local situation and local imperatives.

The part played by effective leadership has also received attention, and, in this paper and elsewhere, the critical importance of school leaders in introducing and implementing change is

acknowledged, as is the part that school leaders play as role models. In particular there has been endorsement of the practice of distributed leadership and the value of networks to enable the exchange of experience and cooperation^{xiv, xv}. Philosophically, this perception of shared endeavour is consistent with the concept of the school as learning organisation. Reflective practice, shared tasks and responsibilities, and from these the joint ownership of ethos, will involve the entire school as a professional learning community. The school head's role under this arrangement becomes one of delegation, encouraging and entrusting individuals and groups in their multi-discipline teamwork and professional collaboration^{xvi}. Policies that aim to build these emphases on teacher leadership capacity consequently have an important role. The provision of appropriate continuing professional development for school leaders is important, especially when it is considered that, conventionally, leadership rarely features in Initial Teacher Education programmes^{xvii}. In some countries, though, there is now in ITE an emphasis on notions of distributed leadership and teachers as leaders of learning across schools.

3.1.2 Structural considerations to inform policy

Ensuring the continuity of learner development as they go through different levels of education calls for new forms of co-operation across education systems. The OECD's 2016 report *Governing Education in a Complex World*^{xviii}, provided a useful backdrop to discussions on system structures.

There is great variation in the arrangements of national and regional school systems. These differences will be reflected in the extent to which policy makers are inclined or enabled to support teachers and school leaders in their efforts to adopt new ways of working. In most countries there will be financial limitations, but some obstacles may be structural, with constraints not so much of cost but from existing practice that is sub-optimal. Policy changes may be possible to alter how the system works without necessarily incurring significant additional expenditure. The following considerations illustrate this view.

There are several key areas in which policy may directly support teachers and school leaders. These include:

- **establishing participative processes** supported by legislation and implementation guidelines which will stimulate school development;
- **reconceptualising hierarchical structural interactions**, within and beyond school, into peer-to-peer relationships of the "critical friend", characterised by shared goals and ethos;
- ensuring provision of **high quality, career long, continuous professional development** for teachers from the Initial Teacher Education phase onwards;
- ensuring preparation and support of visionary, inspirational **school leaders**
- introducing effective **quality assurance** processes which support teacher development as well as providing a mechanism for appraisal;

- providing the space, time and trust to **encourage school leaders and teachers to innovate.**

If the model of school as learning organisation is accepted, then the conditions for the school to flourish must be in place. There should be acceptance of local determination of shared beliefs, values and norms for continuous and collaborative learning, which will create the structural and cultural conditions for learning, experimentation and innovation. It must be acknowledged that the model infers that effective education goes beyond academic achievement to include ethical values, the ability to self-direct learning, and well-being.

A continuum of effective teacher education should extend across the phases of ITE, induction, and then the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers and school leaders in terms of capability in pedagogy and management. However, beyond the central organisation of ITE, decentralised and devolved approaches to continuing professional development may currently often be unsystematic, lack consistency and be difficult to quality assure. Policy makers might consider how the education system as a whole should support the teacher education continuum, particularly after ITE. The urgency for action in this area is clear, in particular in countries where high numbers of teachers leave the profession prematurely. Yet an expectation of mentoring, particularly for beginning teachers, may be relatively easy to initiate. However, it cannot be assumed that all teachers will be effective mentors, and training for mentors should be a key component of any initiative in this area.

Professional development may be closely linked to career progression and working conditions. Policies on selection and recruitment, appraisal, salaries, management structure and school leadership have considerable impact on the actors involved. They should be rigorous and demanding, but they are also only likely to meet with success if they are perceived as fair and equitable. It is recognised that teacher education should be considered part of a broader policy objective to raise the attractiveness and quality of the profession. Selection, recruitment and retention, ITE, early career support, Continuing Professional Development, pedagogical feedback, and incentives all have their part to play^{xix}.

The qualities required for leadership are many and pose a test for recruitment and selection^{xx}. However, a more subtle challenge relates to the delegated autonomy that school leaders, and teachers in leadership roles too, may anticipate in their roles, as the degree of autonomy delegated will impact on their capacity to implement and manage innovation. Policies might be devised to promote autonomy by providing the latitude necessary to respond effectively to changing local conditions. School leaders' roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and there should be arrangements in place for the required competences to be reinforced through professional development activities.

There is general acceptance that accountability is a requirement of schools, and there is a risk that, as such, it tends to be viewed negatively. The notion of "accountable autonomy" may be helpful here, as it suggests that accountability is not just a matter of control by the authorities

but that it relates to, and enhances, school leadership and professionalism at school. The use of effective quality assurance mechanisms, data and even interventions, all can make the school leader effective, and are not merely instruments of control^{xxi}. They enable the school and its leader(s) to develop and enhance the quality of the education that the learners receive.

In the model of school as learning organisation, school leaders may benefit from engagement with networks – locally, nationally or even internationally. If the system allows, they may also be able to contribute in a formal capacity to these networks as appointed system leaders, sharing their expertise by offering peer-to-peer support with leaders of other schools^{xxii}.

A recurring consideration posed to policy makers is the role of effective education systems in harmonising societal aims (the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for work and life), and individual aims (personal and parental ambition and aspiration). The question applies to young learners, certainly, but thought should also be given to how that balance is struck, so that teachers and school leaders contribute to the aims of the school, and the system in which it is situated, while at the same time the independence of these professionals as learners themselves is valued and respected.

The European Commission announced new proposals (May 2017) to support Member States in the field of school development and teaching. A *Study on policy measures to support, develop and incentivise teacher quality* is currently being conducted for the European Commission. A Eurydice report on teachers' careers in Europe was also published in February 2018.

3.1.3 Key aspects of governance

Key aspects of the governance of school education systems that may influence policy relating to teachers, school leaders and schools as learning organisations were identified by the Working Group in its deliberations. They include, but are not restricted to:

- the balance of autonomy and accountability;
- the relationship of schools with their external educational environment and community;
- ethos and vision (is it shared, based on trust and self-confidence?);
- cooperation and collaboration within school;
- leadership (is there distributed leadership and teacher leadership?);
- professional development of staff (are there considerations for its quality across a continuum?); and,
- the locus of ownership of policy and its implementation.

This report provides a basis for considering these elements and opportunities for system development, whilst acknowledging the diversity of system models.

Action to introduce new policy initiatives on teachers and school leaders could be at the

national or regional level. However, as the concept of school as learning organisation is essentially rooted in local organisation and relationships, change might be implemented through local initiatives and pilot schemes in local networks. Assuming the success of these early trials, policies could be rolled out for wider adoption. In increasingly decentralised systems the local or municipal level may assume particular responsibilities for defining – or localising – the conditions in which schools operate (including important resource matters).

3.2 Working process

The formulation of the Guiding Principles and the accompanying examples of policy development was carried out in three ways:

Review of existing research and literature: A background paper of international sources exploring work concerning the topic was created for the Working Group’s members.

Working Group meeting, Brussels: Using a blend of sub-group discussion, reporting, and full group reflection, the members explored the topic from different perspectives in working sessions at a two-day meeting. Input was received from Working Group members who shared case studies from their countries, and from guest organisation representatives³.

Peer Learning Activity: The policy challenges and principles set out in this report were developed in depth by eleven countries and four organisations attending a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on ‘Teachers and School Leaders’, hosted in Leuven (**Flanders, Belgium**) by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training (2-5 May 2017). The PLA focussed on system-level responses that can work towards supporting teachers and school leaders, and so impact positively on learners.

³ Marco Kools, Analyst, Policy Advice and Implementation Division, Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD: Schools as learning organisations: the role of teachers and school leaders; Petra Goran, European Commission: A whole school approach to inclusion: the role of teachers and school leaders. Results from the work of the ET2020 Working Group on Schools (2014/15); Prof Marco Snoek, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences/Centre for Applied Research on Education, on Supporting teachers in innovative schools; Prof Kay Livingston (ATEE), on the Association for Teacher Education in Europe Research Project ‘Factors that make for an Innovative Teacher’.

4. Principles in action

This chapter expands on the Guiding Principles for policy development relating to teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations. It incorporates discussion points and country examples contributed by members of the ET2020 Working Group on Schools, as well as references to other relevant policy guidance.

How to read this chapter:

Chapter 4 looks at each of the nine Guiding Principles in more detail. The nine corresponding sections in this chapter follow a common structure:

- A Guiding Principle is introduced
- A summary is given of the Working Group's reflections leading to the principle, lessons from research and previous peer learning underpinning it, including evidence on European education systems
- This overview is combined with policy examples from across Europe to illustrate possible avenues for policy-makers
- A summary of policy measures to consider concludes the section

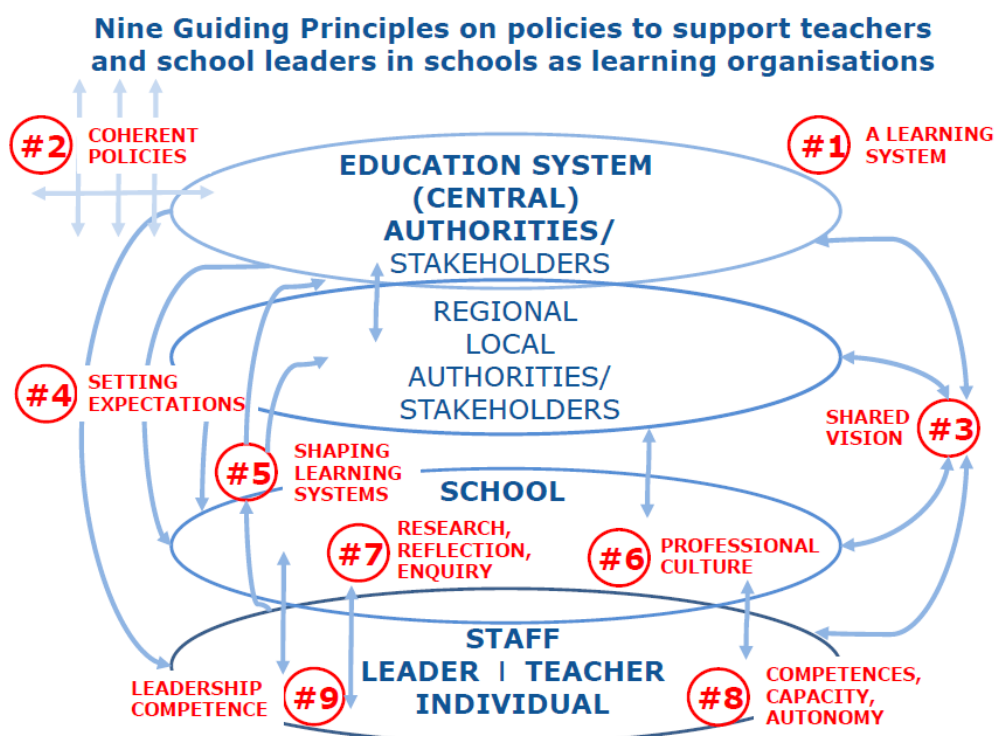


Figure 3: The nine Guiding Principles – how to read this report

4.1 Education as a learning system

Education should be an inclusive learning system with a key role for teachers and school leaders.

In school education, the learning system should function in an inclusive manner that respects diversity to ensure that no school, nor individual teacher, is isolated or is unable to participate effectively. Regular review of the system, involving national and local government as well as the schools themselves, should identify and strengthen connectors across networks, but allow sufficient time for change to take place and be embedded. The system should be open and provide opportunities to engage multiple stakeholders as part of the process, including pupils and their families, local actors and social partners.

Schools have never operated in isolation, but the world in which they are situated is changing dramatically and now demands different interactions from those accepted through the 20th century. National imperatives, such as preparing an effective workforce and responding to budgetary constraints, have had an increasing impact on how an education system is expected to operate. At the same time, responding to societal expectations, the development of a broad set of key competences has gained in importance (expressed through curricula and priorities for learner development), and action has been taken to support new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Inclusivity and diversity are valued, and there is recognition of the benefits of collaborative teamwork.

There have also been changes in national political philosophies, with, to varying degrees, trends towards decentralisation, devolution or “small government”. This shift has led to an associated increase in the influence and significance of regional and local stakeholders, as well as social partners – organisations, groupings or individuals such as employers and trade unions involved, typically at local level to mutual benefit with staff and pupils in schools. The extent of school autonomy and decentralisation differs from country to country. But against the background of a general trend towards allocating more responsibility with schools, networks are considered to be beneficial and effective mechanisms to avoid isolation at the level of school and its constituent teachers and leaders^{xxiii}.

At national and international levels there is recognition that schools will not successfully embrace change unaided. Policy-makers have responded to the challenge of supporting teachers and school leaders in various ways^{xxiv, xxv}. In return, there is an important role for teachers and school leaders themselves to contribute to the learning system at different levels, from local school development, through school networks to the formation of education policy (see 4.4).

The pace of change itself presents a challenge. Decisions can be taken quickly, and with the urgency that attends ministerial priorities. However the implementation of changes in policy direction may take time and the ramifications can be substantial. Stress and fatigue among school staff are reported in consequence^{xxvi, xxvii, xxviii}. The complexity of the modern teacher’s

work has been recognised, and with it the importance of breaking down tendencies towards isolation in the classroom^{xxix}.

Box 1: Schools within learning systems – the stakeholder perspective

EU stakeholder organisations have made recommendations on policies that support schools as learning organisations, within learning systems:

Learning organisations require processes that involve all partners: pupils, teachers, school leaders, stakeholders, teacher educators, and ministries. This approach necessitates a common language, shared understanding; cooperation across all different institutions and cooperation within the school (leader, teacher, pupils, parents)

A culture of innovation and learning requires the development of all partnerships noted above; work on a new mind-set concerning education and its development; a shared vision (specific to every country); openness that allows schools to develop their own principles within a guiding framework

Start working with change leaders (innovative, flexible people) by identifying these change leaders; bringing them together (or working through self-organisation); making them visible; offering them support through ministries and research. Change leaders will understand the importance of engaging others through building trusting relationships

Consider the importance of time, recognising that change is a long process (not necessarily limited to a legislative period) and that learning is an ongoing process; making continuity possible (e.g. when governments change); reducing stress of too much change (beyond all other obligations)

Take national traditions into consideration (the current situation, the opportunities and the barriers)

Build an atmosphere of trust among all partners

Establish a culture of informed risk-taking on all levels, recognising that failures are occasions for learning

Recognise the complexity of change (and what this means for enacting change processes in different countries), including differences in starting points for change; the speed of change; policy contexts, learning and teaching environments; support structures and resources

Source: results of a joint reflection by European stakeholder organisations representing social partners, teacher educators and independent schools on the ET2020 Working Group Schools (ATEE, ECSWE; EFEE, ETUCE), at the Leuven Peer Learning Activity, May 2017

As we have seen, the model of school as learning organisation, in which individuals and teams create a learning culture at the level of organisation-wide practices, provides a particularly inclusive approach to cooperation across education systems. The idea of a shared vision is strong, as is an ethos of team working. The goal of fostering professional learning is pre-

eminent^{xxx}. The following examples from diverse administrations illustrate the adoption of system-wide approaches to educational development and progress (Box 2)

Box 2: System-wide approaches to educational development and progress

In **Austria**, the Education Ministry in 2010 launched a participatory consultation process with stakeholders to develop strategies for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the field of education. Representatives from schools and school authorities, teacher education providers and researchers met with NGO representatives, self-advocacy groups and parents' associations to develop an innovative scenario for a step-by-step realisation of "Inclusive Model Regions". The overall aim of this approach is to improve the quality of education in inclusive settings to such an extent that special schools will not be necessary in future. The process requires not only a sensitive way of respecting and dealing with the traditions of special schools but also a lot of trust-building among stakeholders who may be reluctant to change.

Due to their specific experience and motivation to bring about change school inspectors, school heads and teachers take the role of change leaders in the three Austrian regions Carinthia, Styria and the Tyrol. Recognising the complexity of systemic changes, regional action plans and multi-professional networks have been created to support the continuity of sustainable innovation. Progress can already be seen – in Carinthia more than 90 % of pupils with special needs are already attending regular (inclusive) schools. Moreover, important experiences from inclusive model regions have been legally consolidated as part of the current education reform.

In **Slovenia**, when certain changes are planned for introduction in schools across the education system, school development teams are established to manage change at school level. For example, this strategy was adopted to support the modernisation of curricula, first in Gymnasiums, then also in VET schools, and to develop schools' self-evaluation. The teams are expected to act as agents of change within their schools and are trained both in the content of the changes introduced and in change management. Change management is also a compulsory element of the obligatory initial training all school leaders (head teachers) have to go through to acquire a headship license.

Eurocities, a network of local governments in major cities in Europe, reports that school leadership and school development are matters of intense debate among large local authorities responsible for school education. To increase the sustainability of school development locally, municipal education authorities in such cities as **Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Gothenburg and Antwerp** have undertaken deliberate efforts to support and build the capacity of school teams to tackle forthcoming challenges autonomously and to do so in a cooperative, effective and sustainable way.⁴ It has been found that when schools turn to local authorities for support,

⁴ Eurocities organised a Critical Friends Review on this topic in May 2017. The report is expected to be published in September.

determining the 'real' problem is often a first action before offering guidance and investing in tailor-made school development processes. Local authorities see an advantage in drawing on the broad, multi-disciplinary expertise of their own staff to support school teams.



Measures to consider include:

- **Build capacity for change management**, including the identification of change leaders at different levels of the education system (school, local, municipal/regional, system level), offering them professional development on change management, and other forms of support;
- **Set up broad and inclusive consultation processes**, to build trust and enhance support for reforms among stakeholders, and to inform policy-making;
- **Consider regional or local partnerships to stimulate school development or support the implementation of specific reforms**, e.g. model regions, local networks.

4.2 Coherence of policies

Policy-makers should aim to achieve coherence across the system, aligning different policies directly affecting teachers and school leaders and embedding them in wider school policies, to serve the ultimate objective of ensuring high quality education for all learners.

Ensuring coherence, or continuity, between different policies (professional development, staff careers, support measures, leadership, curricula) avoids tensions and contradictions and makes systems more effective. Coherent policies should also seek to create room for experiment and innovation. Engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including social partners, in meaningful dialogue helps achieve this coherence.

There is a range of policy areas that have a direct or indirect impact on the careers and working conditions of teachers and school leaders, and so affect schools' ability to turn themselves into work environments that fit the vision of the school as a learning organisation. The motivation of staff to become involved in school development and act as change agents seems directly related with the attractiveness of the profession, both to serving staff and to potential new teachers.

A Study for the European Commission^{xxxi} found that while making teaching more attractive as a profession is the stated objective of most European countries, only a handful have comprehensive strategies that go beyond piecemeal measures and aim to align different policies for this purpose. One example is **Norway** where significant central input and guidance is aimed at transforming the status, professionalism and capability of teachers (Box 3).

Box 3: A comprehensive strategies to raise teachers' competence levels

In **Norway** a strategy, "Promotion of the status and quality of teachers – joint effort for a modern school of knowledge," was launched in 2014. The objective of this comprehensive government programme is to enhance student learning through extensive efforts designed to develop and upgrade teachers' competences and increase their motivation.

The programme includes a number of measures with these goals in view:

All students should have teachers that are specialised in maths, English and Norwegian: While research points to positive impacts on learning when teachers know their subjects well, a high share of subject teachers do not have a formal specialisation. The government wants the current subject specialisation requirements for newly qualified teachers to apply to all teachers. Primary school teachers will therefore need at least 30 credits in the relevant subject in order to teach maths, English and Norwegian (at least 60 credits for secondary school teachers).

New teachers will require a 5-year Master's degree: The government has introduced a five-year Master's degree for teachers, starting in 2017. The aim is to raise the quality of Initial Teacher Education, with the result that newly qualified teachers should receive enhanced preparation for their careers.

Investment in continuing education for teachers: The government will sustain investment in continuing education in order to help all teachers obtain the qualifications they need. Almost 6 000 teachers (of approximately 92 000) are in formal education programmes in the school year 2016-2017. In total, the government will invest more than NOK 1.3 billion (EUR 140 million) in further formal education for teachers in 2017. That commitment will enable municipalities and county school owners to plan and organise the education programmes for their teachers, to ensure that they satisfy the new qualification requirements. Teachers who already fulfil the formal requirements will also be able to develop their competences.

New career paths for teachers will be piloted. There will be a focus on building up competences in counties, municipalities and head teachers in order to create a knowledge-rich education system. Efforts will be made to build teams and strong subject-based communities within schools

A national strategy for quality in teacher education was launched in May 2017. The strategy includes new quality measures, including a national framework for guidance and support for newly educated and appointed teachers.

More information:

<https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/education/innsikt/larerloftet/id2008159/>

The latitude for teachers and school leaders to take risks and make mistakes is important. In a system that features a large number of examinations, it becomes difficult to accept risk and innovate at either the organisational level or that of curricular management practices. However, if there is genuine alignment within the system, this problem can be alleviated to some extent. Staff should feel able to turn to each other for advice, and work in collaboration with each other in a relationship of mutual trust. European stakeholder organisations in the Working Group proposed steps that would create better policy coherence through the deeper involvement of stakeholders: the teachers themselves, the organisations representing them and the wider community (Box 4).

Box 4: Involving stakeholders to increase policy coherence

European stakeholder organisations recommended that policy-makers:

- involve relevant stakeholders in regular and open dialogue and collaboration that are not linked to negotiations (e.g. staff remuneration), to create more ownership by stakeholders and a shared vision as a basis for policy-making.
- consider the involvement of (European) stakeholder organisations for their extensive networks at national, regional and local levels (e.g. to test/receive feedback on peer learning results) and their broad expertise in school education (they are more than just interest groups). European stakeholder organisations pointed to their awareness of common challenges and cultural differences between countries.
- involve a broad range of stakeholders (beyond the groups represented at the PLA), also including student representatives, parent associations, local community representatives, industrial partners, art groups, pedagogical research at university level etc.

Joint reflection by European stakeholder organisations at the Peer Learning Activity (PLA) of the Working Group in Leuven, May 2017.

The following two examples, from **Romania** and the **Netherlands**, illustrate the importance of central leadership for the initiation of policies that then require for their success the ownership and commitment of actors at school level.

Box 5: Aligning teacher policies with broader school policies

In **Romania**, the Ministry of National Education has developed an action plan for desegregation and quality improvement in education, a public policy act that is intended to ban and eradicate any form of segregation in schools. One of the measures included in the plan is to change the law regarding school segregation, which will be enshrined in the initial education and continuous professional development of teachers, head teachers and other teaching staff. The action plan also comprises a revision of quality standards for schools on school desegregation, inclusive education and diversity. The legal basis for teacher salaries will be revised to introduce merit-based salary bonuses to teachers who record school progress of the most vulnerable groups of children in education. The Ministry is also seeking to develop broad partnerships with various educational partners for the implementation, and the monitoring of the implementation, of strategic measures included in the Action plan.

In the **Netherlands** a new inspection scheme was introduced in summer 2017. In the previous scheme, schools had to account for their quality based on a standardised list of minimum criteria. This approach created two problems: a lack of ownership by teachers and school leaders towards the criteria used, and little motivation for schools to perform above the minimum standards. In the new scheme, schools can establish their own ambitions and the goals they want to achieve, and indicate the criteria they want the inspectorate to use for the assessment of their performance against these aims. These criteria are added to the minimum criteria. Each school is given feedback on how to improve further.



Measures to consider include:

- **Consider comprehensive strategies to raise the quality in the teaching professions, including school leadership, and the attractiveness of careers at school**, covering such aspects as teacher competences, qualification requirements, a continuum of teacher education and professional development, teacher evaluation, career perspectives and working conditions;
- **Critically review policies on teachers and school leaders** in line with any major changes to curricula, assessment, school organisation and funding, quality assurance etc., and vice versa, to ensure coherence in line with central policy objectives in school education;
- **Involve stakeholder organisations in open and regular dialogue** to increase policy coherence and benefit from their experience and broad networks.

4.3 Shared vision and understanding

Shared vision and understanding, which consider national, regional and local perspectives and priorities on school policy, give direction to the work of schools as learning organisations and to the systems by which they are supported.

Developing a shared vision and understanding strengthens teachers' and school leaders' ability to develop effective learning and teaching, and to collaborate rather than compete. Ensuring opportunities for interpretation in the local context will help teachers and school leaders gain ownership of the vision and engage with the management of change. For this to happen, it is important that policies are based on an understanding of autonomy for schools and staff that is balanced with appropriate modes of accountability and support for building the capacity of staff to act locally.

Decentralisation of education systems in Europe has been accompanied by a general move towards greater autonomy for the school as a whole, and particularly for those assuming leadership roles^{xxxii}. The link between the degree of school autonomy and the potential positive impact of school leaders has been established^{xxxiii}.

In some education systems more power rests with the central authority, and political influence is more pronounced, than in other systems characterised by greater local autonomy. Policy actions will be different depending on the country context. Working Group members recognised these national variations, with some cultures demonstrating high levels of trust among actors, while others lacked this sense of shared endeavour. There is also a risk that autonomy is only nominal. If the view from inside the school is that autonomy has connotations of trust and empowerment then it will be embraced. However, if autonomy is primarily viewed as a means of pushing responsibility (but not necessarily authority) down a hierarchy onto schools, and possibly is just a cost-saving exercise, then the shift is less likely to be successful. Consequently, how policy makers communicate and enact autonomy becomes critical. Consideration should be given to how those teachers who may start from a position of demotivation can be encouraged.

Levels of autonomy should be considered alongside arrangements for accountability in the system. A balance of autonomy and accountability must be established in order to promote the possibilities of teachers and school leaders taking risks and making change happen, but at the same time being responsible for the actions taken and results achieved. An example from Portugal illustrates how devolution of responsibility can be successfully achieved (Box 6):

Box 6: Developing a widely shared vision on teachers' professional development

In **Portugal**, a new policy on teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) underlines the need to combine individual and collective interests, with schools aiming to serve teachers' and departments' organisational needs through collective learning and self-reflection. CPD comprises small and long-term courses developed in, and by, the schools themselves and not necessarily by external trainers. It can take on characteristics of learning communities encouraging collective reflection. This policy is deeply embedded in a logic of school autonomy and empowerment, stressing the mechanisms of self-regulation and improvement.

The notion of “accountable autonomy” may be helpful. If this idea appears at first sight a contradiction, it is implicit that accountability is not simply a matter of control by the authorities but that it provides mechanisms through which a school leader’s performance is enhanced. Accountability should imply responsibility, and so the opportunity for individuals to change and improve the education system. In this way, accountability can be seen in a positive light.

The use of smart data, effective quality assurance mechanisms and tailored support, for example to develop measures for education institutions in disadvantaged areas, can all make school leadership more efficient and effective, and are not simply instruments of control^{xxxiv}.

The model of the school as learning organisation (Figure 1) gives primacy to a shared and inclusive vision centred on enhancing the learning experiences and outcomes of all students. Although vision is only one of seven dimensions of the model, it sits at its core. The vision is the outcome of a process involving all staff, to which students, parents, the external community and other partners are invited to contribute^{xxxv}. It should be emphasised that the school must work at a local level in order to secure ownership and sharing, within the context of a national or regional framework.

Box 7: Developing a shared vision through broad platforms and partnerships

In **Finland**, the Ministry of Education and Culture in January 2016 appointed a Teacher Education Forum to support the reform of Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development. Close to one hundred forum members and experts participated in work on the Teacher Education Development Programme. In addition, nearly 2 000 experts from the education sector, students and teachers, were involved through an online think-tank. The objective of this reform programme is to introduce a systematic, coherent structure for teachers' competence development spanning their entire career. The programme aims to ensure that teachers have opportunities for competence development at any point in their professional lives. Particular attention has been paid to building up the competences of beginning teachers and to offering them support during their first years in the profession. The programme will promote competence development in teams and networks, and make mentoring a more systematic element in the induction of novice teachers. Investment in educational leadership aims at supporting schools towards becoming learning organisations.

The Teacher Education Development Programme is implemented in broad co-operation through twenty innovative development projects starting in autumn 2017. It is part of the government's key project aiming to reform comprehensive school, learning environments and teachers' competence. To learn more:

<http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4183002/Teacher+Education+Development+Programme+2016>.

In many EU Member States, school education is organised by more than one type of provider, and relevant knowledge and experience are spread across several stakeholders. **Eurocities** reports on examples for platforms, initiated and supported at local level to foster cooperation and exchange between these partners, including school boards, providers of Initial Teacher Education, research institutions, trade unions as well as organisations in the fields of youth, care and culture. For instance, in **Antwerp, Belgium**, the city involves both local and national partners (e.g. Education Ministry, public employment services) in a platform dedicated to attracting more and better candidates into teaching (<http://www.onderwijstalent.be/>).

The model also proposes arrangements of distributed leadership. The notion of teachers' leadership of learning can be seen in this way, applying to a range of situations across and beyond their own school, in which teachers may act influentially. From the school head's perspective shared leadership within and between schools is a mechanism to ensure capacity; it is powerful but it results in leadership practices which are more complex and so present their own management challenge (OECD 2008)^{xxxvi}. An example of the systematic development of distributed leadership is provided by **Portugal** (Box 8).

Box 8: Creating broad partnerships to support reform initiatives

In **Portugal**, the National Programme for School Success Promotion, implemented in 2015/2017, used distributed leadership at system level, incorporating the following steps:

1. Defining broad guidelines by a task force at central level;
2. Training for trainers;
3. Training for school leaders, including head teachers and others;
4. Identifying areas for priority action within the framework for the autonomy of each school/cluster of schools;
5. Design of strategic plans in association with the mission and purposes of each school/cluster of schools;
6. Implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and redesign of the strategic plans;
7. External evaluation.



Measures to consider include:

- **Open fora or platforms to bring together perspectives from different levels of the system** including central authorities, national stakeholder organisations; regional/local authorities and stakeholders, practitioners at school, pupils with their parents and families, local communities;
- **Balance school autonomy with measures of accountability that support school development** and help teachers and school leaders to shape schools as learning organisations; review quality assurance systems and the role of inspection in this respect;
- **When defining policies and priorities for Continuing Professional Development**, consider balancing needs at system and school levels with those of individual teachers and school leaders.

4.4 Setting expectations

Clear expectations for the engagement of teachers and school leaders, that can be set through standards, competence frameworks or curricula, help to define roles within learning organisations.

These expectations can guide the provision of appropriate support and give staff good career perspectives, whilst maintaining a freedom to take risks, develop and innovate, have ownership, and stimulate collaboration within and across areas of curriculum and school development.

As teachers pass through different stages of their careers, their progress is intricately linked with their command over a set of competences required for effective practice, linking knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.⁵ Policy makers have a major role to play in setting up the expectations for the engagement of teachers and school leaders. An increasing number of education systems are making these expectations explicit with the help of competence frameworks or professional standards, or through curricula. If these tools provide the

⁵ Professional competences form one of the five interrelated perspectives of the continuum of the teacher profession introduced in section 3.1.1 above.

opportunity for dialogue, rather than serving as mechanistic tick-lists, they can help promote quality in the teaching profession by increasing transparency, by helping teachers deploy and develop their professional competences and by promoting teacher agency, empowerment and responsibility.⁶

While the majority of European countries now have frameworks that define and describe a set of competences teachers should possess, or develop over their career, in practice, such frameworks vary in terms of format, level of detail, value and use to which they are put. In some countries competence frameworks extend to guidelines for Initial Teacher Education, or define competences at different steps in a teachers' career and underpin criteria for career advancement. **Latvia** and **Poland** have both made recent changes to their standards for teachers, while the Steiner Waldorf schools in the Flemish education system (**Belgium**) have agreed a tailored system of standards for the evaluation of their schools with the Ministry of Education and Training (Box 9):

Box 9: Setting expectations through standards: for the profession, for teacher education and for school evaluation

In **Latvia**, a new standard for the teaching profession is being developed in accordance with the new competence-based approach to the curriculum. This standard describes the necessary skills and attitudes, professional knowledge and competences of teachers according to their professional activities and responsibilities. In the development of the content of the new standard the experience and examples of neighbouring Baltic states have been taken into account.

In **Poland**, new standards of teacher education based on learning outcomes were introduced in 2012 to enhance the quality and importance of pedagogical practice and to improve the link of theory with practice. Five years later a number of serious shortcomings were identified, including the absence of recruitment criteria for teachers, the low quality of candidates entering ITE, outdated programmes and the low social prestige of ITE qualifications. Consequently, in April 2017, the Minister of Education set up a working group to assess the situation, prepare a concept and make recommendations for changes needed in teacher education. The group consists of representatives from the Ministry, a range of educational bodies and agencies, higher education institutions and others.

Steiner Waldorf schools in the Flemish education system (**Belgium**), are inspected on the basis of their own standards. The Ministry of Education and Training carries out school inspections, but important guidance services are provided by the schools' umbrella organisations (in this

⁶ Policy guidance developed by the ET2020 Thematic Working Group on Teacher Professional Development discusses the variety of approaches, also warning that if competence frameworks are understood and employed as tools for intensified, external control of teachers they might have unintended, disempowering effects (European Commission 2013): *Teacher Competence Development for Better Learning Outcomes*

case *Overleg Kleine Onderwijsverstrekkers*, OKO, the organisation covering all small education providers in the system). The Steiner Waldorf schools have developed their own standards for schools, based on pupils' learning outcomes, which the Flemish authorities have recognised as equal in value to the system-wide standards. Inspection is consequently carried out against the schools' own collective standards.

The pace of change noted under the previous principles (4.1, 4.2, 4.4) in turn demands regular review and, potentially, revision of the competences required for teachers, teacher educators and education leaders, and, in consequence, “strong action to support new approaches to teaching and learning”^{xxxvii}. These “new approaches” may, for instance, be linked to moves towards competence-based school curricula or a stronger focus on teacher collaboration. They may also require new types of teacher competences that are related to specific characteristics of the school as learning organisation. This includes, for example, innovation and risk taking, which are discussed here as part of other principles (4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.9). Enshrining these expectations in competence frameworks or standards can help make collaboration and a contribution to wider school development the norm.

In the context of the school as learning organisation there should also be consideration of the extent to which the ownership of standards and competence frameworks can be extended to schools, and to the teachers themselves. It is likely that a national or regional framework will be implemented, thereby promoting a degree of consistency across the system. However, at local level, teachers, school leaders and teacher educators may be anxious for balance and political neutrality and will observe the consultation process that informs the set of standards, as well as the constitution of the expert panels who formulate them. European policy guidance has resulted in recommendations on how ownership and purpose can be ensured.⁷

Whilst there is sense in establishing a set of national standards, the level at which their implementation is controlled and monitored is contentious. Leadership in the school as learning organisation can be suitably positioned to monitor and support a beginning teacher. However, for there to be fairness across the education system in terms of career progression, it may be advisable to have an external mechanism for the support and moderation of beginning teachers, so that such decision-making and responsibility does not lie exclusively with an individual school or member of school staff.

There are similar competence frameworks and standards for school leaders, but, between countries, those for teachers vary greatly in format, purpose and level of detail. The question has been raised whether these frameworks give sufficient attention to some of the aspects that may matter most for effective leadership, including the ability to motivate staff, to lead the development of teaching practice and teacher leadership.

⁷ Policy guidance developed by the ET2020 Thematic Working Group on Teacher Professional Development - see previous footnote.

Box 10: Defining and assessing school leaders' competences

In **Slovenia**, school leaders' responsibilities are defined in legislation, but there is currently no career promotion, comparable to that of teachers. The school councils evaluate school leaders' competences annually, but the criteria are mainly quantitative and serve as a basis for the annual financial reward. Guidelines for school leaders' promotion are currently being developed within a project funded through the European Social Fund ([Leading and Managing Innovative Learning Environments](#)) but wide consensus will be required if system-wide implementation is to be considered.

In **Italy**, a new system of evaluation of school leaders was introduced in 2017. In an annual exercise a team of evaluators gather evidence through an interview with the school leader and by assessing his/her obligatory individual portfolio. A final decision on the evaluation is taken by the Regional Education Office. The evaluation is made against the school's improvement objectives, established through a self-evaluation report, as well as national and regional objectives, and considers the school leader's specific contribution to achieving them. The evaluation of school heads is aimed at enhancing and improving their professionalism as part of broader policy efforts to increase the quality of the school service and in accordance with the National Evaluation System.

In its consideration of Quality assurance in school systems the Working Group explored the balance to be struck between appraisal of teachers as a mechanism for review and performance management, alongside a formative perspective that informs the identification of a programme of appropriate Continuing Professional Development. Current policy guidance emphasises the latter view. For example, the OECD report *Synergies for Better Learning* concludes unambiguously, "Without a clear link to professional growth opportunities, the impact of teacher appraisal on teaching and learning will be relatively limited"^{xxxviii}. Such opportunities are inextricably linked to a teacher's motivation and sense of being valued.

A recent research project by the Association for Teacher Educators in Europe (ATEE) looked into the qualities of innovative teachers and how to support them in schools (Box 11).

Box 11: What makes for innovative teachers: a research project by the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE)

ATEE's Research and Development Centre (RDC) on the Professional Development of Teachers, a network within the association, chaired by Professor Kay Livingston, undertook a research project which aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics and qualities of innovative teachers and how they can be supported in developing their innovative qualities.

The project involved research being undertaken by 20 ATEE researchers from 11 countries (**Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, Sweden and Turkey**). Interviews were carried out with teachers, school leaders and teacher educators in these countries. The results of the research found that the innovative teachers displayed active agency in what they did. They showed a willingness to take risks and to pursue ways to develop their own learning and development.

The teachers, the school leaders and the teacher educators identified the following characteristics in innovative teachers: Inspirational; Risk-taker; Courageous; Independent thinker; Adaptive; Reflective; Self-confident; Eccentricity; Boldness; Curious; Open to new ways of doing things; Inclusive; Perseverance; Eager; Analytical; Creative; Commitment.

The interviewees provided practical examples of innovative approaches the teachers took in school such as:

Engaging Learners

- Being bold in choosing materials and strategies at the level of the classroom
- Understanding each student as an autonomous individual learner
- Understanding teaching as a dialogue with learners
- Turning failure into learning opportunities
- Understanding new technologies as a valuable learning resource

Connecting to real life context of students and extending teaching beyond subject disciplines and the space of the classroom and assessment requirements

- Openness to the outside world to apply new developments in the classroom
- Willing to take risks in trying new ways of doing
- Taking personal initiative beyond the requirements of the curriculum

Adaptive Professionals

- Demonstrates openness to broad conceptualisation of knowledge
- Demonstrates an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning
- Seeking and receptive to new ways of doing things

Commitment to On-going professional Learning Teachers

- Engages actively in personal research to discover new approaches
- Shares materials and strategies actively with colleagues
- Recognises the value of collaboration and learning from others

In creating the conditions for teacher innovation in school the role of the school leader was recognised as essential. The importance of whole school commitment to innovation was identified to enable teachers to develop trusting relationships, take risks and try new and different ways of developing learning and teaching for all learners in school.



Measures to consider:

- **Create transparency on the competences required from teachers at different stages of their careers** (such as graduation from ITE, end of induction, linked to later career steps) through competence frameworks or standards;
- **Involve teachers, teacher educators and other relevant stakeholders in the development and regular review of these tools** to ensure broad buy-in, relevance and usefulness;
- Ensure that expectations as set out in competence frameworks or standards for the teaching profession are **aligned with teacher education curricula, as well as with school curricula.**

4.5 School leaders and teachers shaping learning systems

Schools leaders and teachers should be acknowledged and respected for their expertise and their contribution to developing the education system at different levels.

Through their own endeavours as learners, teachers and school leaders act as role models, adding to the development of the school as a learning organisation. But they should also be supported in their efforts to increase capacity to work across networks of schools and professionals. Involving teachers and school leaders from the outset in the design of new initiatives and reforms will help improve the system and empower staff to engage in leadership, be innovative and take as well as manage risks.

Distributed leadership has a significant part to play within and between schools to ensure capacity. In complex organisations such as education systems hierarchies with a long chain of command lose their effectiveness. It is essential that many actors within the system assume individual responsibilities. Beyond the organisational benefits, the use of Michael Fullan's concept of "lateral capacity"^{xxxix} has virtues in maximising the use of proficiency of school staff. Teachers will have expertise in particular fields that can be shared with others. Others will learn or develop skills and understanding in consequence, but just as important may be the enhanced self-respect accruing to the teacher who has an identified role in helping the development of his or her colleagues.

Again it should be emphasised that successful peer-mentoring will not just happen; it requires planning and support for the teacher who is to take on the role, and should go beyond social or technical support to focus unambiguously on improving learning and teaching.

Box 12: Tutor teachers in Finnish basic education

The goal of the national tutor teacher model is that all the basic education schools in **Finland** will have a tutor who supports and advises other teachers to introduce new curricula. The aim of tutoring is to support schools and teachers in the school reform. That support includes utilisation of innovative pedagogy and the promotion of digitalisation of teaching, using the new and wider learning environments. Tutors both instruct individual teachers and organise guidance and support for different teacher groups. Tutor teachers are networking with their counterparts in their own municipality and also regionally.

Tutor teachers started their work in spring 2017. Nearly 80% of municipalities nationwide are already involved in the first phase of the project. Tutoring will be expanded and strengthened in the years to come, increasing the number of participating municipalities. There are government subsidies available both to train the tutor teachers and to finance their work. There will also be regional co-ordination and development funds in the future, which will enable hiring regional coordinators to support municipalities in the region and further develop tutoring. Different models of tutoring will be collected and shared with all the schools in 2018.

The fulfilment that individual teachers may gain from this kind of opportunity should not be underestimated. Career diversification and the harnessing of lateral capacity can compensate for the inevitable funnelling and constriction of prospects that characterise conventional management hierarchies. If properly recognised and acknowledged, teachers may be very satisfied with the contribution that they have been enabled to make without necessarily progressing up the management ladder. See also 4.9 for further discussion of distributed leadership.

Using teachers' potential for school development

Several education systems can point to policy developments in which specific staff expertise has been identified, recognised and encouraged (Box 13).

Box 13: Recognising special expertise and competences within school teams

In the **Slovak Republic**, a teacher career system was introduced in 2009 to raise the quality and attractiveness of the profession, putting an emphasis on continuous professional growth. The system comprises four career stages (Novice teaching staff, Independent teaching staff, Teaching staff with a first attestation and Teaching staff with a second attestation). At the different stages the system also offers opportunities for horizontal specialisation, including specific professional activities such as career counsellor, ICT coordinator or head of subject

area, as well as leadership positions. The career system is currently being reviewed to build on strengths and address shortcomings. Among other proposals the government is considering stricter selection criteria for Initial Teacher Education, support for training (laboratory) schools closely linked to ITE faculties and a new incentive-based remuneration scheme for teachers.

The **Netherlands** introduced differentiated salary scales from 2009. Within primary schools this move created opportunities to appoint specialist teachers in mathematics, Dutch language and topics such as culture and the arts. These specialist teachers have several roles within a school: to develop the curriculum on that topic and to support colleagues. Within larger school boards, expert teachers from different schools collaborate across schools to develop new teaching and learning strategies using outcomes from research.

In **Slovenia**, teachers can occupy different roles, such as class tutors, heads of subjects or team leaders. Although these roles are defined either by central legislation or schools' internal acts, they are not formally recognised as career advancement, and do not lead structurally to more senior positions at the school level. However, being part of a teacher team or holding a (non-formal) position at school is part of distributed leadership practice and the promotion of teacher leadership. It serves to recognise and make use of individual teachers' talents and competences in contributing to change management and school development. Different forms of distributed leadership are currently being piloted within the project [Leading and Managing Innovative Learning Environments](#), supported through the European Social Fund.

Once mechanisms have been established to enable teachers to take on special roles besides classroom teaching, including leadership roles, they are in a position to make an enhanced contribution to school development. The following examples from **Luxembourg, Spain** and **Albania** (Box 14) indicate the power of this process.

Box 14: Supporting school development locally

In **Luxembourg**, an agency affiliated to the Education Ministry, SCRIPT (*Service de coordination de la recherche et de l'innovation pédagogiques et technologiques*), has just started offering systematic support and additional resources for local school development. As part of this support, the institute runs a network of resource teachers specialised in school development who assist and accompany schools in drawing up development plans. At the secondary level (*lycées*) the project also encourages the establishment of school development teams. The initiative underlines local school autonomy and the adaptation of school development to local needs. To this purpose it encourages, and provides a legal framework for, broad collaboration within the school community. The offer to schools includes support in networking with other schools, a new project management system and CPD dedicated to school development.

In **Spain**, one of the main goals of the new Organic Law on Education is to promote the quality of educational establishments, by strengthening their autonomy and enhancing the role of

management bodies. Measures envisaged include specific quality improvement programmes for schools that wish to improve their performance. These steps should be based on the understanding of the school as an organisation with shared responsibilities, and take as reference other innovative school management models that have previously proven successful in other countries of the EU. Participating schools are asked to draw up a strategic plan defining intended outcomes, strategic objectives, the management's vision and core values and a project implementation schedule.

In order to carry out this kind of programme, schools will be granted a greater degree of autonomy regarding curriculum and human resources as well as material and financial resources. The head teacher will be enabled to adapt teacher recruitment to specific requirements deriving from the implementation of the programme under the supervision of the educational administration of the Autonomous Community, which will be responsible for compliance with applicable regulations.

Schools in these programmes will be held accountable for their performance, as compared to their starting situation. Teachers involved in the programme can have their activities recognised as merits for teacher allocations as well as for professional development – provided the school receives a favourable project report.

In **Albania**, the initiative “School as a Community Centre - a friendly school for everyone” aims to build strong partnerships between schools, families and local communities. Supported by a range of international organisations, including the Council of Europe and UNICEF, it currently involves 225 schools across the country.

Schools' activities are assessed against standards issued by the central education authorities. School leaders and teachers play a central role in these transformation processes, leading, managing and supporting the work as part of a wider team that also involves representatives of parents, pupils, local government and other partners. Teachers' tasks can involve project work, local or international, the organisation of meetings and consultations with parents and pupils, and cultural activities. The initiative includes professional development activities for the teachers involved, both locally and within the region.

Both an external assessment by the UNDP and the internal monitoring of the initiative by the Ministry have pointed out the important role of the teachers in the process and underlined the importance of supporting them through professional development. The external assessment also identified that teachers considered their involvement in the scheme to be an overload. Following its suggestion the Ministry introduced additional financial incentives for the teachers involved.

Beyond teachers' own school, their specialisation and expertise can be shared to wider benefit. Typically this input may be affected through networks. These links may be local in their organisation, or national, as the following two examples from Germany illustrate (Box 15).

Box 15: Spreading competence and experience across school networks

Each school in the network of **Steiner Waldorf schools** in **Germany** is expected to ensure high quality induction of beginning teachers. This includes mentoring through an experienced colleague, involvement in collegial support groups and tailored professional development. Mentors for each school engage in regional exchange groups with their peers. Regional groups are facilitated by teachers who in turn collaborate with peers in exchanges at national level facilitated by the German association of Steiner Waldorf schools.

In **Germany**, the most prestigious school award, the *Deutscher Schulpreis* (German School Award) has led to the creation of a network that bring together all schools that have received the award over recent years. The *Deutsche Schulakademie* (German School Academy) offers schools that have received the award the opportunity to exchange experiences. A separate award for excellent and innovative schooling in the non-academic tracks of Germany's school system, the *Starke Schule* (Strong school) award, links up 200 of its award-winning schools during 4 years for networking, professional development and the sharing of good practice.

Part of the role of school leaders is to facilitate the sharing process, matching expert practitioners with colleagues, either within their school or beyond into the networks in which they belong.

Leaders working to improve the system

Considerable expertise resides in school leaders and teachers and this is recognised by policy makers. For example, at the end of 2016, the Slovakian ministry undertook an analysis of the current situation of school management as part of a broader investigation into school climate.

Education systems - for example in **Finland, Belgium(Flanders), Austria** and the **United Kingdom(England)** - are now identifying “system leaders”, who usually have been successful in their own schools and are in a position to support other local schools, or, indeed, become involved in an even wider network. The involvement of system leaders could be to support a school identified as weak, but equally, and more positively, the leader may be offering peer-to-peer support for other school leaders on developmental priorities or providing needs-based support for colleagues new in post^{xl}. These arrangements will be forward-looking and have a particular value through introducing fresh ideas and avoiding schools becoming isolated or introspective. The four examples below reflect the diversity of opportunities that could be implemented (Box 16).

Box 16: Opportunities for teachers and school leaders to contribute to system development

In the **United Kingdom(Northern Ireland)**, education practitioners with a post of responsibility in their own school can contribute to enhancing and supporting the inspection process by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) by becoming an Associate Assessor. Associate Assessors are appointed through public advertisement and interview, and must successfully complete induction training. Their initial period of tenure is three years and they will normally join at least two inspections or inspection activities each year.

By working with Associate Assessors, the inspectorate aims to enable others to share in the process of inspection; provide the opportunity for current practitioners to experience, and to contribute to the inspection process; bring a current practitioner's perspective to the inspection process and to its continuous improvement; develop the concept of self-evaluation and enable the assessors to have a deeper understanding of how the process of self-evaluation helps their own organisations.

In the **Netherlands**, the government supports the bottom-up initiative of a cross-school network of innovative teachers through funding and the invitation to provide input on teacher policies. The aim of the national network *Leraren met lef* is to connect innovative teachers, who feel isolated at their school for lack of a learning culture, with like-minded colleagues from other schools. Financial support is given to the network to organise national events and masterclasses (e.g. on sharing leadership at school). The network emphasises teacher agency and representatives were invited to contribute their ideas in the process of the development of the governments *Teacher Agenda 2013-2020* initiative. More information: www.lerarenmetlef.nl.

In **Norway**, the government is introducing plans to improve retention of good teachers in the classroom. New career pathways have been piloted in a limited number of municipalities since autumn 2015. The aim is to give teachers opportunities for taking on new challenges and develop themselves and their schools professionally, while they continue teaching. It is expected that the teachers themselves take part in analysing results, initiate professional development for the organisation and give guidance to colleagues. It has recently been decided to expand the pilots until 2019.

In **Latvia**, a range of projects addressing teacher education and competences is supported through the European Social Fund and ensure support for the implementation of education reforms. This includes projects on the implementation of competence-based approaches to curricula; prevention and intervention measures to reduce early school leaving; support to the development of students' individual competences; career guidance.



Measures to consider include:

- Create opportunities for school staff to diversify careers by **taking on additional roles to classroom teaching/school leadership, at school** (coordinating or leadership roles; support to colleagues, including mentoring, professional development, involvement in school development, (international) project work, extracurricular activities, co-operation with external partners);
- Create opportunities for school staff to **become involved in developing the education system** (school evaluation; policy dialogue; policy development etc.)
- Create opportunities for/encourage/support school staff to engage in **school-to-school networks to share expertise and teaching resources, spread innovation or support school development.**

4.6 Professional culture

Education systems can help schools develop professional working and learning cultures that motivate teachers and school leaders.

Fostering a desire and providing capacity in schools to learn and improve together will help teachers and school leaders better adapt to changing needs of learners and society. Motivation can be influenced by internal and external factors and should be taken into account when considering the recruitment and retention of staff. Collaboration, distributed leadership and networking offer significant potential for a professional culture that supports working and learning at school.

The school as a learning organisation is rooted in a shared ethos and culture around learning and improving collectively (see Figure 1). The school is characterised by its promotion of team learning and collaboration, which is seen as a defining direction in transforming practice. A range of dispositions among members of staff must be developed, and allowed to flourish:

PROMOTING TEAM LEARNING AND COLLABORATION AMONG ALL STAFF

- Staff learn how to work together as a team
- Collaborative working and collective learning – face-to-face and through ICTs – are focused and enhance learning experiences and outcomes of students and/or staff practice
- Staff feel comfortable turning to each other for consultation and advice
- Trust and mutual respect are core values
- Staff reflect together on how to make their own learning more powerful
- The school allocates time and other resources for collaborative working and collective learning

Source: OECD/UNICEF (2016): *What makes a school a learning organisation? A guide for policy-makers, school leaders and teachers*, p4^{xli}

Few would these aims, but in practice they may require a considerable cultural shift within an education system, which may disrupt existing practice and vested interests.

Self-confidence and some humility are required from individual teachers if they are genuinely to “feel comfortable turning to each other for consultation and advice.” If teachers are anxious about their work, or feel threatened and unable to speak openly about how the school might improve, they are unlikely to contribute effectively to its enhancement. The role of the outer ring of the school as learning organisation model – the community – is critical in nurturing the trust and mutual respect that underpins the model. Policy-makers at national and local levels have a major responsibility to support the advance of a positive shared ethos.

Depending on the degree of autonomy schools have in relation to hiring staff, the process of developing a collaborative culture can begin as early as the recruitment process, incorporating tasks that explore the inclination of candidates to subscribe to a school’s philosophy. The assessment of candidates’ responses to questions about competences (see 4.8) may provide useful indicators. The role of retention, to maintain the involvement and commitment of a valued colleague once they have joined the staff team, is important, too. The school as learning organisation will respect the beliefs and positions held by its members. Mentoring may play a valuable role in enhancing the individual teacher’s sense of self-worth, especially for newcomers (see 3.1.2, 4.4 and 4.5). In **Ireland**, the importance of a “bridge”, providing structure at the formal entry point into the profession, has been established for newly qualified teachers (Box 17).

Box 17: Building a bridge into the profession for beginning teachers

In **Ireland**, *Droichead* (Irish for 'bridge') is an integrated induction framework for newly qualified teachers (NQTs). It reflects the importance of the induction phase on the teacher's lifelong learning journey where the new teacher is formally welcomed into the profession of having completed Initial Teacher Education. It lays the foundations for subsequent professional growth and learning for the next phase of their career.

Droichead includes both school-based and additional professional learning activities. The first step in the Droichead process is to establish a Professional Support Team (PST). This is a team of registered and experienced teachers who work collaboratively to support the novice teachers during the Droichead process and who support his or her entry into both the school and the profession. A National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) Droichead Associate provides follow-up support and professional development to the support team, newly qualified teachers and the school staff. It is important that there is a whole-school approach to Droichead as each staff member will support beginning teachers in different ways; from a tea or coffee and informal chat in the staff room, to co-planning and sharing resources and ideas to a more structured approach involving observation and feedback.

Droichead is a non-evaluative professional induction framework, which is markedly different from the traditional forms of post-qualification professional practice which applied in schools at primary (probation) and post-primary (post-qualification employment) levels in the past. The current model was launched in September 2016 and is planned to be the professional induction programme for all NQTs by the school year 2020/2021. Schools will have an interim period to transition into this model.

To learn more: <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Teacher-Education/Droichead/>

In **Malta**, all newly qualified teachers (NQTs), and teachers who return back to their profession after a long spell (career break), go through induction and mentoring. The induction course is jointly organised by the central education authority (the Directorate) and the teachers' College (local network of schools). It is followed by two years of mentoring through senior teachers and Heads of Departments with a focus on classroom practice and aspects related to teachers' tasks.

In the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, within a four-step career system, beginning teachers have the status of "teacher-trainee". They work with a mentor to develop their competences. In 2016, a working group with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Bureau for Development of Education, the state educational sector, the non-governmental sector, the teaching profession and school leaders, developed a range of guidelines and templates for the work of teachers and their mentors.

The importance of teacher education is already recognised at supranational level. The Council of the EU summarised its position in 2014, stating: "Teacher education should be seen as an integral part of the broader policy objective to raise the attractiveness and quality of the profession. This requires adequate selection, recruitment and retention policies, effective initial teacher education, early career support, career-long professional learning and development, pedagogical feedback and incentives for teachers."^{xlii}

Ministers also invited the Commission to "Build communities of teachers, in particular prospective and recently recruited teachers, by making use of existing European platforms for teachers such as eTwinning, with a view to further developing collaboration among peers on teaching practices across the EU" and "to support cooperation with partners, networks and organisations which can offer experience and know-how on designing effective teacher education programmes, in particular initial education programmes"^{xliii}. Examples from the **Netherlands, Slovenia** and **Croatia** (Box 18) describe the benefits of building communities among school staff:

Box 18: Promoting a culture of team learning and collaboration among all staff

In **the Netherlands**, an increasing number of schools have introduced collaborative strategies for team teaching and team learning with two examples being prominent:

Stichting Leerkracht (Teacher force) focuses on the collaborative work of teachers. Teachers meet regularly to prepare lessons, to observe each other's lessons and to discuss the outcomes of pupil learning. An increasing number of schools (now almost 500) have integrated this way of working in their weekly schedule.

An increasing number of schools practice *Lesson Study*, a learning process for teachers in which they collaboratively:

- define a concrete learning objective for pupils,
- design a lesson that will help pupils to gain the intended learning outcome,
- observe pupils during a lesson taught by one of the teachers,
- evaluate to what extent the design helped the pupils to gain the intended learning outcomes
- draw conclusions on the lesson design and the underlying assumptions.

This process can be repeated with a redesigned lesson. Often schools carry out Lesson Study in close collaboration with teacher education institutes.

In **Slovenia**, many policy initiatives encourage team learning and collaboration, both at school level and among schools. The initiatives typically establish teams of teachers and offer them training on running activities with their own colleagues at school. Among those involved are the Networks of Learning Schools coordinated by the National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE). Based on concepts of school improvement, collaborative culture and networking, each network consists of six to eight schools. Schools and NSLE jointly select topics. School development teams meet regularly and receive training on both the contents (cooperation with parents, classroom management, prevention of bullying, etc.) as well as the

process of managing change. This process is designed to enable them to act as change agents in their schools.

In **Croatia**, a major reform aims at making all schools digitally mature (e-Schools) by investing in infrastructure and digital competence development. This work is supported through virtual communities of practice linking and supporting teachers across the schools where this policy is piloted. Teachers are encouraged to communicate and collaborate by sharing examples of good practice in the use of ICT in education. Support to the community includes virtual meetings, webinars and face-to-face school visits.



Measures to consider include:

- **Encourage and support collaboration among staff for teaching** (e.g. team teaching; sharing of teaching resources) **and staff learning** (collaborative CPD, classroom observations; mentoring);
- **Consider cross-school networks and digital platforms** to support (a culture of) collaboration in the teaching profession;
- **Support a culture of collaboration by avoiding situations that could encourage counterproductive competition between individuals**, for instance by underlining collective/team elements in staff assessment/evaluation, objective setting, incentives and recognition;
- **Strengthen recruitment and retention of qualified staff**, where possible by giving schools the possibility to take school ethos or professional culture into account when recruiting new staff;
- **Encourage links between schools and providers of teacher education** to support a culture of continued learning among school staff;
- **Support systematic induction of beginning teachers, and teachers new to a school.**

4.7 Research, reflective practice and enquiry

Policies should support a culture of research, reflective practice and enquiry-based learning at school.

Practice-oriented research and enquiry should be embedded along the continuum of school leaders' and teachers' professional development, including Initial Teacher Education. This will stimulate teachers' motivation and competence to engage in research with the purpose of informing and enabling action across the system. Researchers in schools, universities and other organisations should have opportunities to disseminate their work and exchange information and ideas.

The concept of the school as learning organisation recognises the importance of a continuous process of learning for all members of its community, particularly teachers and their students. Establishing a *culture of inquiry, exploration and innovation* is one of the key dimensions of the concept, linked to the opportunities for staff to innovate, take risks and experiment in a spirit of inquiry and open-mindedness that leads to better learning.

ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF INQUIRY, EXPLORATION AND INNOVATION

- Staff want and dare to experiment and innovate in their practice
- The school supports and recognises staff for taking initiative and risks
- Staff engage in forms of inquiry to investigate and extend their practice
- Inquiry is used to establish and maintain a rhythm of learning, change and innovation
- Staff have open minds towards doing things differently
- Problems and mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning
- Students are actively engaged in inquiry

Source: OECD/UNICEF (2016),: *What makes a school a learning organisation? A guide for policy-makers, school leaders and teachers*, p5.^{xliv}

However, this shift can present new challenges to staff in schools, and to the education system itself: how to ensure that high quality professional development still takes place when it is no longer provided nor necessarily closely monitored by the broader education system. There is a risk that decentralisation of teaching and learning may allow intellectual activity to become static. This can be avoided if policies support schools' efforts to make research, reflective practice and enquiry-based learning part of their everyday practice. The key is that the quest for evidence should be scientific and systematic.

In such an environment, teachers will work to shape their hypotheses. They will have the freedom to experiment, individually and together, as well as with colleagues in other schools, and to manage how their explorations progress. There may be a tendency towards action research, usually without the use of control groups but using approaches that are repeated with modification after analysis and reflection. Several countries have already formalised practice to encourage teacher-led research projects (Box 19):

Box 19: Teacher-led research projects

In **Bulgaria**, the 2016 educational law package introduced new national educational standards that set a new framework and outline expectations for schools as learning organisations. Among other things, the new framework envisages support for teachers and school leaders to act as researchers and innovators.

In the **Netherlands**, with financial support from the government, the Onderwijscoöperatie - the national body for the teaching profession - in 2015 launched the Teacher Development Fund (*LerarenOntwikkelfonds*) to support bottom-up innovative ideas. The funding programme helps teachers put innovative ideas into practice through small-scale school-based projects, without the constraints of the financial implications or the priorities of the school where they are employed. Project grants are accompanied by a support programme in which teachers are supported by a coach, both on the content of their innovation project and on issues concerning implementation and finding grass root support within their school.

To learn more: <http://lerarenontwikkelfonds.onderwijscooperatie.nl/>

These efforts clearly should not take place in a methodological vacuum. Co-operation and partnerships with researchers in higher education institutions help teacher-researchers to ensure that investigations are carried out with academic rigour (and also within appropriate ethical boundaries). Projects may be organised among co-enquirers in schools, universities and other organisations. This breadth of participation is likely to provide various outlets at national, regional and local level for knowledge sharing and transfer, for example through engagement in projects, then presentations and dissemination, thereby feeding into the wider education system and in return receiving further stimulus for research. Collaborative culture is then seen to work at the local level and on a larger scale, and there is a sense of collective ownership of the outcomes.

The OECD's TALIS survey found a positive correlation between teachers' professional development based on research, observation and exchange and their use of active teaching practices: "Teachers who report participating in professional development activities involving individual and collaborative research, observation visits to other schools, or a network of teachers are also more likely to use active teaching practices, such as small group work, projects requiring more than a week for students to complete and information and computer technology (ICT)."^{xlv}

The Working Group consider that professional development embracing practice-oriented enquiry should be embedded from the ITE phase onwards. This expectation is realistic, especially where trends towards Master's level work are becoming a significant element of ITE.

Previously the Working Group has identified appropriate support structures as one of the five perspectives to consider in policies for a 'continuum of the teaching profession'. This '*instrumental perspective*' will include different elements depending on the phase concerned (future teacher/beginning teacher/serving teacher), but it was stressed that "in all three phases, sources for learning come from *experience* (teaching and teaching practice), from *peers and other key stakeholders and providers* (in communities of practice and classroom observation) and from *theory*. Learning from theory is often limited in the teaching period after ITE. Theoretical ideas and research findings can help to build reflective teaching and this practice needs supporting. Career-long instruments, such as teacher portfolios, can help to strengthen the continuum of teaching."^{xlvi}

Box 20: Supporting reflective practice

In **Italy**, a professional portfolio for teachers during their induction period will provide documentary evidence of their professional development, working directly on the on-line platform hosted in the portal of the Ministry of Education and Research. The portfolio will help teachers reflect on their practice and their way of designing and implementing teaching, enabling each to identify and illustrate the fields of activity and professional skills through which to provide the greatest contribution to the school institution in which they work.

In **Steiner Waldorf** schools, collective child study is a deeply embedded method of learner assessment and curriculum development that supports teachers' in their reflective practice. The method is commonly practised at faculty meetings and often involves teachers, therapists, school doctors, and occasionally parents, to draw up an individual education plan comprising diagnosis, therapy and further monitoring.

In the **Netherlands**, a bursary system for teachers to participate in Master's programmes (*Lerarenbeurs*) aims to contribute to a profession with a stronger focus on professional development, attitudes of inquiry and the use of research in schools. The scheme gives every teacher the opportunity to apply for a study grant for Master's (or a second Bachelor's) qualification. The grant covers the study fee for the duration of the programme (two or three years) and replacement costs for one day a week. Since its launch in 2008, 40 000 teachers have participated. Research showed that the in-service Master's programmes contribute to a stronger inquiring attitude of teachers and an increasing number of action research activities take place in schools. Some of the teachers get the opportunity to remain involved in action research and inquiry projects within their schools after finishing their Master's programme. However, their number is still limited as school leaders encounter difficulties in finding time and money for this activity within their budgets.

The Working Group report also recommended that, "to achieve a creative and reflective teaching workforce, policies and actions should encourage student teachers and teachers to use and engage in new research in their learning and practice. While ITE lays the foundations for this, policy actions should foster innovative cultures in schools and ensure they have links with universities and other organisations that support research-informed development of teaching practices." The group also recommended the promotion of action research as a way of finding valid solutions to challenges in classroom practice "promoted by stakeholders as a means to strengthen collaborative learning environments within and between schools and with providers of ITE."

In a majority of European countries, central guidelines indicate that Initial Teacher Education programmes should develop future teachers' knowledge and skills relating to educational research.⁸ These recommendations apply to programmes at both Bachelor's and Master's level. In countries where there are no central guidelines, in practice, providers may still include these elements in their programmes.



Measures to consider include:

- **Encourage the principle of using a teacher portfolios** as a way of supporting reflective practice and professional development; the portfolios can be introduced through Initial Teacher Education, and be part of the induction process or a tool to support serving teachers in their Continuing Professional Development and self-assessment;
- **Support teachers in gaining research qualifications and conducting research**, for instance by recognising and encouraging research as part of professional development; through grants for research projects or qualifications (e.g. PhD);
- **Support reflective practice** to develop learner-centred teaching and assessment strategies;
- **Reward and stimulate innovation in teaching, and school practice more generally**, for instance through grants, awards;
- **Create partnerships between schools and higher education institutions**, focused on research, feedback loops between theory and practice (involving both teacher education providers and faculties of educational science);
- Ensure **ITE programmes**, especially at Master's level, put sufficient focus on enquiry-based learning, reflective practice, innovation and research;
- Instigate and develop training for **peer-mentoring**.

⁸ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/151EN.pdf

4.8 Professional competences, capacity and autonomy

Teachers and school leaders should be supported in their professional development, autonomy and growth in a continuum spanning all phases of their careers.

Teachers and school leaders should be trusted, supported and empowered as professionals who can be agents of change contributing to school development and who have the capacity to take responsibility and be accountable for the impact of their actions. In collaborative learning environments their competences and capacities, as well as their autonomy and accountability should be considered not just individually but also collectively, as part of professional teams.

Teaching is a highly complex task. It requires a broad set of competences, the ability to apply them flexibly in a wide range of situations, and the readiness to develop them continuously. Many countries recognise that for competences to be effective, teachers first need high quality preparation and then a high degree of professional autonomy both in their practice and professional development. Similarly, the professional development and autonomy of school leaders is increasingly a matter of policy attention. This autonomy is increasingly accompanied with accountability, including school evaluation, individual appraisal and considerations of (external) student assessment.

A continuum of teachers' professional development

A considerable body of research describes the formal mechanisms that support teachers in their professional development. Schemas are likely to elaborate on phases of Initial Teacher Education, Induction and then Continuing Professional Development. There is a risk that these phases fragment and so become disconnected from each other^{xlvii}. Supported by more thoughtful policy and coordination, phases will provide a framework that continues to nurture teachers as their career develops. The phases thereby form a continuum of teacher education or professional development^{xlviii, 9}. An identifiable continuum is important for teachers, as it reinforces the sense that there is pattern and structure to their careers, and that their professional development serves them individually as well as responding to the priorities for the school.

An approach to the creation of a continuum of professional development through a central Teaching Council is provided by **Ireland** (Box 21).

⁹ See introduction, Figure 2. For a detailed discussion on policies to support a continuum of the teaching profession see the final report of the ET2020 Working Group on Schools in European Commission (2015), *Shaping Career-long Perspectives on Teaching. A Guide on Policies to Improve Initial Teacher Education*.

Box 21: The Irish Teaching Council

In **Ireland**, a Teaching Council acts as the professional standards body for the teaching profession. The Council seeks to set and uphold high professional standards for teaching and teachers. Established in 2006, the Council has 37 members, 22 of whom are registered teachers. The Teaching Council ensures standards are upheld in the teaching profession by:

- setting the requirements for entry into teaching;
- maintaining a register of teachers who meet the Council registration requirements;
- establishing and monitoring standards for all phases of teacher education;
- developing and promoting a code of professional conduct; and
- investigating complaints regarding the fitness to teach of registered teachers.

Emphasising the local perspective in which schools operate may require some modification to conventional models of professional development in its different phases.

Initial Teacher Education

A few education systems, such as **United Kingdom(England)**, are moving towards school-centred or school-led Initial Teacher Education. Such decentralised arrangements are conceptually closer aligned with the school as learning organisation, but are associated with risks in ensuring high and consistent quality when apprenticeship models of teacher training dominate.

The majority of countries, where ITE is firmly rooted in higher education, are making efforts to reinforce school practice within ITE programmes and to strengthen partnerships between ITE providers such as universities or colleges of teacher education on the one hand and schools on the other. These partnerships can manifest themselves, for instance, in networks of practice schools. These approaches are consistent with the concept of the school as a learning organisation, by linking theory with practice and by involving experienced practitioners as teacher educators (see examples in Box 22).

Box 22: School-university partnerships

In the **Netherlands**, the Ministry of Education is stimulating and supporting close partnerships between universities and schools. The aim of these partnerships is to improve student teachers' workplace learning and to create shared responsibility for teacher education curricula.

Since 2005, the Ministry has supported these partnerships through specific subsidies to schools, and quality criteria have been developed that are now part of accreditation criteria for teacher education programmes. Within the partner schools, school based teacher educators have been trained, increasing both expertise on and awareness of teacher learning within the partner schools. In the partner schools, the support of newly qualified teachers through

induction programmes and the continuum of teacher development have also been strengthened.

In 2017, there are 92 schools involved in these partnerships with universities. The national representations of school boards of primary education, secondary education and the universities have jointly created a national support centre where experiences and outcomes of evaluations and research are shared through publications and networking conferences (www.steunpuntopleidingsscholen.nl).

In **Italy**, a legislative decree regarding Initial Teacher Education for secondary level teachers was approved in April 2017. These teachers will be required to pass an open competition in order to enrol in a one-year university specialisation course which will be followed by a two-year traineeship period during which they will gradually take on roles related to the teaching profession while reflecting on their practice through university tutoring. At the end of the three years, if they pass the assessment they are employed permanently. In this way theory is linked with practice and effective partnerships between universities and schools are established.

Induction for beginning teachers

Induction, where it is available to teachers, is mostly school-based. It may combine an introduction to the profession with that to the working methods and culture at a particular school. Besides raising the quality of teaching and helping new teachers through potentially difficult beginnings, induction programmes can also support professionalism in schools. This process will work best if newcomers are integrated into a culture that is open to new ideas and inspiration (note that this is intended as induction, not assimilation) and allows beginning teachers to be agents of change too. Recommendations for induction systems have been prepared on the basis of European peer learning activities (Box 23).

Box 23: Policy handbook on induction programmes for beginning teachers

Policy guidance developed at European level has suggested that any induction system should meet beginning teachers' needs for three basic kinds of support: personal, social and professional. In the policy handbook entitled '*Developing coherent and system-wide induction programmes for beginning teachers: a handbook for policymakers*', a structure is proposed based on four interlocking sub-systems: mentoring, expert inputs, peer support and self-reflection.¹⁰

¹⁰ European Commission (2010), *Developing coherent and system-wide induction programmes for beginning teachers: a handbook for policymakers*, SWD (2010) 538 final. The document is based on the work of the Peer Learning Cluster 'Teacher and Trainers', a Commission expert group with representatives from European countries: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/handbook0410_en.pdf [available in English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish]

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): accessible, needs based, collaborative

For schools to develop as learning organisations all teachers, not just the newcomers to the profession, need to have the opportunity, and be ready, to engage in the professional development they need. Defining professional development as a duty and ring-fencing these activities within the teachers' contracted working hours can help increase the uptake of CPD. Some countries support teachers in pursuing additional studies or qualifications (Box 24).

Box 24: Supporting teacher's professional development through diverse approaches

Norway has a strategy for credit bearing continuing education for teachers, first launched in 2009. Its aim is to increase the teacher's professional and didactic competence, in order to strengthen students' learning. This arrangement is a joint effort for which partners meet regularly to discuss the ongoing work and to adjust and give priorities. National education authorities distribute financial means, and are responsible for reporting, evaluation and coordination. The universities and university colleges develop practice-oriented educational programmes. The employee and employer associations inform and motivate their members to participate.

Teachers apply to participate after consulting with the school leader. The school owner/provider approves the application and has the final decision about participation. Teachers are released from some of their ordinary duties, but keep their salary during the training. National authorities finance 60 per cent of the cost of a substitute teacher for most subjects. School owners cover 15 per cent of the costs for substitute teachers. Teachers contribute by using some private time to study.

An additional grant scheme was introduced in 2015. Teachers apply for a grant to enrol in studies. The teachers study in their private time. The scheme can thereby give both teachers and schools more freedom to organise participation as it suits them best, also reducing the need for substitute teachers. The government is still evaluating the scheme, but preliminary findings suggest that teachers find it challenging to combine studies with a full time job. There has been an increased focus on the collective aspects of continuing education. To enhance student learning schools have to function as professional organisations. More information (Norwegian): <https://www.udir.no/kvalitet-og-kompetanse/etter-og-videreutdanning/larere/>

In **Latvia**, teachers and school leaders are required to undergo at least 36 hours of professional development every 3 years. Courses are offered in the form of "A" and "B" programmes, and since 2014 there has been state support for the participation in such programmes.

The shorter, A programme courses, are designed to cover specific needs (e.g. pedagogical knowledge, use of new technologies) and are offered and implemented by various state and non-state providers, in co-ordination with the local government and often also with the teachers' methodological associations.

The B programme courses are designed to broaden teachers' specialisations through longer professional development programmes, provided by universities, leading to qualifications in a second subject or education level. From 2017, additional support from state funding for implementation of teacher education courses is provided for gymnasiums and special education institutions to share the professional experience.

In order to support new pathways into teaching, the government in 2014 amended the regulations on teacher education and professional qualification requirements, giving professionals and graduates of other higher education programmes the opportunity to join the teaching profession through a competitive programme called "Mission Possible".

In **Malta**, teachers can receive scholarships for further studies at Masters and PhD level. Within the past decade a number of initiatives (e.g. STEPS, Master IT, Endeavours) funded through EU funds, have encouraged teachers to continue to widen and deepen their theoretical perspectives by undertaking higher studies at Masters and PhD level, either at local accredited institutions or abroad. The response was positive, and many have successfully graduated either at Masters or PhD level thanks to this support. To make it easier for those who opt to continue with their higher studies, all teaching grades are now entitled to a sabbatical of one year to finish their studies.

Ensuring there are relevant and accessible opportunities available is a further consideration. The approach adopted requires a clear analysis of demands and the setting of priorities for professional development to avoid the mismatches witnessed in some countries.¹¹

In many countries schools and teachers are required to define their learning needs in development plans that link individual goals with those of the school and, possibly, the education system, for example to accompany major curricular reforms. It is important that by recognising teachers' interests and by building on their existing strengths, a deficit model can be avoided.

Box 25: CPD programmes to tackle national priority themes

In **Sweden**, *Matematiklyftet* ("Boost for Mathematics") is a large-scale CPD programme seeking to help mathematics teachers develop their practice, focusing on pedagogical content knowledge. The initiative combines collaborative learning among colleagues with support from an external tutor (advisor) and web-based material. Over the course of one year, teachers participate during their working hours in cycles of activities, including individual study, discussions with colleagues and practical application in the classroom. The initiative is part of the national school development programmes, delivered by the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), alongside other professional development programmes on reading literacy, digital education and special needs education. Boost for Mathematics makes available

¹¹ The TALIS survey identified a mismatch between the topics teachers identified as their most urgent needs for professional development and the topics of the CPD in which they are engaged.

state grants to stimulate participation in the training of supervisors and CPD for teachers, all building on collaborative learning. Designed to reach all schools in **Sweden**, and with a funding volume of €75m, the programme has seen the participation of more than 35 000 teachers (i.e. 8 out of 10 math teachers in Sweden) during 2012-2016. In addition, almost 1 700 tutors have been educated through the initiative, and close to 3 000 school leaders have taken part in a training.

In **Belgium(Flanders)**, every two years, the central government authorities decide on a number of themes for CPD projects that are needed to support the implementation of educational reforms. The training projects selected are then offered to schools free of charge. Intended initially for a small team of a school's teaching staff, courses last one year (with the possibility of an extension for one year to involve additional support from their pedagogical counselling service). Following this phase, participants are expected to transfer their newly gained expertise to their local school context, sharing with colleagues at their school.

In the **Czech Republic**, a project supported through the European Social Fund aims to support teachers in developing reading literacy, mathematical literacy and digital literacy and computational thinking (basic literacies) across curricula. The project covers both pre-schools and basic schools, and encourages reflective and collaborative practice. It also aims to foster a mutual view of quality in education across the school board and other relevant stakeholders.

The essential objective of CPD must be to create a lasting impact on student learning through improved teaching practice. This process requires sustained and targeted investment. By definition, learning organisations take great care that the positive impact of staff learning extends beyond the individual teacher and ultimately benefits the entire school and its development. Setting these priorities makes the case for collegial, school-based CPD, if not to replace then at least to complement traditional formats such as training courses or seminars away from school. Digital technologies and open education offer new opportunities for collaborative learning, professional learning communities or networks. The adoption of school-based CPD can have economic benefits as well as a positive impact on pedagogy (Box 26).

Box 26: Developing school-based approaches to professional development:

In **Greece**, CPD has been seriously affected by the economic crisis. Fiscal consolidation has diminished the budget for professional development of both teachers and school leaders. Previous major government initiatives on CPD had been discontinued due to the lack of funding. Now, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Institute of Education Policy are developing plans for a new CPD system that is sustainable, cost-effective and state-of-the-art, and that combines top-down and bottom-up initiatives for teachers' and school leaders' development and improvement. The aims are to establish a new culture of professional development that will also support the democratic organisation of schools ("school units"). One feature of the new system will be to promote the immediate use of teachers' new knowledge and skills in the education process. CPD will be offered using blended learning methods and by

organising teachers into communities of learning and practice, mentored and supported by certified teacher educators. It will use common principles and procedures for the development of the training material, organisation, delivery and certification of training. It will be using a CPD platform/learning management system that will ensure optimum use of digital resources, interoperability of existing platforms and repositories, and visibility and choice of training opportunities.

In **Belgium(Flanders)**, schools and teaching staff are supported by pedagogical counselling services, which are set up by the educational umbrella organisations and funded by the Government. A decree sets out the tasks of Pedagogical counselling services, some of which specifically aim to support schools in becoming professional learning organisations, among other means by:

- promoting the establishment of networks and providing support to these networks;
- supporting and training managerial staff;
- supporting the professional competence of members of staff at school and cross-school level by focussing on beginning staff and staff charged with specific tasks in particular;
- reinforcing the policy powers of schools;
- supporting quality assurance within schools.

In **Cyprus**, teachers and school leaders have the primary responsibility for the implementation of the educational goals determined by the state and the educational authorities. Recent policies have aimed at further enhancing the pedagogical and administrative autonomy of schools; the Education Ministry has asked every school to set its own annual priorities for improvement according to its own annual action plan. This arrangement includes the annual planning of teachers' professional development.



Measures to consider include:

- Support a continuum of teacher education through **dialogue and partnerships between providers/teacher educators, school leaders, school owners/authorities** representing all phases of teacher education
- **Clarify the definition of CPD for school staff**, with a preference for a broad, open and inclusive concept that is operational at the same time (including formal, informal and non-formal forms of professional learning)
- **Consider making CPD an obligation/explicit duty**, and allocating working time to it

- **Align priorities with real needs at different levels** (teachers' individual learning needs, school level needs, system level needs) and **review systems of priority setting** if needed (at which level, by whom)
- **Encourage professional development cultures at school:** this may include reviewing decision-making on priorities and funding allocation; the use of CPD plans by schools/individual teachers; links to teacher appraisal
- **Support self-regulation of the profession** (e.g. through a teaching council or consultation processes)

4.9 Leadership competence

Systems should provide opportunities for school leaders and teachers to develop leadership competences that support their strategic thinking, planning and implementation.

Teachers and school leaders should be inspiring and be able to set priorities for self and others. They should be able, and enabled, to identify their own needs and opportunities for professional development, and to lead others in reflective practice as part of the process of change.

What is required of school leadership?

The Working Group understand that school leadership should be much more than management. The head, or principal, should be someone with vision for the school, who has both the competence and the charisma to support its staff. Accordingly, he or she should combine attributes of leader, manager, entrepreneur, and coach. The head should be involved in leading teaching and learning; fostering leadership capacity within the school; managing organisation; and leading school development. It was considered important for leaders to listen, and to have dialogue with teachers and other stakeholders. There should be space and time for the leader to initiate and supervise innovation and carefully judged risk-taking.

Defining and describing leadership roles

It is important to define the role of school leader at national level, and describe it. A quality or competence framework might be helpful for this purpose (see also 3.7). Members accepted that some desirable abilities – such as empathy, self-control open-mindedness and some social skills, including communication – are not easy to measure. Nevertheless, these qualities may be important for success. **Greece** has already adjusted its approach to the selection of school leaders in recognition of these abilities (Box 27).

Box 27: Assessment of candidates for school leadership posts

In **Greece**, recent changes to the selection of school leaders see the introduction of interviews to test the candidates' 'personality and general background and their contribution to the education process'. This aspect of candidates' suitability was previously assessed by secret ballot of the assembly of school teachers. Interviews will be conducted by Regional Service Councils of Primary/Secondary Education and will take into consideration the opinion of the teachers' assembly as expressed through responses to a structured questionnaire provided by the Ministry.

Supporting school leaders

The role of school leader should be appreciated, and supported, in reciprocal relationships with staff, the educational system as a whole, parents and the local community and other stakeholders. There should be arrangements in place to ensure the developmental needs of school leaders are met. There have been moves in some jurisdictions to appoint school leaders from outside the education system, such that they have, already, management and leadership skills. It may remain more common for school leaders to have developed an understanding of how schools work through their own background in teaching. However, even for the latter route to leadership, it is worth keeping in mind that, in preparing teachers for the start of their career, ITE does not usually allocate much time to consideration of leadership. Consequently, it is probable that any move to school leadership will require tailored input and guidance to overcome deficits as the individual moves on to the next stage in his or her career in education.

Box 28: Norway's national strategy towards leadership education

In **Norway**, the Ministry of Education and Research founded a national leadership education in 2009. The national programme is organised by the Directorate of Education and Training, and is provided by six higher education institutions. Every year approximately 500 principals and other school leaders participate in the programme, which is funded by the national government.

The Ministry had given the Directorate the task of defining the requirements and expectations regarding an education provision for school leaders in lower and upper secondary schools, whilst conducting a tender for a national education provision. It was pointed out that input should be related to practice, and that it could be part of a more extensive Master's programme within education or school management. The programme, provided through a series of workshops, should correspond to 30 credits within the university/university college system, and have duration of eighteen months to two years.

In terms of content, the various programme providers had a certain amount of autonomy in how the programme could be organised. However, it was a requirement that the input was

related to 1) students' learning results and learning environment; 2) management and administration; 3) cooperation and organizational development; and 4) development and change, and that these should be reflected in the provisions. Increased confidence in the leadership role was a central aim of the scheme.

The participants experienced high pedagogic and didactical quality in the provision, and they rated the relevance of the programme as very good. When asked whether their initial expectations of the programme had been met, a large majority agreed. Another finding was that the capacity of the participants to change and develop as leaders had been strengthened as a result of the programme. The participants reported that they were more capable of undertaking a number of key leadership tasks after completing the programme, although the increase reported was relatively small. When asked whether the culture for learning in their own school had changed as a result of the programme, the participants reported a significant, though small, positive change.

Link to evaluation:

https://www.udir.no/contentassets/d973e55c8ab04dfd82eb0f91878f4de4/lede_final_report.pdf

Other countries have set up a national support body to raise the quality in school leadership across the system, in the form of a leadership academy (**Austria**) and a centre for school leadership (**Ireland**) (Box 29).

Box 29: National support bodies for school leadership

In **Austria**, the Leadership Academy is the national forum for continuing education at an executive level in schools. It offers innovation training for head teachers as well as for education management personnel from all types of educational institution. The Academy is based on an understanding of leadership that focuses on dialogue and providing excellent education and personal formation (Leadership for Learning). Leadership is regarded as the capacity to promote the quality of education on offer and to show initiative, creativity, courage, conviction, persuasiveness and confidence in the capacity for innovation already present in the system. The Leadership Academy (LEA) holds four three-day fora each year. At every forum, participants reach a new milestone on the way to membership of the Academy. Successful graduation and admission to membership of the Academy is decided on during the certification process at the fourth forum. The LEA course includes: Plenum meetings with motivational impulse lectures (full assembly); Workshops in collegial coaching groups; reflection on innovation and development of project ideas (groups of six); Learning partnership sessions for the exchange of ideas and collegial brainstorming; Workshops in regional groups (Federal State) for regional net-working and for the presentation and exchange of ideas. The Academy began in November 2004 with 300 participants. The fourteenth generation starts in October 2017 and contributes to the creation of a large-scale LEA Membership Network, which links all the educational

institutions in **Austria**. So far almost 3,000 professional educators have participated in the Leadership Academy. To learn more: <https://www.leadershipacademy.at/>

In **Ireland**, a Centre for School Leadership (CSL) has been established on a partnership basis between the Department of Education and Skills and the associations representing the country's school leaders in primary and secondary education. This move aims to facilitate the development of a coherent continuum of professional development for school leaders. It is the shared objective that the Centre will become a centre of excellence for school leadership and the lead provider of supports. The CSL's responsibility will extend across the continuum of leadership development commencing with pre- appointment training through to induction of newly appointed principals to Continuous Professional Development throughout the leader's career. The Centre will also advise the Department on policy in this area. During the initial phase, the Centre will have a particular focus on the needs of newly appointed principals and experienced principals experiencing professional difficulty and/or challenging situations. To learn more: <http://www.cslireland.ie>

Some countries recognise that just like teachers, beginning school leaders may experience a 'culture shock' when first confronted with the complexity and challenges of their new position. Examples from **Estonia** and **Slovenia** show how mentoring programmes can support novice school leaders (Box 30).

Box 30: Mentoring programmes for novice school leaders

In 2014, **Estonia** started a national professional training programme, designed to create a pool of mentors whose expertise is channelled to support newly appointed school leaders. The objective of the programme is twofold: to provide high-quality mentoring support to these school leaders and to promote internal mentoring systems at the mentors' own schools. There is a public competitive process to apply for the mentoring position. Applicants must have at least five years' experience and demonstrate very high motivation. The training for mentors is carried out by a private company in cooperation with Innove, a non-profit foundation governed by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research. Training for mentors includes communication, needs analysis, coaching and feedback skills.

There is a special development programme to support the new principals during their first two years in the new position. It consists of eight two-day seminars, visits to schools, in **Estonia** and abroad, and meetings with experts and practitioners.

Mentoring is a major component of the programme. All participants are assigned a mentor who has graduated from the national mentoring programme. Mentors and mentees are matched according to the mentees needs. They are both prepared for the cooperation and jointly determine an individualised agenda. The mentor is supposed to act as a critical friend to the principal and uses coaching skills. Mentor and mentee meet at least once a month and have

additional sessions via e-mail, phone etc. Mentors' expenses are covered and work remunerated.

At least once a year mentors in the national pool meet to discuss their experiences and receive additional training. During the first two years, the programme has offered mentors to 32 principals. The feedback shows that the relationship has been mutually beneficial.

In **Slovenia**, there is a specialised one-year mentoring programme for newly appointed school leaders. The National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE) coordinates the programme, and an experienced mentor accompanies each newly appointed school principal. The programme is a combination of face-to-face meetings and workshops where all participants and their mentors meet.

Distributed leadership

Effective school leadership cannot be limited to one individual or a small management team. Distributed leadership has proven beneficial for schools as places of learning and places of work for staff. The school as a learning organisation is based on the idea that "leadership is the essential ingredient that binds all of the separate parts of the learning organisation together". It is also closely linked with the idea that leadership roles should be distributed across a wider team of professionals, and also including learners.

MODELLING AND GROWING LEARNING LEADERSHIP

- School leaders model learning leadership, distribute leadership and help grow other leaders, including students
- School leaders are proactive and creative change agents
- School leaders develop the culture, structures and conditions to facilitate professional dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange
- School leaders ensure that the organisation's actions are consistent with its vision, goals and values
- School leaders ensure the school is characterised by a 'rhythm' of learning, change and innovation
- School leaders promote and participate in strong collaboration with other schools, parents, the community, higher education institutions and other partners
- School leaders ensure an integrated approach to responding to students' learning and other needs

Source: OECD (2016): *What makes a school a learning organisation? A guide for policy-makers, school leaders and teachers.* ^{xlix}

Box 31: Initiatives to strengthen teacher leadership

Since 2008, teachers in the **Netherlands** have been able to enrol on a Master's programme focusing on learning and innovation. This programme specifically aims to develop competences for teacher leadership in schools.

The support programme of the Dutch Teacher Development Fund (see the policy example in section 4.7) explicitly aims at strengthening teachers' leadership competences through coaching and peer networks. The support programme aims to increase teachers' agency in implementing change within their schools and engaging their colleagues and school leader in this process.

A review of policies across Europe found that while school leadership was shared to some extent in the majority of countries, this mostly concerned formal leadership teams and rarely involved innovative approaches¹.

For distributed leadership to work in practice teachers' leadership competences come into focus, in which case there is a strong argument for input on school leadership contributing to CPD programmes for all teachers. Under arrangements for distributed leadership, CPD on this theme would have relevance across all staff. The European Policy Network on School Leadership provides useful resources and tools in this area, including a toolkit for policy-makers and practitioners.¹²



Measures to consider include:

- **Create transparency on the competences required from school leaders**, for instance through competence frameworks or standards
- **Ensure transparency and common understanding on the leadership competences of teachers** (at different stages of their career)
- **Review teacher education**, including ITE programmes and CPD available to ensure it addresses leadership competences
- **Promote forms of distributive leadership with broad involvement of staff at school**

¹² <http://toolkit.schoolleadership.eu/>

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European
Commission



Networks for learning and development across school education

Guiding principles for policy development on the use of networks in school education systems

Produced by the ET2020 Working Group Schools

Education
and Training

Networks for learning and development across school education

Output of the ET2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18

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1. About

ET2020 Working Group on Schools

Under its current mandate, the ET2020 Working Group on Schools¹ examined successful and emerging, or potential new, policy developments in Member States. These concern the governance of school education systems that can support and improve quality, inclusion and innovation. They focused on the capacity for systemic change in the four key interlinked areas: 1) quality assurance for school development; 2) continuity and transitions for learner development; 3) teachers and school leaders; and 4) networks.

Networks

Education systems are becoming increasingly complex in the context of globalisation and digitalisation on the one hand, and decentralisation and school autonomy on the other. There is a keen interest in networks as a tool for better connectivity between stakeholders within and between different levels of the system to achieve defined educational goals and greater equity, efficiency and quality. Furthermore, networks can serve as an environment to explore and pilot new policies, pedagogical ideas and working methods. They can be permanent structures, or function as temporary ‘experimental’ stages in policy development; formally or informally constituted; centrally managed and directed, or operating on the basis of consensual decision-making across multiple stakeholders. A priority for the ET2020 Working Group Schools was to establish when and how best to harness the potential of networks within different educational contexts, and to understand the potential benefits and challenges of doing so, drawing upon examples from across Europe.

This report

This report sets out guiding principles for policy development within a context of recent research and developments in this area of school education. These principles are further illustrated with specific examples from countries, which are shared and discussed by members of the Working Group to consider how different types of networks they have been put into practice, and with what results.

The content comes from a series of meetings held in Brussels, research (member self-reporting) exercise, and a Peer Learning Activity. There are 12 case study examples, as presented by countries and organisations at the Peer Learning Activity. The report was compiled and edited by Laurie Day (Ecorys) and Hannah Grainger Clemson (European Commission) in October 2017, with contributions from Jonathan Allen (Consultant) and Janet Looney (EIESP), and review and validation by members.

¹ Representatives from all Member States, EFTA and Candidate countries, plus social partners and stakeholder organisations.

2. Guiding Principles

2.1 About the principles

The statements – or ‘Guiding Principles’ - highlight the key policy messages regarding networks in school education as developed by the ET2020 Working Group Schools (2016-18). They are based on recent research, policy experiences and peer learning processes. They provide a frame for the sharing and analysis of recent developments in countries, as discussed and reported by Working Group members.

2.2 Fundamental values

Networks are a way for different actors and levels of school education systems - policy makers, schools, school education leaders, teachers and a range of stakeholders - to promote and support school development and to address and potentially solve problems concerning the education of young people in collaborative and flexible ways.

Understanding how these professional networks function, and identifying the important elements to consider, can help to better realise network goals, identify opportunities for networking across school education systems, and contribute to a broad and embedded culture of learning. This culture values – and is dependent on – trust and motivation, as well as confidence, communication, collaboration, and critical (self)reflection. At school level, in particular, it depends on having satisfactory conditions and status for teachers and an acknowledgement of the demanding nature of teaching.

Networks should not exist for their own sake: they depend on mutualism and action driven towards shared goals. They can create co-responsibility and shared accountability. It is important to use evidence for creation and development; even to consider the same goal could have been achieved more effectively through alternative means. The learning needs to be followed by action, leading to further learning.

"A learning network demands an open learning attitude"

Statement from the Peer Learning Activity held in Belgrade, Serbia (September 2017)

This publication contains many images. Some relate directly to the case study examples. Others have been used as inspiration during the process as the Working Group developed their ideas and understanding of networks.

2.3 Guiding principles for policy development on the use of networks in school education systems

1. GOAL-SETTING AND SHARED GOALS: a shared vision is needed to inspire the cooperation of different actors, in the interest of school development. Clear shared goals should be defined the first stage in network development, in order to engage the appropriate actors in an appropriate structure. Goals may be redefined as the network evolves.

2. AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY & FLEXIBILITY: attention should be paid to the decision-making capacity of different actors and their sense of agency and responsibility. Flexibility within policies may encouraged increased activity. Self-assessment - may help identify or motivate new network actors; help existing members identify their own needs; and contribute to network development with an increased sense of ownership.

3. MOTIVATION & BENEFITS: an open and supportive environment supports inter-school and inter-professional exchanges. The interests of different actors should be balanced within and between different system levels, as friction and competition between schools or other actors can undermine the cohesiveness of networks. It is important to demonstrate that the inputs (in time or resources) are proportionate to the outputs.

4. ROLES: Cooperation between teachers as key actors should be supported by: a) providing time for dedicated activities, b) assuring recognition; c) giving them a voice, and d) assuring a climate of trust. Actors should be aware of their role as networking activity may be different to their daily professional tasks. Effective distribution of leadership is particularly important.

5. CAPACITY-BUILDING: teacher collaborative competence should be developed through ITE and CPD. There should be both horizontal and vertical cooperation, taking care not to overload particular actors. Mediators between network points may need specific support.

6. CROSS-SECTORAL WORKING: action should identify points of shared interest and align policy development cycles of different areas. Evidence-based policymaking and practice requires connections with and between teacher-led experimentation, and expert pedagogical research.

7. NETWORK DEVELOPMENT: networks should be flexible. They may be temporary or longer term, and may exist as an initial phase in establishing and embedding a culture of collaboration. They may also make lasting connections of which project activity may be one part; guided by the actors. Managing or acting within networks can inform decisions about distribution of resources.

8. IMPACT, QUALITY ASSURANCE & EVIDENCE: Monitoring and evaluation is central to understanding the effectiveness of networks and self-reflection is key to ongoing development. Network developers should consider how progress and outcomes will be measured, define key indicators, and to decide how and by whom they will be measured. Appropriate data generated by networks should be taken into account at local and national levels of decision-making.

3. Networks within and for a culture of learning: an introduction

3.1 Policy context

Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training, one of the ET2020 goals², remains an ongoing concern for Member States. Policies need to reach all aspects of the school education system and, whilst ministries traditionally act as the central or highest point in the hierarchy, many systems are becoming increasingly decentralised. Even countries with a highly centralised system reveal some desire to give more autonomy to actors at regional and local levels as a way of more effectively and quickly implementing policies and instigating necessary changes depending on the local context.

There is an increased value placed on synergies, communication and collaboration within and between schools and between different elements of the school education system as a whole. This value is underpinned by an assumption that working together is more effective for all than working individually (even if the goals and methods are the same or similar) because of the opportunity to build on the knowledge and experience of others in a 'learning culture'. When the EU and Member States are being asked to intensify efforts to improve their education and training systemsⁱ, such a cultural shift can be crucial in supporting development and innovation. This is i) because innovations evolve more quickly and effectively with more and different actors involved in the testing and improving of new approaches; and ii) because of the increased capacity of actors and approaches to adapt and evolve in changing contexts as a result of shared goals, knowledge and skills. Communication and collaboration are key features of a 'professional culture' where actors are both trusted and motivated to take a role in those decision-making processes and actions, which includes self-evaluation and self-improvement.

'Networks' are playing both a structural and cultural role in these contemporary approaches to policy-making processes within often complex systemsⁱⁱ. If a professional learning culture with increased *autonomy* wants to thrive, these actors need connecting vertically and horizontally in a way that they are both motivated and have the capacity to share, learn and make changes. Nevertheless, *accountability*, together with notions of 'measurement' and 'effectiveness', are tricky aspects to discuss and define when talking about 'cultures' that are inherently dependent on complex, shifting and social behaviours.

The recent Communication on 'School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life' highlights that cooperation helps schools to enrich learning experiences and outcomes and better support young people in developing the competences they needⁱⁱⁱ. The Working Group members recognise that networks require, but might also ignite, an important cultural shift towards 'co-creating' in school education development, rather than waiting for change to happen. A significant cultural shift is unlikely to be immediately widespread but the belief is that networks as one approach can be beneficial. Effective networking for quality and improvement in school education requires a deep understanding by policy makers of the

² See http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

purpose and nature of networks in order to adequately support their development and often be part of the network activity themselves. There are many identifiable barriers to the necessary conditions needed for networks to be able to function – at all levels of the system - and work towards their goals with a clear understanding, internal to each network, of the added value. Exploring solutions to overcome these barriers and improve the effectiveness of networks is the focus of this report.

3.2 What do we mean by networks?

A review of theoretical literature led to networks being understood in the following ways:

1. At their most basic, a network is group or system of interconnected people or things. It is the established *connections* between them that maintain the network. Analysing a network, such as from a policy perspective, can be usefully based on examining these relationships.
2. Networks exchange knowledge, skills and resources, between points for the *mutual benefit of all* of the actors, although the activity carried out by actors might be different (e.g. the work of teachers and policy makers). Networks may bring together stakeholders from different sectors or different levels of the education system, drawing on their collective intelligence.
3. Networks are alliances working *towards a particular common or shared goal(s)*. Therefore they may seek to change the status quo, including the performance or quality of other actors (e.g. supporting schools facing particular challenges). The goals may be redefined after some time as the network provides a way for synergies to develop and new ideas and innovative practices to emerge.

Networks can be distinguished from **clusters** and **partnerships**:

NETWORKS	CLUSTERS	PARTNERSHIPS
Established <i>connections</i> and <i>relationships</i> between points maintain the network	Groups of people or things (e.g. schools) operating in a similar geographical area (e.g. a town) or field of work (e.g. special educational needs)	Two or more actors make an agreement to share knowledge, skills or resources, possibly during a period of joint activity.
<i>Collective intelligence:</i> exchange knowledge, as well as skills and resources, between points for the <i>mutual benefit of all</i>	Actors may share knowledge or resources	
Alliances working towards a particular <i>common or shared goal(s)</i>	Not necessarily working towards a shared goal or have established connections between actors	

Networks are not merely static structures, but are defined communities and dynamic entities where activity is driven towards particular goals and organically evolves. Networks should ideally take goal-setting as the starting point to inform the process and the supporting structure, although sometimes the process or structure are first to be defined. Each should be reviewed and adjusted as a cycle (below):

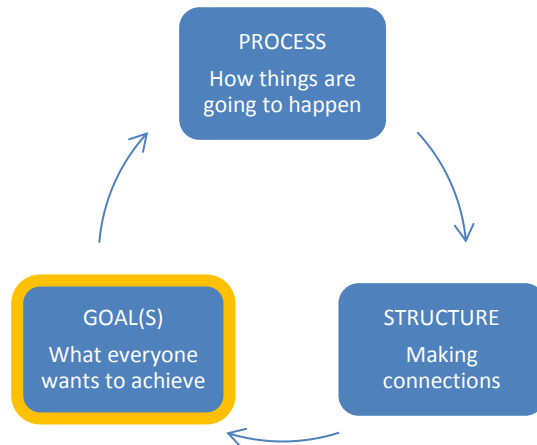


Figure left created for Peer Learning Activity

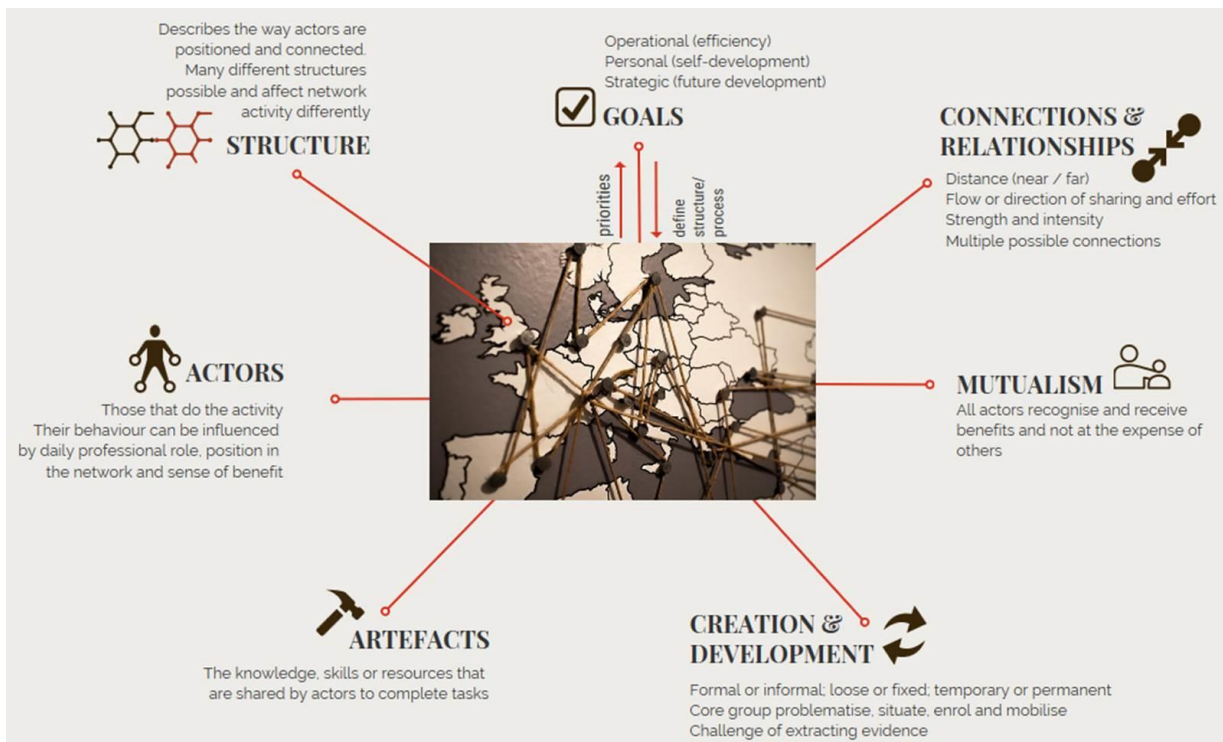


Figure above created for Peer Learning Activity

The main elements when analysing networks, drawn from various theoretical models, are:

GOALS: these are shared between the network actors and are the desired outcomes of the activity. Identifying goals sets the priorities for action but also suggests a necessary structure. Goals can be operational (achieving efficiency), personal (about self-development of the actor),

or strategic (future development of the organisation or system). Goals are a way of operationalising work towards a shared outcome or 'vision', which unites the actors in their values of what they are striving for.

ACTORS: these carry out the network activity. Their behaviour can be influenced by their professional role (i.e. in their daily context), their positioning in the network (including whether they are clustered with others), their relationships (connections) to other actors, and their sense of benefit.

CONNECTIONS & RELATIONSHIPS: these are the structural links and functioning relationships between actors. They may be different distances and strengths or intensities. They may allow artefacts to flow in one or both directions. There may be more than one connection between two actors.

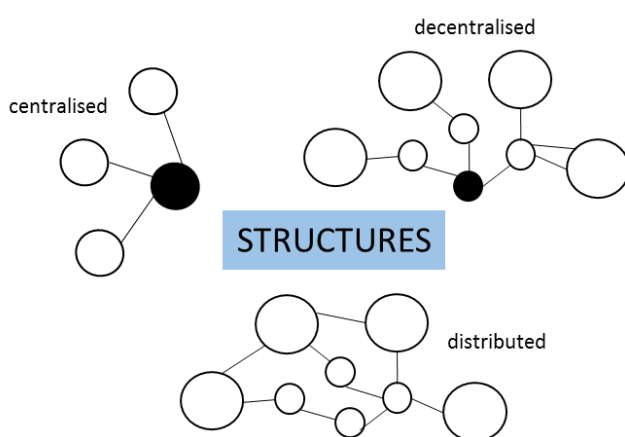
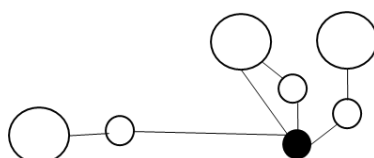


Image developed for Peer Learning Activity

STRUCTURE: this describes the way the actors positioned and connected in relation to each other across the whole network. There are many different structures that mean control, information flow and the capacity to instigate change happen differently, for example: centralised, decentralised, distributed, linear, tree, and so on.

- 'Closeness' of points or actors identifies where information could be quickly relayed to others
- 'Betweenness' refers to the power of an actor to make the link between different disconnected groups



ARTEFACTS: artefacts are the things that are shared across the network in order to undertake the activity and achieve goals. These can be knowledge, skills and/or resources.

CREATION and DEVELOPMENT: Networks may be informal and become formalised (within a system); they may be loose (in their connections) and become more fixed; static or fluid. Often in creation a core group will problematize a situation and position themselves in relation to it. These actors will then enrol others to the network and mobilise it. Networks may be temporary or develop organically into another type. In both cases there is a challenge to extract evidence from the network activity to assess its performance and identify future goals and any changes.

MUTUALISM: Network cohesion and functioning depends on all actors recognising the value of being part of it. All actors benefit but not at the expense of the benefit of any others.

3.3 Research evidence of networks in school education systems

Over the past several decades, a significant body of literature on networks has emerged, addressing both conceptual issues and evidence of their impact. These include three strands of research relevant for education including: social network analysis, policy change and political science networks, and public management networks^{iv3}. This typology offers varying perspectives from which to consider networks; a single network might be analysed from one or more of these different viewpoints.

- **Research on social networks** explores aspects such as the nature of relationships within networks, information diffusion and communication across networks. Research on teacher social networks (both face-to-face and virtual) has grown considerably with the advent of social media. The emergence of social networks in education has been seen as particularly important because of the isolated nature of traditional classroom-based teaching, limiting opportunities for mutual learning and adaptation^v.
- **Political science networks** research explores networks focused on policy change and agenda setting; their impact on collective action and policy outcomes; policy innovation (i.e., how networks promote innovation and diffusion)^{vi}. More recent research in the political science tradition has focused on how collaborative and participatory networks support knowledge development and innovation.
- **Public management networks** research explores the structural features of networks and their impact on outcomes and cost efficiencies. This area of research has become more important with the current trend towards decentralisation of education systems in Europe, as pressures on resources increase, as reflected in the ongoing OECD School Resources Review (SRR).

³ These different theories have different roots, with sociological analysis beginning in the 1930s, political science literature in the early 1980s, and public management literature in the mid-1980s. They rely on different research methods, different assumptions about human motivation, and highlight different research questions. At the same time, greater cross-fertilisation across these strands may further enrich each area.

3.4 Why strengthen the role of networks in school education systems?

Based on the previous thematic work, the Working Group approached the topic with a common understanding of the importance of networks for efficiency, effectiveness and innovation and that:

- collaborative networks, whether online or face-to-face, enable innovations to evolve more quickly and are more effective as more people are involved in testing and improving new approaches given that diverse views help collaborators to move beyond paradigms and worldviews of a particular community^{vii};
- networks may also support a more efficient allocation of resources across school systems.

In complex school education systems, networks may be seen as an effective and efficient approach to:

- support horizontal decision-making
- solve complex problems
- share responsibilities
- create synergies between stakeholders
- promote knowledge-sharing and the dissemination of practice;
- enable innovations to evolve more quickly;
- enhance the professional development of teachers;
- support capacity-building in schools;
- optimise the use of time and resources;
- mediate between different levels of the system.

As highlighted above (3.3), social networks, networks focussed on policy change and innovation, and public management networks are established with varying goals in mind. Their scale and organisation also vary. Because school education networks are heavily dependent on the interaction between educators, they can offer deeper, more meaningful and relevant interactions although these social-professional relationships still have their own challenges.

3.5 Critical points to consider when integrating networks in school education systems

The Working Group formulated key questions concerning policy needs and actions and the creation, sustaining and developing of networks to support learning and development across school education systems. These can be used by policy makers and others as critical points to consider when deciding on investing in a network:

1. How to know when and where to initiate networks?

- What is the value and role of networks in terms of supporting learning and development within different parts of the system?
- What kind of evidence helps to identify the need for a new network and the effective functioning of existing ones?

2. How can the necessary conditions be created for different types of networks to function effectively?

- What competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of members and leaders need to be supported for the networks to function in different contexts?
- Who drives network processes and how can a sense of ownership and engagement be maintained across different groups of actors?
- What resources are required and how to ensure these are used efficiently?

3. In what ways can network outcomes feed back into different parts of the system and support decision-making and development?

- What approaches can ensure that networks can respond to defined needs in policy development but also to local needs?
- What are the limitations and opportunities for different types of networks to transfer knowledge and ideas across systems?

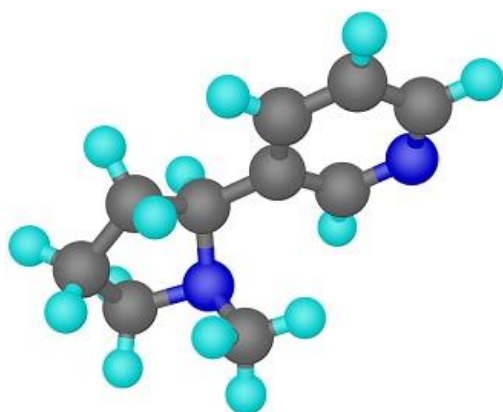
As part of the work, a set of Guiding Principles are proposed to inform policy decision-making processes that include networking. These are grouped under eight themes that also, in themselves, form a useful checklist for creating and developing networks within school education:

- ❖ Goal-setting and shared goals
- ❖ Autonomy, accountability & flexibility
- ❖ Motivation & benefits
- ❖ Roles of different actors
- ❖ Capacity-building of actors
- ❖ Cross-sectoral working
- ❖ Network development
- ❖ Impact, quality assurance & evidence

3.6 The ET2020 peer learning process

The formulation of guiding principles and accompanying examples of policy development was carried out in three ways:

Review of existing research and literature	A background paper summarising international sources of literature on networks was created for the Working Groups members by European Commission consultants.
Working Group meeting	Using a blend of sub-group discussion, reporting, and full group reflection, the members explored the topic from different perspectives in working sessions at a meeting at the European Commission in Brussels. Working Group members shared case studies from their countries.
Peer Learning Activity	<p>The policy challenges and principles set out in this report were developed in depth by 9 countries and 3 organisations attending a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) hosted by Serbia (26-29 September 2017).</p> <p>This PLA enabled participants to undertake a deeper critical analysis and reflection on behalf of all members of the Working Group, and discuss possible future action for their own contexts. In this respect, the longer case study examples that feature in the report are of country and organisation networks that are current and constantly developing. Therefore the reflections and possible future actions should be understood as work-in-progress.</p>



A molecule is two or more atoms held together by a chemical bond.

Molecular science studies their structure, properties and interaction.

Analysis of network activity and effectiveness is similar.

4. Networks in action

The Working Group thematic meetings and Peer Learning Activities highlighted a significant number of examples of networks in action within and between national education systems across Europe. These examples have operated at varying scales, and with varying degrees of formal monitoring and evaluation. However, they provide important insights to contemporary policy challenges for network management.

In this chapter, we examine more closely the examples of networks from the Group, triangulated with further examples from the wider policy and research literature. To provide a structure, we have grouped the networks into six broad ‘types’ that best reflect their characteristics:

- a) **International support to policy and practice development**
- b) **Supporting national policy development and implementation**
- c) **Developing national and regional structures of governance**
- d) **Connecting schools for school development**
- e) **Connecting teachers for professional development; and,**
- f) **Multi-stakeholder networks targeting specific groups of learners**

For each category, first we present the key concepts and rationale, before considering the evidence base, discussing the main challenges, lessons learned and outcomes from educational networks, with reference to case study examples from the Group and the wider literature. There are 11 longer case study examples, as presented by countries and organisations at the Peer Learning Activity.

All Guiding Principles are relevant to each type of network, however specific principles are highlighted where they are particularly relevant to the success or challenge of a network type or specific case example.

4.1 International support to policy and practice development

Education networks operating at an international level clearly offer the widest geographical scope. At a first glance, these networks may seem more challenging to organise, taking into consideration distances and different languages and cultures. However, technology has the potential to remove some of these obstacles, and unlock the potential benefits of knowledge-transfer and inter-cultural learning.

Harris^{viii} argues that the following principles need to be at the core of an effective online development network: participation beyond the boundaries of a traditional public authority; a clear purpose, mission and community values; bringing in new members and changing external contributors and facilitators over time; a clear plan of action to catalyse change; infrastructure

to enable individuals to assess their capacity to contribute; feedback, and a perceived return on investment.

Box 1: Examples of inter/transnational policy networks in a European context

[ETUCE](#) (European Trade Union Committee for Education), which operates at European level to defend teachers' interests to the European Commission. ETUCE is also active in several EU-funded cooperation projects, for example on ICT in schools and promoting the social sector dialogue. It therefore plays an active role in engaging teachers in school development across Europe.

[ATEE](#) (Association for Teacher Education in Europe) has the aim of enhancing the quality of Teacher Education in Europe and supporting the professional development of teachers and teacher educators across the continent. ATEE has 19 thematic workshops, and also networks with established links between research, policy and practice. ATEE is conscious of its international nature, and is careful to understand and respect cultural differences.

Ministries of Education themselves are members of [European Schoolnet](#), organised to introduce innovation to diverse stakeholders, including the Ministries themselves, but also, schools, teachers, researchers and industry partners.

[SIRIUS](#) is the European Policy Network on the Education of Children and Young People with a Migrant Background that was initiated by the European Commission in 2012. The network facilitates inclusive policymaking by exchanging knowledge and experience between researchers, practitioners, immigrant youth and communities and policymakers for the development of joint strategies on migrant education. The current network is composed of 31 members in 18 countries.

International networks can also support the diffusion of specific educational models or paradigms. The [UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network \(ASPnet\)](#) spans 10,000 schools and 180 countries, providing an educational programme based around human rights, sustainable development, and intercultural learning. At the country level, ASPnet National Coordinators are designated by UNESCO's National Commissions. Head teachers, teachers and students lead activities in the individual member schools.

Just as international networks may operate at varying levels to support education through school improvement, they may also influence governance, including a move to multi-level governance, with actors operating at different levels through links that are dynamic and fluid^{ix}.

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) of the European Union, of which the ET2020 Working Groups are a product, also constitutes an international network, providing a "soft mode" of governance to "steer policies"^x. The OMC has the potential to contribute to convergence in policy areas in which consensus has been difficult to achieve, and has been applied in areas such as employment and migration^{xi}.

CASE STUDY 1: Cross-border networks of schools: European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE)

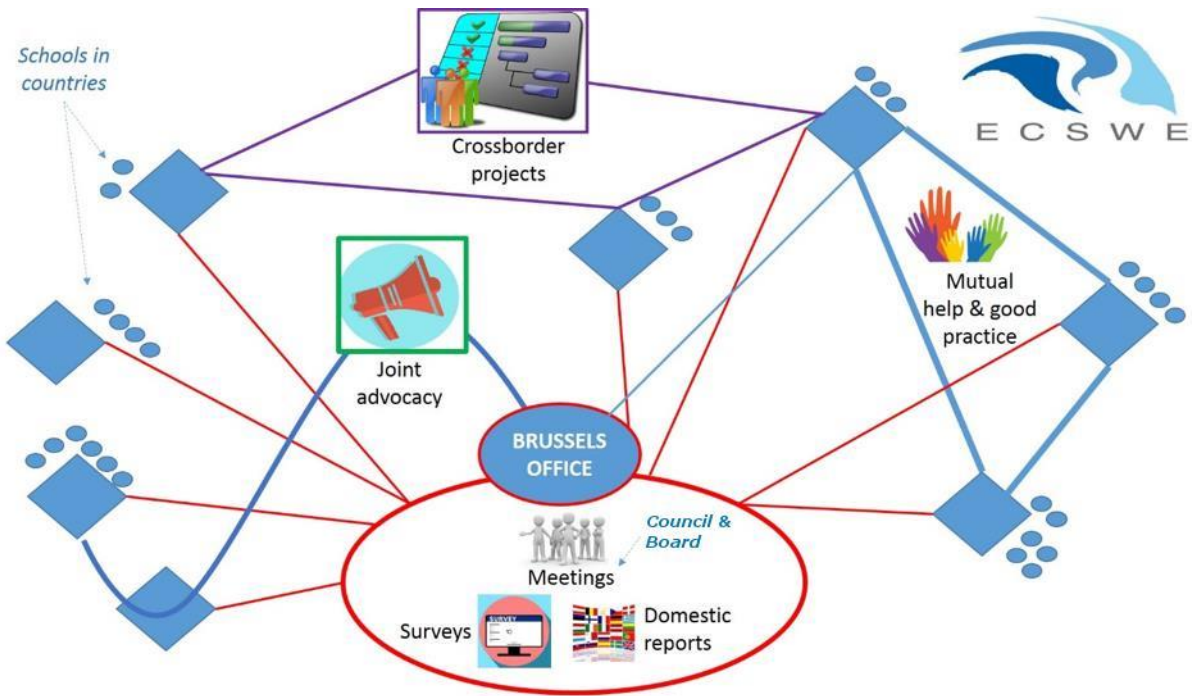
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Goals; 4. Role of different actors; 5. Capacity-building of actors

About the network

The organisation brings together Steiner Waldorf school associations from 28 European countries to report on important organisational, political and legal developments in the member countries, to exchange good practice and to coordinate joint activities and advocacy around shared goals, including: 1) holistic education fostering all human capacities, 2) age-appropriate and development-oriented media pedagogy 3) school autonomy, e.g. freedom of curriculum, pluralism in assessment; 4) freedom of parental school choice; 5) public funding for independent non-profit schools.

The European office collates surveys and domestic reports and facilitates meetings of national representatives. Across the network, schools (712 as of 2017) within and across countries work on joint projects and support each other by sharing good practices, including network conferences.



Developing the network

Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

It is nearly 100 years since the first Steiner school was established. The mission of the European council is to support genuine Steiner Waldorf education and promote human-centred and independent education in Europe. ECSWE note that ministries seem to increasingly outsource problem solving and policy-development into networks that distribute leadership vertically and horizontally and thus ensure

shared ownership and shared accountability. This is of particular interest for their own school movement that has worked in networks for many decades already.

In return, Working Group members have identified the inner diversity and transnational character of ECSWE as a particular strength. This diversity allows ECSWE to draw on a broad range of expertise and knowledge that could have an even greater impact by further strengthening the peer learning dimension of the network.

Challenges

Whilst organised around the shared vision of a holistic and human-centred pedagogy, ECSWE faces the challenge of catering to the needs of a very diverse membership in terms of, for example, geography; local culture; the legal and political environment; the status of independent education within a given country; and the level of public funding. To what extent the members of the network (can) play an active role is determined by finances and human resources, the level of commitment to international cooperation and the awareness of mutual challenges. Promoting peer learning between national associations and cross-border mobility of Waldorf teachers may address some of these challenges and expose national representatives and teachers to diverse forms of advocacy, school leadership and pedagogical practices.

A further consideration is how ECSWE could best contribute to bringing the ET2020 Working Group Schools outputs into national and EU-level policy making via its existence as a cross-border network. For ECSWE, the question remains as to what extent the voice of stakeholders at a more local level is making a difference in policy making. Certainly, the degree of freedom to experiment might permit parts of the network to explore and pilot alternative pedagogical approaches in cooperation with ministries and this 'offer' might in turn strengthen relations between the network and policy makers.

“It was interesting to see that ministries increasingly outsource problem-solving and policy-development into networks that distribute leadership vertically and horizontally and thus ensure shared ownership and shared accountability. This is of particular interest for our school movement.”

From ECSWE Peer Learning Activity Report

Possibilities for future development

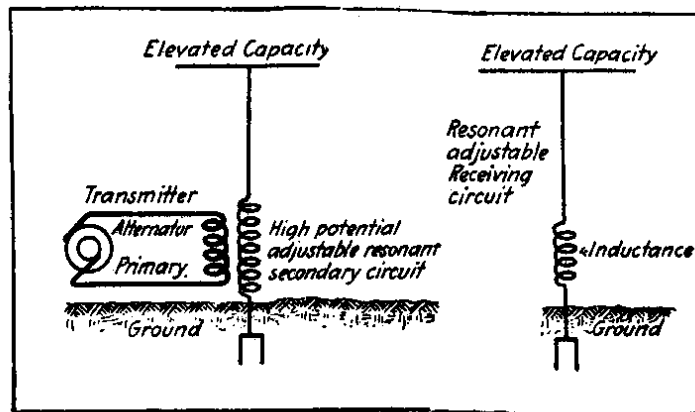
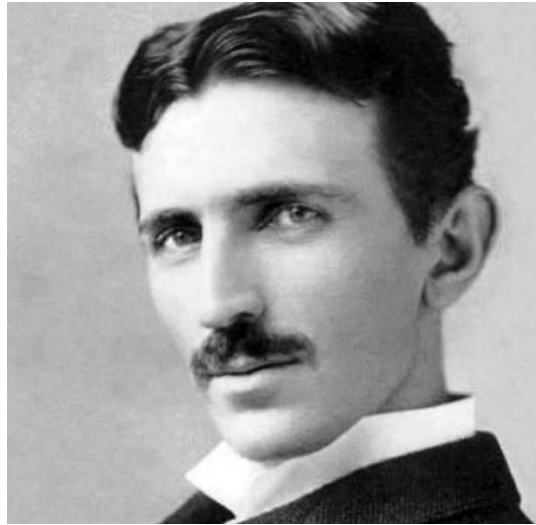
ECSWE recognise that both national and cross-border networking is heavily dependent on the willing engagement and self-identified needs of actors at local level as a first step. Capacity-building of actors to then work as effective 'critical friends' and communicate both horizontally and vertically is also of particular importance.

<http://ecswe.net/>

Nikola Tesla (1856-1943) was a world-famous physicist, engineer and inventor.

There is a museum dedicated to his life and work in the centre of Belgrade, Serbia.

The principles of his alternating current (AC) induction motor and wireless electricity transmission highlight the challenges in generating strength and communication across networks.



Tesla's System of Wireless Transmission Thru the Earth as Actually Exposed in His Lectures Before the Franklin Institute and Electric Light Association in February and March, 1893. Fig. 8.

As appeared in the Electrical Experimenter, May 1919

4.2 Supporting national policy development and implementation

At national level, networks can provide an important role in policy formulation and testing. They offer utility both as a source of innovation, and as a means of subsequently disseminating good practices and ensuring their diffusion across the education system at all levels^{xii}. In an OECD study, Hopkins^{xiii} concluded that networks for policy and practice innovation are most effective when certain conditions are present. These include: consistent values and focus; a clear structure and impact on learning; supporting knowledge creation, utilisation and transfer; clear leadership and empowered participants; and, adequate resources.

Involvement of a wide range of stakeholders is important, including teachers, school leaders, network initiators and managers, consultants, researchers and evaluators, as well as policy makers. E-communication can provide a means of rapidly sourcing feedback from diverse interest groups at different levels of the system. Such communication can be either ad hoc, or managed via more longstanding networks. For example, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in **Ireland** regularly uses online consultation process to inform policy development. A recent instance in 2017 involved gathering feedback on proposals for a primary curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics.

National policy networks typically involve a combination of formal engagement with schools and other key stakeholders, to consult on priorities of national interest, and more open dialogue, exploiting the potential of networks for policy makers to 'listen' to schools, educators, and other key stakeholder groups. The permanency of these networks invariably reflects their goals, ranging from longstanding forums to connect otherwise disparate parts of the system, to time-limited pilot projects of an experimental nature, with the purpose of bringing stakeholders together outside of the constraints of educational hierarchies and providing time and space to problem-solve and innovate.

Box 2: National Policy Networks

In **Switzerland**, Schoolnetwork21 (réseau d'écoles²¹) is a standing network of 1,850 schools with a history of 20 years. It aims to foster sustainable development within schools, covering topics ranging from human rights, to health promotion and environmental sustainability. The network is funded by the ministries of education and health, and the cantons, and coordinated by foundation trusts. Through this model, the ministry is able to support schools to achieve policy priorities from some distance, facilitating access to many CPD resources and toolkits.

In **Portugal**, the National Pilot Programmes for Pedagogical Innovation and Curricular Flexibility aim to provide additional freedoms to school clusters – rather than networks - to work collaboratively to develop localised solutions to policy issues. Grade retention (year repetition) has been identified as a particular challenge in Portugal, as it is correlated with Early School Leaving (ESL). The pilot format offers schools flexibility, while maintaining accountability. In total, six school clusters have been selected for the pilots, with monitoring and feedback of results to the ministry.

CASE STUDY 2: Making new links across closed networks for professional and institutional development: Croatia

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2. Autonomy, accountability and flexibility; 5. Capacity-building of actors; 6. Cross-sectoral working; 7. Network development

About the networks

The Ministry of Science and Education in Croatia has established networks of County Council leaders to carry out and coordinate the tasks of professional development of teachers, educational school experts and principals in accordance with the Institute of Education's program of professional development of teachers, teachers, associates and principals.

1. The network for **general subject teachers and principals** is managed by the Education and Teacher Training Agency with 4 regional offices, each facilitating the work of sub-networks of county council leaders.
2. The Agency for Vocational and Adult Education facilitates the network for **vocational subjects teachers** (engineering, health care, tourism), each with multiple programmes.

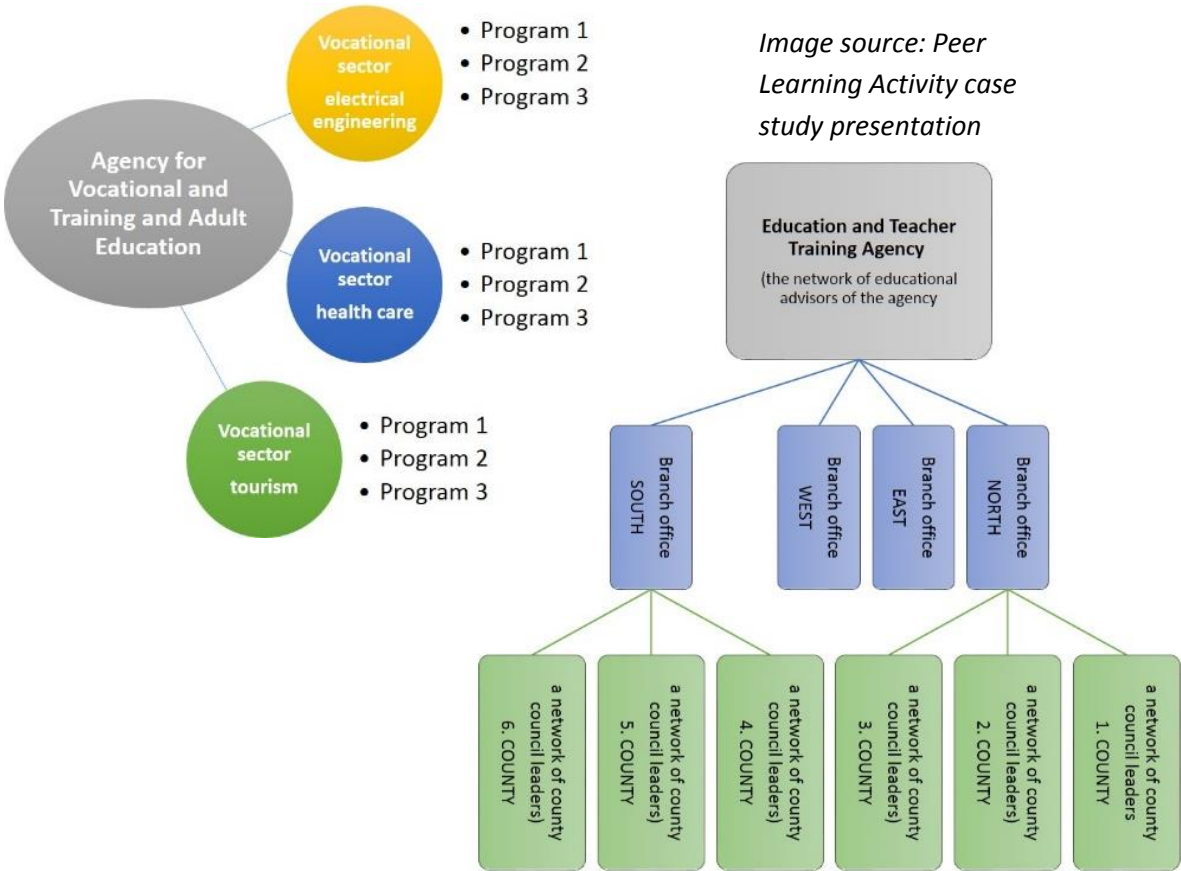


Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

How it is being developed

The use of networks is currently under development. The new Strategy of Education, Science and Technology has identified the most important areas of improving educational institutions as including raising the level of institutional autonomy and accountability; establishing mechanisms of co-operation; and ensuring specific training for actors working with particular special education needs and talents.

The ministry's approach is to combine the adoption of new regulations with the establishment of specific support networks for these key areas. The ministry are seeking to motivate stakeholders at local and national level to get involved in education system development projects. They have identified the potential to utilise these two distinct and hitherto 'closed' networks - within general education and Vocational Education and Training respectively - to consult with country councils and school leaders on national policy reforms. Their principle concern is whether the introduction of autonomy will be successful in a highly centralized education system.

Particular strengths, as identified by other Working Group members, are the use of established networks as a basis for further development and the key steps taken by the ministry to have a public consultation on their proposed changes with the realisation that one set approach does not necessarily work for all actors in the system.



The many islands along Croatia's coastline present an additional challenge for professional networking and general connectivity.

Challenges

A particular challenge is to seek ways to connect the general education path to the vocational path and to link across quite closed (subject-specific) networks to facilitate cross-curricular peer learning. Another challenge in making new connections with existing networks is to link schools with other actors in the system and do this on topics of mutual interest, for example VET institutions with industry or school leaders with regional and national authorities.

Furthermore there is the question of how to empower school clusters and encourage local teachers' and principals' networks to initiate or be part of the process of change in education. This may include revising the way public consultation is organised.

Possibilities for future development

It is the intention to further explore the potential within and across networks to develop cross curricular links as part of the new Strategy. This will include targeted support to build the capacity of actors who manage networks and may also include targeted funding.

CASE STUDY 3: Targeted support to curriculum teaching and learning: Greece

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3. Motivation & benefits; 4. Roles of different actors; 7. Network development

About the network

In Greece, the ministry has funded a network of Environmental Education Centres (EECs) since 1990 to function as learning and training organisations, raising students’ awareness and training teachers on environmental issues, and embedding environmental education within the secondary education phase. Students’ training mostly takes place at EEC buildings and the programmes they attend last from one to three days. EECs define their annual topics and inform schools about them. They also upload teaching material produced to their websites, making it accessible for all schools and teachers.

A review of the centres highlighted that, despite performing a key role in addressing national policy objectives, the EECs were not always well integrated with networks of schools. The ministry aims to link the EECs more closely to national curricula and to establish closer synergies at all levels of the system – national, regional, institutional, and teacher-to-teacher.

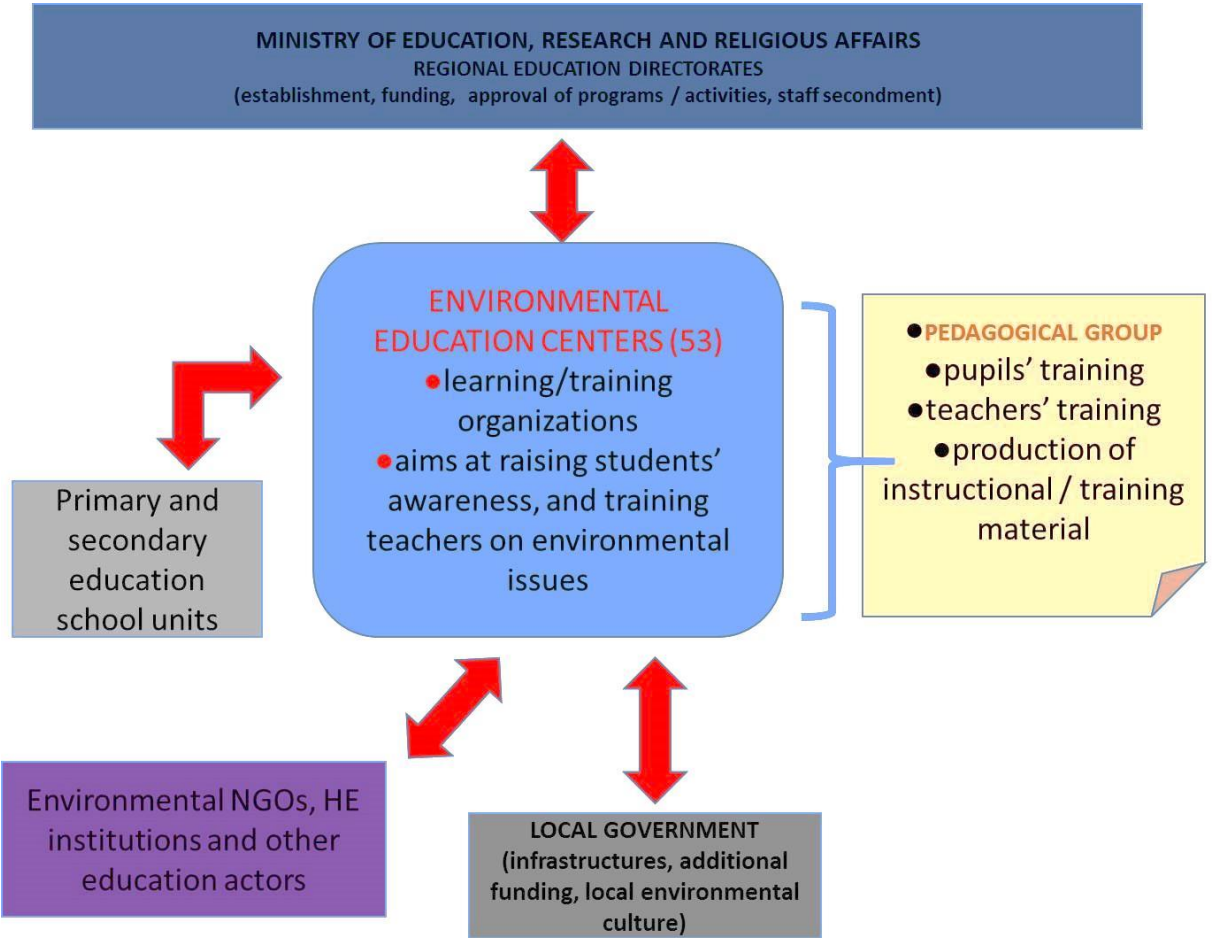


Image source (above and opposite): Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

How it was developed

The legal framework for the establishment of EECs was created in 1990 (law 1892/90) aiming at initiating environmental education into secondary education. The first EEC was established in 1993 and today there are 53 Centres (balanced geographically) operating within the country. They constitute a decentralised public education structure for Environmental Education which functions as a network between the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, the Regional Education Directorates, the schools, the local government/communities, higher education institutions, and NGOs.

The Ministry is responsible for their establishment, funding (partly), and approval of the EEC programmes and activities, as well as for providing the necessary staff (secondment of public primary and secondary education teachers). The local government can request the establishment of EECs and provides additional funding and infrastructure. The EEC staff form a pedagogical group responsible for pupils' training, teachers' training and the production of instructional/training material.

Some of the EEC network's particular strengths, as identified by other Working Group members, are the equity of access and the ability to provide 'teaching in the field', along with supportive material.

Challenges

There is a desire to identify ways in which the EEC network can help build a more established collaborative culture amongst teachers and link the centres more efficiently to schools in a mutual (rather than one-directional) relationship, assuming that this increased collaboration will lead to better learning outcomes for students. An added challenge – or positive outcome – would be to further involve teachers in policy making in this area.

Possibilities for future development

An institutional framework may be the most useful tool to: enable schools to produce annual development plans which would then help to create a closer linking of environmental activities to curricula; involve a larger number of teachers/students in the activities; enable schools to provide feedback to EECs with their suggestions; and initiate the collaboration of school teachers with the EEC staff. Such an institutional framework could also help to redefine EECs' role, transforming them to centres that mainly focus on sustainability, which would broaden their thematic work, attract a larger number of teachers/students, and would adapt EECs' function to the current challenges building on their existing outcomes.



4.3 Developing national and regional structures of governance

Educational networks exist at all geographical scales, and the connections between them and distribution of responsibilities are fundamental to their effectiveness and their sustainability. The role for national policy makers can be more or less directive, depending on the goals of the network.

The division of responsibilities within networks is strongly influenced by the structure of national education systems^{xiv}. There has been an overall trend towards the devolution of responsibilities for school improvement within European countries, described in the literature as ‘lateral capacity building’^{xv xvi}, in which key relationships are established on a horizontal basis and often reside at a local level. Multiple school accountability requires local mechanisms to establish a sense of community, which are often highly contextually specific^{xvii}. Nonetheless, vertical relationships, including between school and district, and between sub-national and national tiers of government, continue to play an important balancing role. As Fullan concludes: “...too much intrusion demotivates people; too little permits drift, or worse”^{xviii}.

The ongoing [OECD School Resources Review \(SRR\)](#) examines how school networks support quality and efficiency at different levels. What the evidence from these country reviews suggest is that while governance arrangements are particular to each country, *regional networks* can help to strengthen both autonomy and efficiency of municipalities and schools. While there are few empirical studies on managerial networks, a study by Meier and O’Toole^{xix} analysed performance of 500 U.S. school districts found that “*more networking in more directions*” enabled managers to reduce rigidity of their organisations, and to thus to take greater advantage of the available resources within the system.

Box 3: Strengthening regional and sub-regional educational governance

Estonia – network potential identified by external evaluation

Estonia has a highly decentralised school system, with many small schools, creating barriers to efficiency. The independent OECD school resources country review concluded that networks provide a way of overcoming these barriers, for example by: clustering of schools with one school providing leadership and managing the budget; sharing of resources among neighbouring schools; or creating regional networks to improve management of resources. For any of these options, network-level coordination and planning should involve all stakeholders in resource management decisions^{xx}.

United Kingdom(England) – development of a regional and sub-regional infrastructure

In the **United Kingdom(England)**, there has been a trend towards decentralisation within the school system, accelerated by the conversion of a large proportion of secondary schools into Academies (publicly funded independent schools) since 2010^{xxi}. This process has seen increased school autonomy, within a dual system of maintained schools and academies, and a reduced role for local authorities^{xxii}. Recognising the challenges presented, the Department for

Education intervened in 2014 to introduce a new tier of governance: Regional School Commissioners (RSCs), to facilitate a more coordinated approach towards school improvement at a regional and sub-regional level. This arrangement has been aligned with a policy to encourage the clustering of schools into Multi Academy Trusts (MATs)^{xxiii}, supported by a Regional Academy Growth Fund (RAGF). As with other countries, therefore, the regional level has provided a focal point for network and resource management.

Italy - School reform law 107/2015

In **Italy**, national legislation was passed (Law 107/2015), creating the possibility for schools to share resources and to undertake joint activities falling within their respective School Development Plans. The Law envisages networks as organisational structures including schools, local authorities and other private and public bodies, which are functional to inter-institutional relationships in a given territorial area and can tackle common educational issues together. In addition to that, the Law constitutes a new model of shared governance between autonomous educational institutions, subject to the signing of a specific agreement defining the nature of the collaboration. In this context, school networks are “*forms of aggregation of school institutions around a shared project*”. The implementation of the Law has reportedly created a conducive environment for new initiatives to promote social inclusion at a local area level (particularly tackling early school leaving, and supporting migrant students) and to pool resources for training and curricula.

A common theme to emerge from different educational networks across Europe is the importance of creating a 'moderating' or 'mediating' role – whether this is located at the intersection of different geographical scales, or between different overlapping networks. In **Sweden** (see Case Study 5), the five regions provide a natural axis for local and national decision making, with regional coordinators performing a key role in this respect. Similar regional network coordination arrangements can be found within **Norway** (see Case Study 4) and **Finland** (see Case Study 7), albeit operating within different policy and legal frameworks.

CASE STUDY 4: Regional networks for local implementation: Norway

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
 2. Autonomy, accountability & flexibility; 4. Roles of different actors; 5. Capacity-building of actors; 7. Network development; 8. Impact, quality assurance & evidence

About the network

The national government has decentralized the decision-making on how to use grants for Continued Professional Development (CPD) for schools and teachers to local networks. The aim is to stimulate local ownership and make sure that funds are used in a way that respond to local needs.

There is a core network of County Governors convening at national level with the involvement of the Directorate of Education and Training. Each Governor facilitates a co-operation forum with regional networks, the local university, teacher associations, the association of municipalities and local businesses.

Counties organise themselves in different ways, but in one example, there are 4 regional networks, each with 5-6 municipality administrations. The municipality networks are made up of the heads of schools in that municipality plus teacher association representatives and local businesses.

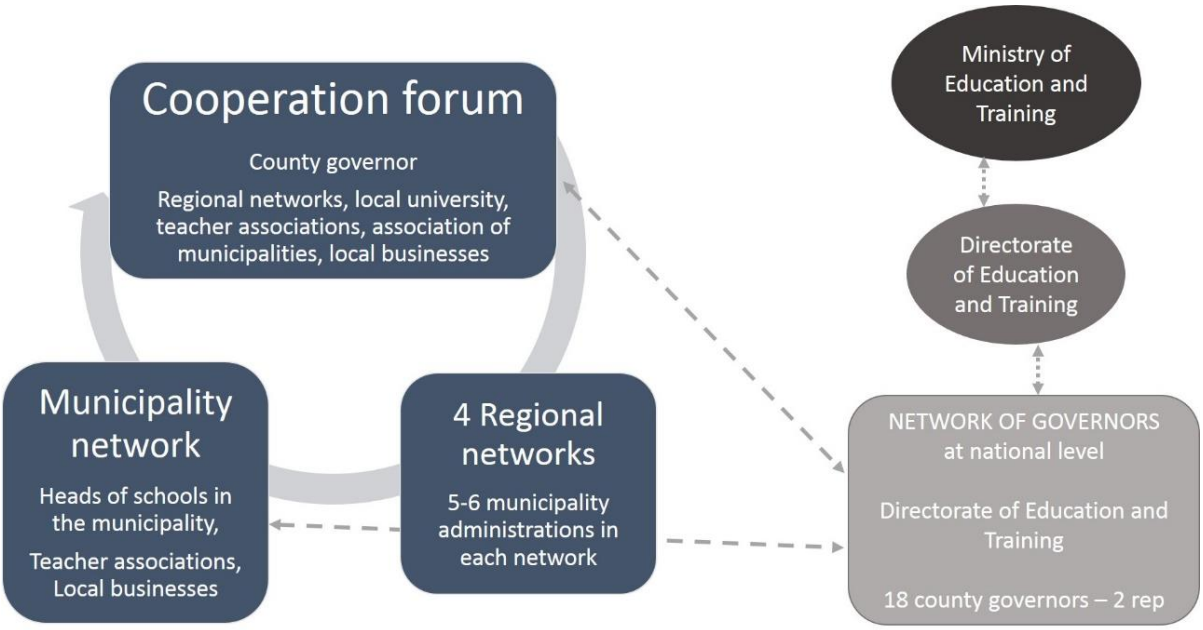


Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

How it was developed

Initially a government White Paper was introduced, covering early intervention and quality. It represents a new model for locally-based competence development of school staff. The funding of school education is national but the model is based on local ownership of participation. The funding goes into a forum involving the municipality, regional school owners (upper secondary), local higher education institutions, and other partners.

Implementation is still in the early stages, and there remains a strong need for the national level to offer guidance and assistance to the local level. At the same time, feedback from the local level changes the

implementation process. These insights have illustrated to all participants that it takes time to establish a shared vision and understanding when trying to achieve a balance between the network as a tool for implementation of national policy and the need for local involvement and ownership.

Some particular strengths of the network, as identified by other Working Group members, are the adjustment of needs to the local context; a sense of collective responsibility; and the accompanying incentive to participate.

Challenges

The current focus is how to create mutual commitments for all the participants in the network; how to involve other stakeholders; and how the national government can support the networks in becoming actual 'learning networks'. The peer learning process highlighted that networks can act as the point of balance between national and local actors, and their aims and needs. Networks can serve as arenas to discuss and form a shared vision, but also as a way of giving feedback to the government, if several local actors come together. It also highlighted that a network should not necessarily sustain or remain unchanged when conditions change, the network should probably change too.

A crucial question is whether the network is functioning in its own right or as a structured way of implementing a new strategy. For Norway, this shift from using networks as a tool to functioning on their own after some time is certainly desirable.

How can we achieve balance between the network as a tool for implementation of national policy and the need for local involvement and ownership?

What are the necessary conditions (research, experience) for networks to sustain after the kick-off period is over?



Possibilities for future development

Feedback from the networks will help to evaluate progress and future needs: if the strategy contributes to equity, and whether certain regions and/or certain themes of competence building should be targeted.

CASE STUDY 5: First steps in using an established regional network for new teacher professional development policy action: Sweden

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4. Roles of different actors; 5. Capacity-building of actors; 6. Cross-sectoral working

About the network

Whilst Sweden has already established a network to support school development, it is now looking to utilise and build on the same structure in order to take a systematic approach to Continued Professional Development (CPD). The ministry understands that sustaining cooperation between all levels will be crucial in enabling schools to operate as effective learning organisations within a decentralised educational system.

Whilst the broad interest is how to implement and valorise policy such as Continued Professional Development through networks, the primary concern at policy level is to better understand and establish the main roles and responsibilities of the national authorities, local authorities and higher education institutions.

How it was developed

The Swedish National Agency for Education had already established its network of 5 regional coordinators, which has now grown to 17. Each coordinator is responsible for a network of municipal school providers and linked to a university. The coordinators meet 3-4 times per year with training and an annual conference. Funding for coordinating the network is provided yearly to the coordinators along with extra funding for school development.

A particular strength, as identified by other Working Group members, is the use of an established network and the approach of using the sub-network coordinators as an important reference group.

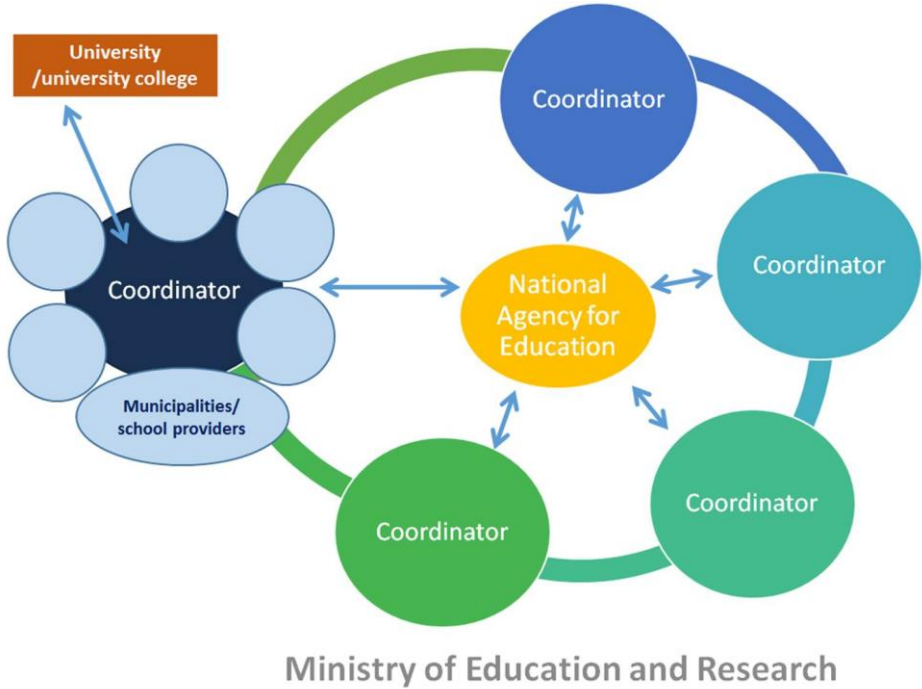


Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

Challenges

A key challenge is to establish networks with a broad representation of stakeholders as a way to facilitate vertical and horizontal discussions in order to develop and prepare policy initiatives that are better anchored. The Ministry also recognises the importance of taking actions to support a shared vision and a successful implementation of new policies.

A crucial feature of this collaboration is the “mediating level” between “top down” and “bottom up” approaches, as well as the way in which networks can develop through cooperation with other networks.

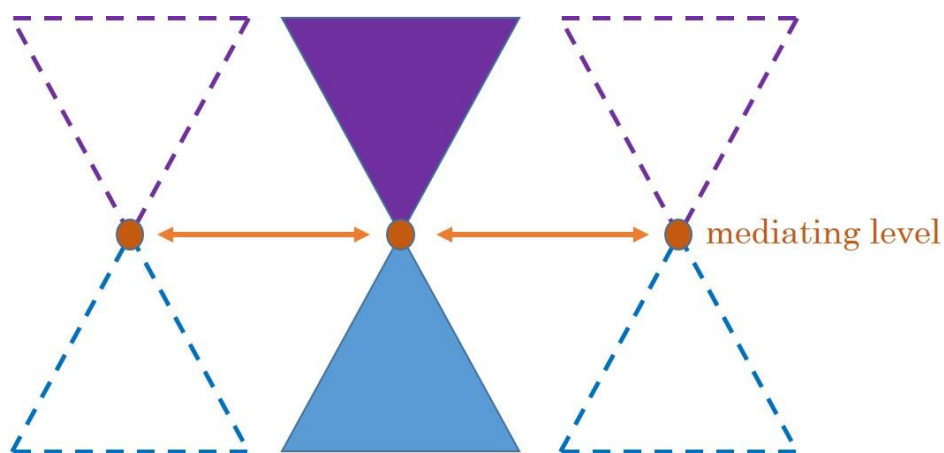


Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study reflection

Another challenge is ensuring adequate input in terms of financial resources, network actor training or support in some other form.

Possibilities for future development

Sweden has a number of ongoing committees of inquiry in the field of school education and will implement new policies due to the outcomes of these. Further consideration and discussions, and exploring the results from these inquiries, will need to take place before the role of national authorities, local authorities and higher education institutions can be defined.

Other examples can be found at a sub-national level. In **Belgium(French community)**, each province has an educational adviser ("accompagnateur de direction") overseeing networks of schools to support their development, while the pedagogical advisers in **Serbia** (see Case Study 9) perform a similar role in facilitating horizontal exchanges of practice between schools within the SHARE network (although the network types and purposes are very different). In Amsterdam in the **Netherlands**, a voluntary network was established between educators from primary schoolboards. In this instance, the network activity was initiated by the university. The group meets five times a year and exchanges information on relevant development, informs each other about CPD activities, and gives feedback on each other's induction programmes. The involvement of the university ensures a direct link to academic research.

The need to achieve a balance of representation from different interests, and geographical coverage, is a common challenge for education networks across Europe. In **Slovenia**, for example, the involvement of secondary schools in national development projects has considerably out-paced primary school involvement. Similarly in **Bulgaria**, the school clusters have evolved in a very organic way in the context of a highly devolved system without a national organisational framework. While this has helped to set a school-led agenda, it has resulted in gaps in coverage at a regional level, with the ministry seeking to provide support to adopt a more coherent and systematic approach. In countries where this regional tier of network coordination is better established, some ministries have taken – or are planning to take – steps to implement large scale national educational programmes in a systematic and coordinated way. The work on teacher professional development in **Sweden** (Case Study 5) provides one such example.

4.4 Connecting schools for school development

Having mutual support among schools has a long precedent within educational policy and practice, and the benefits of doing so are well documented within the research literature.

The concept of the 'School as a Learning Organisation'^{xxiv} explicitly perceives one school as part of a network with other schools – so enabling co-construction of educational progress, as well as nesting individual schools within a supportive framework of governance, higher education institutions, parents and guardians and the local community. Similarly, professional learning communities view individual teachers as part a broader network of professionals with shared concerns.

The notion of a 'self-improving' school system highlights the importance of finding sustainable local solutions for network development. Hargreaves^{xxv} identifies four building blocks of self-improvement: capitalising on the benefits of school clusters; adopting a local solutions approach; stimulating co-construction between schools, and expanding the concept of system leadership. A school-to-school approach takes on particular significance within highly decentralised education systems.

“The need for lateral school-to-school partnerships has become apparent in the face of evidence that neither top-down centrally imposed change nor pure competition and marketisation can achieve sustained improvement across school systems”^{xxvi}

Research has shown that school-to-school networks can have an important positive impact on educational quality, and ultimately on learner attainment. A large-scale longitudinal study covering 43 school districts in nine US states found that collective leadership⁵ at both the school and district levels were associated with higher student achievement^{xxvii}. These networks frequently involved local community groups and universities. Research in California found that those districts which had taken steps to build trust and support professional learning communities, schools (including those in sanction) were able to make more strategic use of systematic assessment and data analysis, and ultimately to improve student learning outcomes^{xxviii}. In another example, a study of 200 schools which formed professional learning communities for reading teachers in an urban district in Texas found statistically significant improvements in student achievement, while teachers perceived a positive impact on student learning^{xxix}.

In Europe, a variety of strategies have been adopted to support the development of communities of practice within school education. The role of national policy makers within these networks can be observed to vary considerably, but typically conforms with one of two broad approaches:

- **Enabling or facilitative** - arms-length support to school networks that have developed organically, such as through the provision of infrastructure to support collaboration; and,
- **Directive or interventionist** – using policy directives or programmes to tackle educational underperformance via peer learning between schools, and/or ensuring that high performing schools have a clear mandate to transfer their skills and expertise to others within the system.

In **Cyprus**, the now well-developed system of primary school networks was initially conceived by primary school inspectors, who recognised the benefits of networking among school principals within their group (each group consists of 15-20 schools). The model was subsequently recognised by the Department of Primary Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture which introduced a policy of supporting these networks in a more structured and planned way in order to include both networking among schools and professional/teacher learning communities. The development of these networks and learning communities should be based on the various learning needs of schools and teachers.

The ‘Lighthouse’ project in **Finland** (see Case Study 7) is a further example of an initiative underpinned by a spirit of bottom-up, school-led innovation. The project takes the form of a “loose developmental network”, which is supported by the Finnish National Agency to

⁵ Collective leadership refers to the extent of influence organisational actors and other stakeholders exert on decisions.

encourage goal-oriented development and experimentation at a school level. The network membership is entirely voluntary and includes schools with varying development needs, with no implied hierarchy. Lighthouse projects sit outside of the more formal national development networks for school education but serve as a potential test bed.

In other instances, central government has taken a more directive role in reorganising school networks to optimise their efficiency and effectiveness. The TEIP school clustering model adopted in **Portugal** (see Case Study 8) is one such example, whereby wholesale legal and structural reforms were identified as a solution to raising educational standards and providing a more equitable use of resources at a municipal level.

A horizontal model of school-to-school support for improvement is being fostered with funding incentives in some European countries, including **Latvia** (see page 39). In **Ireland**, the new School Excellence Fund (SEF) is an innovation of the Department of Education and Skills which will enable schools to apply for funding to implement innovative programmes which are context-specific and aimed at improving learning outcomes. In particular, the SEF will encourage schools to work collaboratively with other schools in clusters and new or existing networks to encourage peer learning and sharing of experience. The funding will also support links with local businesses and academic institutions. Ten clusters are proposed in the first phase (announced November 2017).

The SHARE project in **Serbia** (see Case Study 9) provides another example of a more formalised horizontal model of school improvement. In this case, high performing schools are matched with their counterparts for whom specific development priorities were identified through external evaluation (the school inspectorate). This model has operated for a number of years, with some promising results, and priorities identified for future development.

CASE STUDY 6: Transition from one structural leadership to another: Catholic Education Flanders

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4. Roles of different actors; 8. Impact, quality assurance & evidence

Catholic Education Flanders is one of the largest networks in **Belgium's** landscape of schools and their school boards. They are moving from working under the auspices of the Flemish bishops to an organisation with a board of (elected) governors, each of them real employers in education, members of school boards all over the country. The Flemish case is special because the Ministry of education does not 'govern' schools. All schools have 'independent' school boards.

They see a need to (re)define and expand the role of school boards, also in relationship to the competences they pass on to the school leaders. They wish for them to self-supervise the 'collective efforts for quality improvement' which they are implementing in every school. Inspired by other peer learning countries, they might consider the creation of school development teams as a means for quality assurance in every school where the school leader(s) can act as change agents.

CASE STUDY 7: Supporting learning and cooperation between innovative schools: Finland

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Goals; 2. Autonomy, accountability & flexibility; 4. Roles of different actors;; 8. Impact, quality assurance & evidence

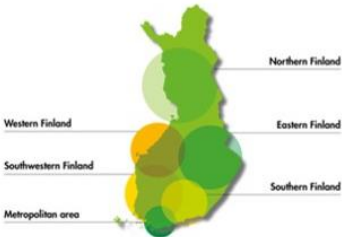
About the network

The 'Lighthouse' project is a national, developmental network that aims to: a) support and increase common learning and cooperation between schools in regional and national level; b) encourage goal-oriented development and experimentation, and c) help to share the new pedagogical approaches and innovation as a result of developmental actions.

The network comprises 6 regional sub-networks. It has 8 different groups of participants (pupils, families, schools, research universities, professional organisation and partners, local businesses, local and national networks, and international) and 10 current development themes, include technology, leadership, and learner well-being and motivation.



REGIONAL NETWORKS



LIGHTHOUSE PARTICIPANTS



TEN DEVELOPMENT THEMES



+ Loisto (networks for ECEC)
+ LUKE = upper secondary schools

Image sources: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

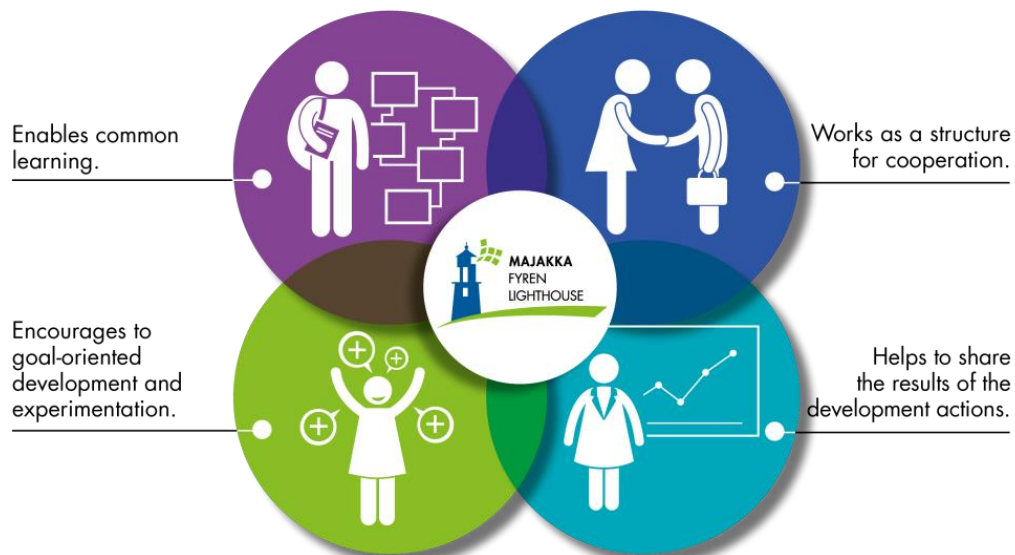
How it was developed

The network was launched three years ago to support municipalities strategic planning, national development of basic education and the introduction of the new core curriculum. At the beginning, 100 schools were involved; now there are more than 250. Due to its success, two more networks were launched: one for cooperation in Early Childhood Education and Care and one for Upper Secondary education.

There is no money offered to the schools; the network is based on cooperation and network actors supporting one another. The ministry understand that a bottom-up approach is important; that all of the innovations are based on the developmental needs rising from schools, teachers and pupils. Schools then make their own development plans according to those needs.

Some of its particular strengths, as identified by other Working Group members, are the establishing of robust evidence from 3 years of trials; the trust invested in local actors; and the achieved continuity and flexibility between national goals and municipal and school interests.

Aim of the network



Challenges

The Finnish ministry are still working on improving the means to support the creation and sharing of innovations via networks.

Whilst the primary outcome of the networking can be developed, the ministry also recognise an opportunity to better understand and improve the network functions and processes as a model within school education governance. Even if the different sub-networks are separate from each other, at a local level the actors are part of the same broad community. Therefore there is a need to add and support cooperation between networks especially at the regional level.

Finally, there is also a challenge to support the development and innovative capacity of schools that are not in the network.

Possibilities for future development

Attention in the future will be in three areas. First is to consider the processes involved so far and the possibilities of creating a model. This model may then have the potential to be used in subsequent multiple networking and innovation projects later on.

Secondly there is a need to support cooperation between different networks, potentially through local meetings.

A third possibility is to launch an evaluation project to gather the learning during the lifespan of the network for future development.

CASE STUDY 8: Multi-level networks as part of a national programme to support schools facing specific challenges: Portugal

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Goals; 4. Roles of different actors; 6. Cross-sectoral working; 7. Network development; 8. Impact, quality assurance & evidence

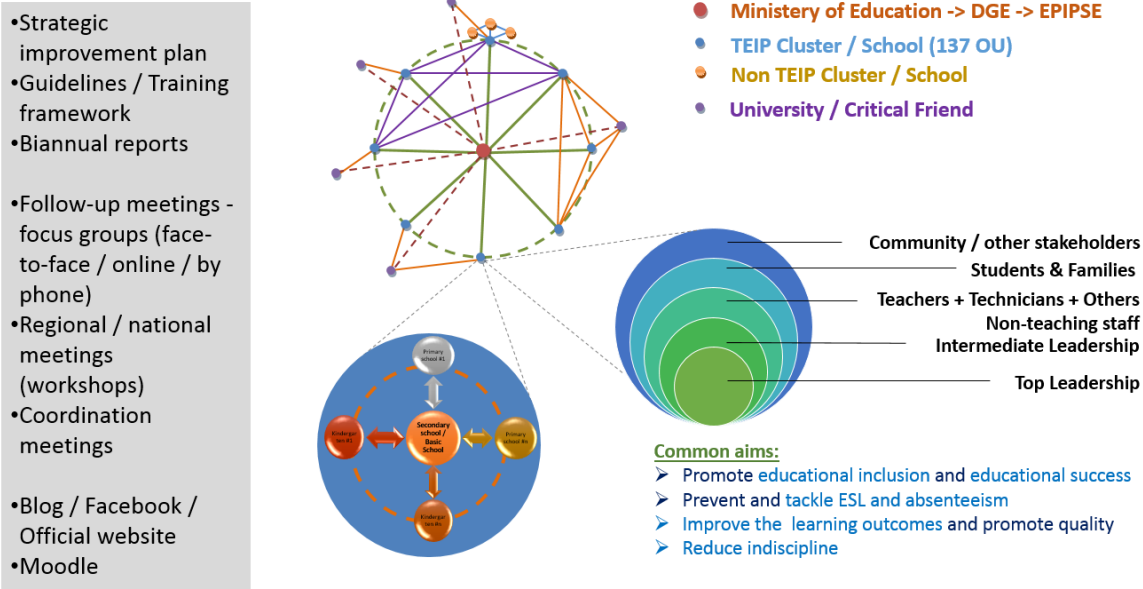
About the network

The Priority Intervention Educational Territories Programme (TEIP) is an educational policy measure to promote inclusion through the support of schools and school clusters located in the most disadvantaged / challenging regions. The programme calls for a preventive, sustained and networking action with the community, in order to promote a good school climate and the educational success of/for all students, to combat school drop-out and to strengthen the relationship between the school, family and the community. It has also been the basis for the negotiation of additional resources.

The programme is supported by a set of networks that go beyond the internal organization of the school clusters and their relationship with local communities. Schools Clusters and non-grouped Schools in Portugal are organized in a way to develop continuous professional development activities. Presently there are 91 Schools' Associations Training Centers (CFAE-Centro de Formação de Associações de Escolas), located in one of the associated schools, which provide ongoing training to associated schools, TEIP and non-TEIP, through the development of continuous training plans based on the needs identified in each school.

The Directorate-General for Education, in charge of monitoring and evaluating the EIPSE-DGE programme, has taken a multi-level approach through the organization of national, regional and local meetings to promote networking between teachers, technicians, middle and top leaders, families, critical friends and institutions of higher education.

TEIP: A network of networks



How the network was developed

The programme had its first edition in the mid-1990s and was relaunched 10 years ago. One of the main objectives was to create the conditions for the schools, which shared the same territory and, as such, the same challenges, to create a common educational project, and to benefit from a joint Pedagogical Council and additional resources to act in conjunction with the community. In 1998, this experience gave rise to a new law on autonomy,

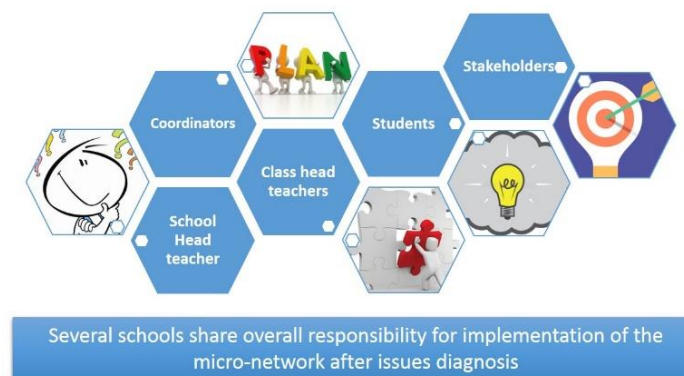
organisation and school management that enabled the creation of 'Schools Clusters', a model that currently prevails in Portugal in public education and whose principle is organisation and networking.

In 2014, the TEIP Schools were challenged to operationalise their educational projects by developing strategic multiannual improvement plans, based on guidelines and a training framework created at the central level/administration. This inspired the governance model of a new 2016 National Plan for the Promotion of School Success (PNPSE-Plano Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar).

Furthermore, the TEIP schools themselves, following a suggestion from EPIPSE, began to organise informally as 'micro-networks', to develop joint training courses/continuous professional development (CPD) aimed at their professionals and to discuss problems and share solutions. There are also the networks created by 'critical friends' who work with more than one TEIP School or cluster and networks created by higher education institutions, which support more than one TEIP School or Cluster.

Image sources (here and opposite): Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

Roles of different actors: school clusters in network



The ministry sees the programme as an example of what it means to be networked, to be organised in a network and, above all, to be supported by a network. Identified strengths by Working Group members include: the multilevel support that the network model is able to provide for TEIP schools; the shared goals of the TEIP schools which help strengthen the network connections; the structure which supports a relationship between policy makers and the critical friends of the schools; and the generating of useful data via the biannual school reports.

Challenges

The ministry is currently rethinking the future of the TEIP programme and how, in the next 4 years, it can be an effective inclusive educational policy measure - promoting the educational success of all children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and capable of differentiating the support to be given to schools depending on the diversity of the target groups, on a sustained basis, based on networking and on a predominantly preventive action. Their two key questions are: **What other kind of actors / stakeholders can be involved on the networks?** And **What other different ways exist to create supportive networks?**

Prevailing challenges include: giving voice and listening to what significant other actors have to say, especially the families and students; engaging community actors who can strengthen the link with the environment, such as representatives of Local Authorities and Social Security; and the disclosure of practices.

Possibilities for future development

As the network and TEIP programme are one entity, the next Improvement Plan is able to focus on certain elements to address the challenges. Actions may include:

- establishing local support teams (including HEIs) for school clusters facing particular difficulties;
- seeking continuity between schools development plans and municipal educational plans;
- promoting training courses to improve the peer learning competence of teachers and trainers;
- involving specific community actors in local and regional meetings.

CASE STUDY 9: Horizontal learning between ‘high’ and ‘low’ performing schools: Serbia

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3. Motivation and benefits; 5. Capacity-building of actors; 7. Network development; 8. Impact, quality assurance & evidence

About the network

The SHARE project focuses on the development and verification of a program of horizontal learning and implementation among schools based on the networking of the teachers between schools. High performing schools mentor and provide support and capacity-building for schools with poor performance which have been identified in external evaluations. The aim is to improve quality in specific areas of school work and life.

SHARE project is a joint project of the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation (IEQE), Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD), Centre for Education Policy (CEP) and UNICEF. The programme has been successfully implemented in 10 pilot schools which, in reference to the external evaluation of school quality results, did not achieve a satisfactory quality level in the past.

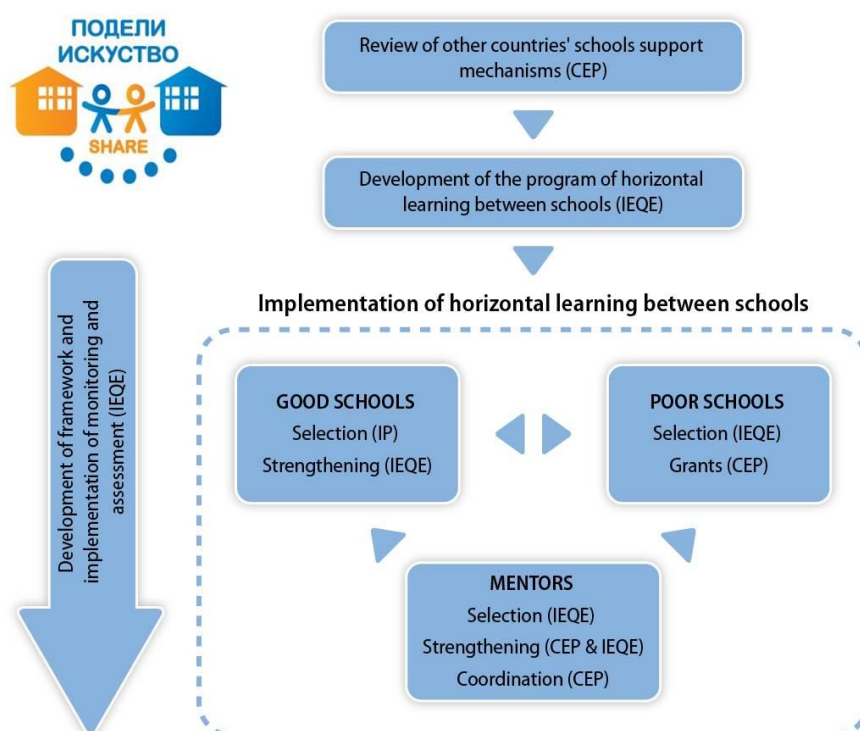


Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

How it was developed

The project was financed and managed on a national level with the aim to improve teaching and learning in particular schools.

There are positive trends in the quality improvement of the schools which participated. The external evaluation conducted after the implementation of the program, showed that nine out of ten schools demonstrated an improvement of quality scoring a higher grade on the external evaluation compared to the previous evaluation report. Although the programme was designed to improve teacher and learning, in most schools there was an improvement in six out of seven areas of quality, but the most significant changes were in three areas: teaching and learning, ethos, organization of work, and leadership.

Challenges

There were some challenges during the pilot process such as a lack of a culture of sharing/reflecting in schools (reflective practice is not developed within schools), lack of “critical friend” in schools. Low-performing schools were so weak that they needed large-scale capacity building in order to be able to “absorb” learning and exposure to best practices. On the other hand, even high-performing schools had poor capacities to identify, reflect on and share their own best practices. Additionally, the lack of financial resources for schools decreased the mobility of teachers.

Throughout peer review and reflection some perspectives were changed in order to meet the priorities of (a) enlargement, and (b) sustainability.

(a) In connection to the expansion of the network, the Share Project plans to be implemented horizontally in the secondary education sector as well. The PLA discussion contributed to the consideration of the possibility of networking of the schools vertically through the education sector, such as linking preschools and primary schools or primary and secondary schools. Also, the network expansion may involve changing the way of networking: instead of the criterion of school performance (which is not always appropriate) a thematic approach could be taken.

b) The sustainability of the network during the PLA workshop identified the necessity of maintaining teachers' enthusiasm and providing financial means to cover the cost of their mobility. In order to recognize the enthusiasm of the teachers, it has been recommended to formally introduce "the award of excellence" to schools participating in such activities and dissemination of good practice. It is possible to encourage local governments to finance and take responsibility. However, not all local governments are in the same position as for financial and human resources. Therefore, a combination of the support from the national level in individual parts of the country and the encouragement of municipalities to take responsibility and provide funding where possible is the right solution for the establishment and sustainability of SHARE.

Possibilities for future development

The priorities in the future are the expansion of the Share network and creation of conditions for sustaining the SHARE network. Possible action for this support includes:

- **Building capacities of practitioners for support of low performing schools to improve their quality through cooperation with peers/networked schools.**
- **Expanding the SHARE network in primary education.**
- **Introduction of the SHARE network in secondary education.**
- **Developing the mechanisms for financial support for schools networking.**
- **Recognising the SHARE project schools as a model of excellence.**
- **Awarding grants to selected schools for hosting, teachers' mobility and building capacities.**

It is feasible to involve other important stakeholders in the project such as parents and students through the Parents' Council and the Students' Parliament or the Youth Office. Since these activities require cross-sectoral cooperation that can be a challenge itself. Therefore, the plan for their involvement will be subsequently drawn up.

4.5 Connecting teachers for professional development

Teacher social and professional networks can support collective learning and innovation, and help to address the risk of professional isolation among individual teachers. A distinction can be drawn between *social hubs* that are, essentially, secure spaces in which those with shared interests in education may collaborate, and *professional networks*, which are more specialised, and help communication within or between professional associations or membership bodies. There is a justification for both types of network, and many points of crossover between them, but their respective strengths and limitations should be acknowledged in the context of school development.

Box 4: “ECEC and primary education” Network (Austria)

In 2013, the Austrian Ministry of Education launched a national development project with the dual aim of strengthening continuity in early language learning, and improving the co-operation of schools and kindergartens to support learner transitions. The project was supported by regional educational authorities and teacher training colleges, and was implemented via a network of 79 participating schools and 100 kindergartens.

The network was formally evaluated, and the experiences had an important impact on the education reform process in 2015/16. This legislation included in particular aspects of sharing information and cooperation between schools and kindergartens, increasing organisational and educational autonomy and a coherent approach to improve the quality of language learning.

The members of the network also played, and continue to play, a decisive role in the implementation of the reforms. Each of the key stakeholder groups has a unique role to play:

- The regional educational authorities became part of a steering body that guides and monitors the overall implementation.
- The teacher training colleges have developed special formats to support school-based training in their regions and continue with newly established research foci on elementary education, transition and continuous language learning.
- The participating schools and kindergartens play an indispensable role as models of educational innovation.
- The scientific support accompanies the systemic implementation process.

The paradigm of co-operation is, step by step, reported to be replacing linear responsibilities and actions within the Austrian education system, and contributing towards stronger cooperation between kindergartens and primary schools, and more effective transitions for children.

The drive towards evidence-based teaching has led to the emergence of networks designed to facilitate the sharing of data and ideas among teachers, university researchers and others involved in education, for example the [Research Schools Network](#), [Evidence Based Teachers Network](#) and the [Evidence Based Education](#) network in the **United Kingdom(England)**. These developments, while laudable, highlight the potential tension between scientific and democratic control over educational practice, and the need to consider how best to quality assure the outputs from teacher-initiated networks^{xxx}.

A mixed methods approach was used for a 2015 study on **teacher networks** in district and charter schools in Philadelphia, in the **United States**. The study found that this teacher social network was important for developing teacher expertise, increasing job satisfaction and persistence, and that there were demonstrable benefits for the school climate^{xxxi}.

In **Slovenia**, a project-based approach has been piloted with a considerable degree of success. This is supported by the National Education Institute of Slovenia (NEIS), who provide input from pedagogical consultants and facilitate project-specific networks on topics ranging from literacy and numeracy development, to assessment methods and other aspects of pedagogy. These networks are time limited, and combine vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms.

In **Latvia**, a state-initiated measure ensures additional financial resources for state gymnasiums and special education institutions to operate as regional support centres. For gymnasiums, this status is linked with teacher professional development and curricula, and for special education institutions it is linked with inclusion. As part of this mandate, these schools are required to organise professional development opportunities with other types of schools, and schools from other regions, as well as between individual teachers, to share and broaden their professional experience. As such, there is an element of compulsion to the model, although this is matched with financial resources.

In **Italy**, funds for in-service training are allocated through the Regional Education Office to individual schools that act as lead schools (School reform law 107/2015). The lead school organises initiatives and activities around a theme of interest for in-service training thus developing a network of teachers working in different schools that share knowledge and experiences.

CASE STUDY 10: Using networks for school management and teacher learning within national education projects: Slovenia

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
3. Motivation & benefits; 4. Roles of different actors; 7. Network development; 8. Impact, quality assurance & evidence

About the networks

In Slovenia, 'project development teams' in basic and secondary schools develop and implement solutions and best practices obtained and evaluated through various projects, such as e-Competent School, Empowering Learners through Improving Reading Literacy and Access to Knowledge, and Assessment for Learning.

For example to ensure sustainability of the literacy project (2011-2013), thematic sub-networks were created in which teachers were organised according to the areas, which were successfully developed within the project. The aim of each network was to promote continued professional growth, expand the knowledge and experience within school collectives, develop good practice in the field of literacy, and help pupils to raise the level of reading literacy. Pedagogical consultants (from NEIS), teachers and experts offered support to schools in the different priorities areas (such as reading and writing techniques, motivation for reading, formative assessment).

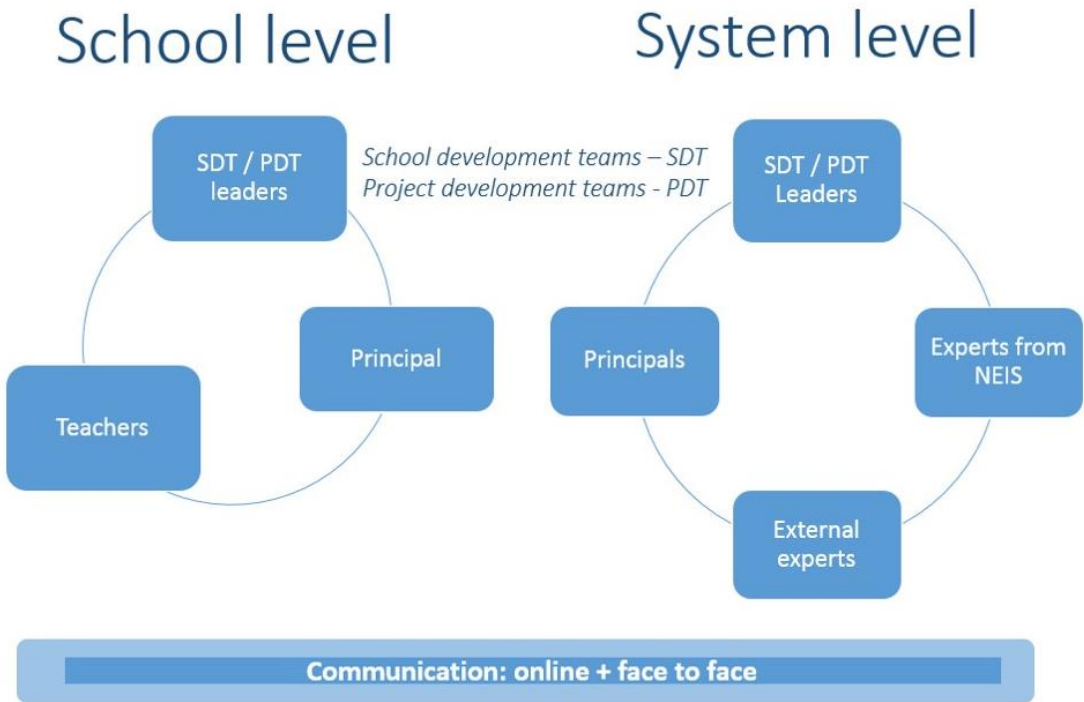


Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

How the networks approach was developed

Initially, School Development Teams (SDTs) were established to create a supportive environment for implementing changes, to promote learning and continued professional growth, and support school leaders in school development planning. The positive experience with establishing SDTs in the process of implementing changes in general upper secondary schools led the National Education Institute of Slovenia (NEIS) to establish new project development teams in basic and secondary schools focused on specific educational issues. The intention is to launch SDTs in all levels of education, not just in upper secondary schools.

A particular strength highlighted in examining this case study is the intended involvement of all schools, and especially the fact that after the funding stopped, schools kept the teams because they saw their value. The national support for the peer learning of teachers, promoting their communication and confidence, is also positive. Nevertheless, there is a strong desire to improve strategies for increasing the “critical mass” of teachers who then cooperate with SDTs and thereby ensure the implementation process at ground level.

Supporting horizontal learning, building a positive school culture, and disseminating best practices via teacher collaboration are all recognised as part of the network activity that can have impact.

Challenges

Key challenges for the Ministry and the Institute are to focus on is the head teacher’s role in the SDT: to strengthen their involvement and ownership as well as include students and parents in the process. In the past parents had been excluded from the process of implementing changes, which is perceived as a weakness of the project networking. The challenge is to find the right balance or level of involvement and to define their role to boost the efficiency of the School Development Team.

Another challenge is to find ways other than just funding – past the initial investment - to keep the networks alive and proactive.

Possibilities for future development

European Social Fund-projects will continue to trigger the process of development work in schools with the help of pedagogical consultants and experts. However, the intention is to focus more on teaching and learning – on the process of networking activity- in addition to the structural organisation of actors.

Holmes^{xxxii} notes that online interactions through social networks that are free of bureaucracy allow teachers to talk more freely about their feelings. Over time, teachers may build communities of trust, reciprocity and shared values. When teachers combine online learning with application in their own classrooms, and are able to see benefits, they are often more willing to invest time in the network.

On an international scale, [eTwinning](#), part of the Erasmus+ programme, provides a forum in which all those working in schools, including teachers, head teachers and librarians, can collaborate, develop projects and participate in an international community of practice^{xxxiii}. Cooperation is encouraged at the levels of both school and individual teachers. eTwinning now has over 500,000 registered users, and involves nearly 180,000 schools. It has been endorsed by the education authorities in a number of Member States, including those such as **Italy**, who have afforded a method of formal recognition.

Other countries have sought to support teacher peer education through more formal policy networks, initiated by government. In **Poland**, the [Platforma Doskonaleniewsieci](#) was established in 2013, as part of a project aiming to support schools and community centres to implement the new national teacher development programme. The project achieved a significant scale, engaging 6,000 schools and kindergartens from 160 districts, and was supported by an online platform.

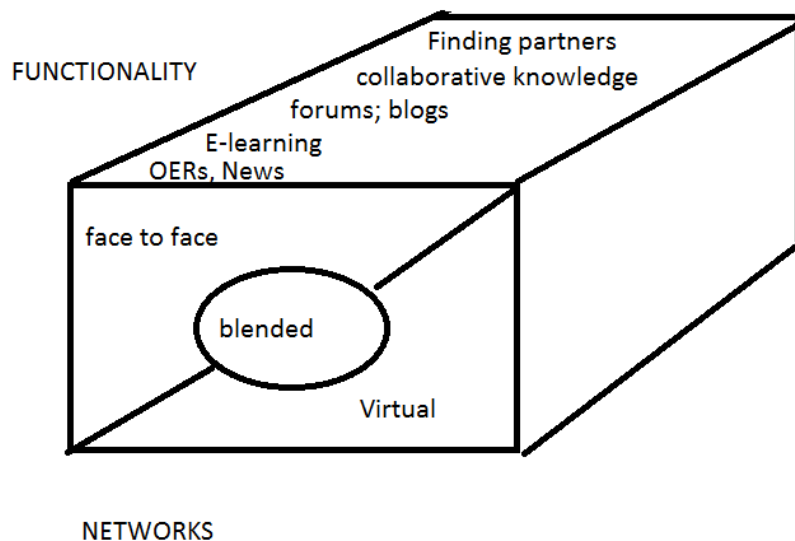
*From: **Guidance on Web-Based Professional Networks for Vocational Teachers** (Education and Training Foundation 2017)^{xxxiv}; a review of a number of virtual professional networks in Europe.*

1. *Repository platforms* serve to store and distribute materials: typically, they are supported by the ministry or a national agency, and they have top-down architecture and management
2. *Actuality platforms* focus more on topicality and innovation. They may be top-down or they may also take the form of market place where teachers may quickly find novel practices and earn royalties by creating their own lessons
3. *Community platforms* serve a reasonably well defined group of users with a focus on interactive communication. Usually a group or association of teachers will have initiated them and they are typically managed in a distributed manner.

A virtual network or web-based network is organised according to a set of on-line services (enabled by Web 2.0) which permit or enhance the communication, learning and collaboration of a group of people. Virtual networks can enhance and extend face to face networking, because they make communication over distance and across time cheap, easy, flexible (both synchronous and asynchronous) and rewarding. They help to sustain communication over time and they can serve to intensify, focus, amplify, multiply and extend interactions. A virtual network can encourage synchronous and asynchronous exchanges, facilitating one-off, just-in-time, or sustained communication, storing information and eliciting emotional and personal commitments.

Virtual networks - and associated platforms operating as the tool - have particular relevance for education professionals. A virtual platform can support the emergence of a 'virtual community of practice' which, in turn, can increase trust and improve the quality and quantity of co-working and, in this way, enable a profession to work more collectively and more effectively. A virtual network can take the form of a unified and integrated set of e-services, called: a virtual or web-based platform. It is also possible for a virtual network to take the form of distinct but inter-connected applications for e-mail, chatting, file-transfer etc. In most cases, virtual platforms are used together with other applications, social media⁴ and e-mail.

Community and institutional platforms benefit from the trust and engagement that has been created in face to face meetings and then carried into virtual encounters. However, this relatively strong sense of community may work against the membership becoming very large. The different functionalities may be offered through face-to-face, virtual or blended network:



Platforms can add value to physical events, making it easier to access presentations and materials and to follow up conversations or collaboration. Platforms can serve to extend face-to-face training, linking it with mentoring, peer-learning and thus have more influence upon instructional practice. Usually, however, linkages with CPD are organised through social media or through other platforms operated by the CPD providers.

In **Spain**, the central administration supports a number of online communities, which enable teachers to share resources and to communicate. The [Web Procomún](#) is one such example. The promotion of such networks is consistent with Spanish education policy, which stresses the importance of teacher cooperation, while recognising that the national administration has no competencies on schools.

⁴ The term social media is understood to refer to a type of internet-based application that permits users to create user-profiles and to upload and share content. Social media can serve as the vehicle for a virtual professional network (e.g. a professional Facebook group) or they can be 'plugged in' to a virtual professional platform in order to enhance its functionality.

CASE STUDY 11: Online platforms to support teacher cooperation: Belgium(Flanders)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Goals; 2. Autonomy, accountability & flexibility; 5. Capacity-building of actors

About the network

'KlasCement' is a peer-to-peer Open Educational Resources platform for teachers. The main function is to operate as a repository for teaching materials and lesson plans, uploaded and shared by users. It lists information on training courses and logged-in users can search for other members to collaborate with. There is also a discussion forum.

The moderation of uploaded material consists of checking if the resources do not consist of fundamental factual errors and if copyright laws are followed. There is no moderation on pedagogical criteria, and no value claims are being made by the moderators or the ministry.



Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

How it was developed

It was founded almost 20 years ago by a teacher and has evolved into a network of more than 100K members and almost 50,000 resources. With the network growing, careful steps were needed to define appropriate levels of intervention by the Ministry, and to empower teachers to share content within an appropriate legal framework.

The Flemish Ministry of Education slowly invested more and more resources into it: in 2002 funding a part-time teacher to moderate the educational resources until it was brought into the ministry with a professional team of 20 part-time posted teachers and IT developers.

Some of its particular strengths, as identified by other Working Group members, are the large number of users; the taking on of the large administrative burden by the ministry; and the taking responsibility for publishing standards and improving the online functions.

Challenges

With the increasing involvement of the government a perception has developed of government interference in the resources themselves. Due to the strict moderation on copyright, barriers for sharing were also increased, raising the question as to how to keep involving and facilitating the use of the platform and the sharing of educational resources. Although government intervention has created a stable and safe environment for the network, where funding is secured, it has also created a tension between what users want and what policy makers could do with user information.

Rapid technological changes and the emergences of other, often private, social networks have also raised questions of the role of the platform and whether it should be making other offers to teachers through different networking functions such as discussion forums.

KlasCement has grown organically into the network it is today, but it is clear that the needs of users have evolved too and the way the ministry sees the network may not be the same as user perceptions. There is a desire to investigate if their goals are still valid and if the network is still organised in the most effective and efficient way to reach those goals.

Key questions

- ▶ How can we keep facilitating and stimulating the participation of teachers in OER-networks?
- ▶ How do we ensure that KlasCement is responsive within policy development but also to the needs of the teachers?


 **Vlaanderen** is onderwijs & vorming **DEPARTEMENT** ONDERWIJS & VORMING

Image source: Peer Learning Activity case study presentation

Possibilities for future development

The ministry aims to now engage with the most active users (key network actors) as 'ambassadors' for the online network and take steps based on their views and expertise. By doing this they hope to take away part of government label of rubber-stamping that the network has for some teachers and to stay responsive to their needs.

<https://www.klascement.net/>

4.6 Multi-stakeholder networks targeting specific groups of learners

While education policy and practice networks in education are invariably concerned with schools, school leaders and teachers, it is important to consider the roles of a much wider and more diverse set of key stakeholders within the system. The concept of multiple stakeholder accountability has gained increasing prominence in educational discourses, including in the work of the OECD. As Hooge^{xxxv} argues, horizontal measures involving a range of stakeholders can significantly enhance and strengthen vertical measures of regulatory and school performance accountability, to address the full range of school improvement objectives within increasingly complex education systems.

Multi-stakeholder networks also offer enhanced scope and capacity for meeting the needs of specific populations or learners with additional needs, as ‘inclusive systems’ geared towards learner development^{xxxvi}. As such, they are a common feature of programmes developed to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners, such as those at risk of Early School Leaving (ESL), migrant and minority ethnic groups, and learners with special educational needs.

Box 5: Examples of multi-stakeholder networks for specific groups of learners

The [Drop-out network and Central help desk in Antwerp city](#) in **Belgium** supports both students and schools. Students who are frequently absent from school are referred to the Pupil Guidance Centre. The Centre in turn may seek support of the Central Helpdesk, which is at the centre of a network (the Antwerp City Council, Antwerp Education Council, school administrations, Pupil Guidance Centres, Social Welfare Services, Youth Services, the Police force and the Justice Department). The Helpdesk will help to tailor services to the needs of early school learners or those who at risk.

The [School Completion Programme](#) in **Ireland** enables local communities to develop tailored strategies for learners at risk of early school leaving. A Local Management Committee (LMC) which brings together representatives of schools, parent and other local voluntary and statutory services to make decisions on project management and govern local resource use. The network arranges appropriate supports for learners to improve access participation and outcomes.

In the **United Kingdom(England)**, the Department for Education and Department of Health jointly funded a [Mental Health Services and Schools Link Pilot Programme](#). In total, 22 local partnerships were selected, bringing together clusters of schools, health services, and voluntary sector partners, to develop a ‘whole system’ approach towards improving mental health support in schools. An independent evaluation found that the pilots were successful in establishing trust between professionals; developing more coherent pathways, and identifying and referring students at an earlier stage. Multiple stakeholder accountability was a key success factor^{xxxvii}.

In 2014 the **Iceland** Ministry of Education, Science and Culture published a White Paper on educational reform. One of the main targets set in the paper was to raise reading literacy levels and the ministry identified specific goals such as increasing curriculum time for literacy,

ensuring schools set a literacy policy, and convincing parents/guardians of the importance of reading. In order to initiate action towards these goals, a network was set up by bringing together the state, local authorities and stakeholder organisations. A national campaign was carried out which involved the Minister of Education making an agreement with every municipality in the country on how to work together towards the goal. The role of the National Parents Association in drawing attention to the importance of reading literacy is recognised as having been influential.

In **Latvia** in 2017, the ESF project “Prevention of and Intervention to Early School Leaving” started for the purposes of reducing early school leaving among children and youth. It is implementing preventive and intervention measures in 665 educational institutions for pupils in grades 5 to 12 of general education institutions, as well as for pupils of years 1 to 4 of VET institutions and general education institutions which implement VET programmes.

The project promotes the establishment of a system of sustainable co-operation between municipality, school, teachers, support staff and parents in order to identify at-risk learners in a timely manner and provide them with personalized support. Teachers are given opportunities to professionalize and strengthen skills for working with young people. A database will be created, which will ensure regular exchange of information at state, local government and school level of pupils at risk of early school leaving, together with preventive measures and their outcomes.

Beyond pilot programmes and projects, many countries have taken measures to review and strengthen governance arrangements at a municipal level to ensure that schools are networked with a full complement of support services to meet young people’s needs. Multi-disciplinary teams and cross sectoral networks are now fairly well established across Europe, and have been the subject of previous research^{xxxviii}.

‘Early Help Hubs’ in the **United Kingdom** are one such example of multi-agency locality clusters, which support joint planning and information sharing between schools and other youth and community services, and which play a key role in safeguarding and child protection. In **Portugal**, the ministry has taken measures to review how best to systematize the links between the TEIP school clusters and municipal social services representatives, to facilitate a joined-up approach, while in **Slovakia** the March 2015 [Act on Vocational Education and Training \(61/2015\)](#) requires that employers participate actively within the dual system of secondary school education, to strengthen links with the labour market and to ensure a breadth of VET opportunities. Some 1,450 employers and 7 professional associations are part of this network at a national level.

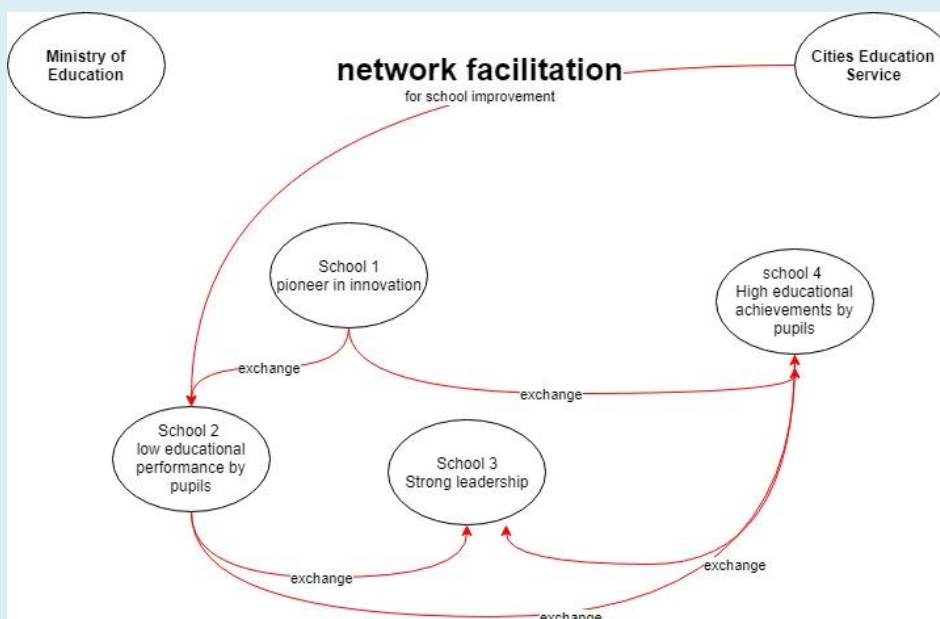
CASE STUDY 12: From partnerships to networks in local settings: Eurocities

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

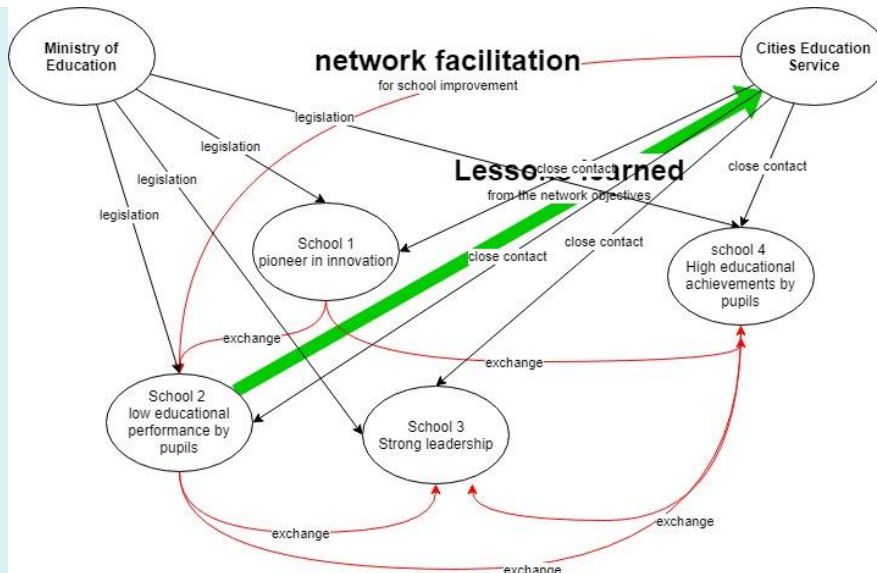
5. Capacity-building of actors; 6. Cross-sectoral working

At a local level, individual teachers/schools often search for solutions all independently. By accident they may meet and a partnership has born with two or three school(teams) who start experimenting. At some point, the partnership is noticed by the authorities and gets the chance to develop as local authorities may provide a more structured and extended shape leading to the formation of a network. Each partner tends to add their part of the puzzle and the teachers and/or schools start learning from each other.

There is a contrast between 'vertical' networks, that tend to be hierarchical or institutionalised (e.g. school networks and councils) and 'horizontal' networks, which may be characterised as peer-to-peer and small scale and include: learning networks; networks for innovation; networks to support work preventing students dropping out; networks for the labour market and networks for the integration of newcomers. A variety of stakeholders might be involved: school principals and staff; contact persons and coordinators; teacher training institutions; the ministry; the city or municipality; unions.

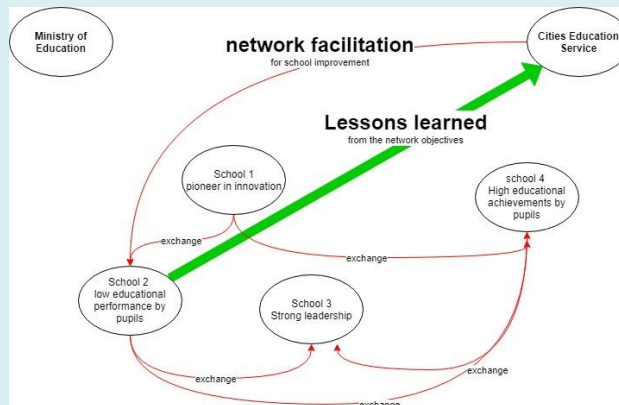


There are a number of requirements for any facilitator of a network that is created from partnerships and that is working on particular aspects of learner development. These include: trust building and maintaining a balance of benefits; supporting the process as well as the structure; and keeping the goals clear and focused given that the learner group needs may be diverse.

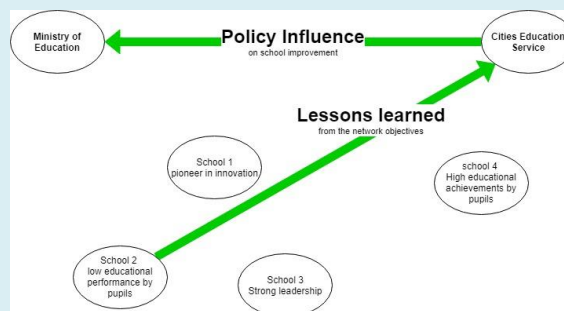


The challenge in such facilitation (see graphic above) is the potential for chaos in the connections. There is a risk of overloading demands on the actors and competing with all other 'important' issues in school education as well as the wider community. A possible temptation, with such increased connectivity, is also to use this access to schools as a way of engaging with and affecting learners' behaviour in increasing ways.

Nevertheless, there are two clear possibilities for using such networks with a positive outcome. The first is learning lessons from ground level whilst also actively helping specific groups of learners directly:



The second is having an impact from the local level on national policy making:



5. Reflection: practical steps to the effective use of networks

5.1 The purpose of networks in school education

With education systems presenting ever greater complexity in the context of globalisation and digitalisation, and decentralisation and school autonomy, there is a keen interest in networks as a way of supporting the interactions between key system actors, and as a tool for harnessing this connectivity to achieve defined educational goals.

As we have discussed throughout the report, networks are both a pre-condition for well-functioning education systems, and a policy lever for managing interactions between different educational sub-systems to achieve greater equity, efficiency and quality. They can be permanent structures, or a function of temporary ‘experimental’ stages in policy development; formally or informally constituted; centrally managed and directed, or operating on the basis of consensual decision-making across multiple stakeholders. Networks have a special set of characteristics that are not always present within more conventional educational hierarchies.

A priority for the Working Group was to establish *when* and *how* best to harness the potential of networks within different educational contexts, but also to understand the potential benefits and challenges of doing so, drawing upon examples from across Europe. In the previous sections of this report we identified broad types of networks and reviewed the evidence from research alongside the contributions of Working Group representatives to consider how they have been put into practice, and with what results. Across these diverse examples, three broad types emerge, which policy makers may consider when reflecting on their own use of networks: as policy or practice incubators; as a tool for educational governance; and as a complementary and participatory entity.

Networks as policy or practice incubators – across many European countries, it is apparent that networks provide a way to test and experiment; often in the context of pilot projects or initiatives, and with specific issues in mind, such as tackling school under-performance, Early School Leaving, or supporting the educational inclusion of newly arrived migrant children. These networks are typically, but not always, time-limited in their nature, and rely in the suspension of ‘business as usual’ to create the conditions for innovation, whether this is in the form of regulatory exemptions, additional funding, or the provision of extra staffing or infrastructure.

Networks as a tool for educational governance - a further set of networks reviewed through the Working Group concern accountability and resource management at different levels within the system – both vertically (national, regional and local), and horizontally (between schools, and with other key stakeholders at a defined scale). These networks have more explicitly spatial dimensions, concerning the evolving geographies of national education systems and the actors within them; the levels at which leadership is distributed, and the relationships between formal and non-formal networks and interest groups.

Networks as a complementary entity – a final set of networks stand out as being more explicitly ‘bottom-up’ in their nature, evolving at some distance from national policy-making on an entirely peer-to-peer basis between schools or teachers, or in some instances in an oppositional or compensatory role to address perceived shortcomings in national policy or funding. These networks can range from more formal networks of independent schools - developing in a negotiated relationship with national government and within the legal parameters of different national education systems - to informal teacher social networks and resource-sharing platforms.

5.2 The role of different actors

Given the purposes described above (5.1), in many of the network examples considered for the report, the role of government was primarily **facilitation**: maintaining a balance between regulation and financial responsibilities on the one hand, and creating spaces for teachers, schools and other key stakeholders to take an active role in testing and innovating on the other. Repeatedly within the examples reviewed by the Working Group, networks were found to be based upon establishing trust and equity; capturing participants’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and clearly articulating the benefits of the time invested. The most effective networks adopted a self-critical approach – periodically reflecting upon their value and relevance, and making adjustments as necessary to keep pace with political, social and economic changes.

The report has also highlighted the evolving sets of **competences** required for educators operating within a networked environment. At their most rudimentary level, networks concern connectivity between different social actors, and as such they require the ability for empathy and self-reflection, and an openness to inter-cultural learning. The examples reviewed by the Working Group also highlighted the need for specific roles within different types of networks, however, and underlined the importance of systems leadership – whether residing at a national, regional or municipal level, or in the context of school systems. The regional scale emerged as being particularly significant for networks aspiring towards national coverage, and some countries were in the process of scoping the optimum role for regional authorities in mediating between national and local priorities.

Finally, the examples in this report underline the importance of **monitoring and evaluation**. While many of the networks presented by the members of the Working Group demonstrated promising results and were potentially innovative their context and processes, comparatively few have yet to be independently evaluated and able to demonstrate more tangible impacts. The international research literature includes many more examples of educational networks that have been rigorously evaluated using ‘strong’ research designs (including the use of quasi-experimental methods). Evaluation may seem more difficult where networks are informal or emerging but should be equally encouraged. Further research and evaluation of networks within European school education would seem to be a priority, to adopt a more evidence-informed approach in this area.

5.3 Guiding principles – a checklist for policy makers

From the network examples described in Section 4, the Working Group identified key challenges and possible courses of action in order to meet those challenges through the effective integration of networks within school education systems. These have been combined together with an extended version of the guiding principles (Section 2) to create a 'checklist' for policy makers, network leaders and other key decision-makers.

1. GOAL-SETTING AND SHARED GOALS

- a) There is a **clear vision** for the network which will inspire the cooperation of different actors, in the interest of school development.
- b) The network is focussed on **clear and shared goals** as the **first stage** in network development, to engage the appropriate actors and in an appropriate network structure, and to make sure the work benefits all involved.
- c) The shared goals are (or will be) regularly **reviewed and redefined** as the network evolves.

2. AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY & FLEXIBILITY

- a) Attention is paid to the **decision-making** capacity of different actors and their sense of agency and responsibility, in order to promote **equity** and **shared accountability** amongst network actors. [One tool may be a form of 'contract' setting out the network objectives, strategy and quality].
- b) There are mechanisms and time invested for policy makers to listen to the **needs and feedback** of schools - both inside and outside of the mainstream system - and regional authorities, and for **decision-making** by different network actors.
- c) Government involvement in networks recognises an **appropriate balance of**

top-down support and recognition with bottom-up action or lower level horizontal working to ensure a positive sense of autonomy and accountability.

- d) There is **flexibility** within policies in order to encourage increased activity (exploration, collaboration, innovation) in networks; for example where freedom of choice of pedagogical approaches or within curricula encourages pilot projects to happen.
- e) **Self-assessment** - a process of critical reflection against a set of targets or expectations (for example when reviewing and renewing school development plans) - is encouraged to help identify or **motivate** new network actors; help existing members identify their own **needs**; and contribute to network development with an increased sense of **ownership**.

3. MOTIVATION & BENEFITS

- a) The network is situated in an **open and supportive** environment to provide a platform for supporting inter-school and inter-professional **exchanges** of teachers and pupils for school improvement.
- b) The network actively **balances different interests** within and between different system levels where these do not detract from the shared goals.

- c) Consideration is given to potential friction and competition between schools or other actors which can undermine the cohesiveness of networks. Steps are in place to **manage and resolve conflicts** where these arise.
- d) Network activity is structured in a way that clearly demonstrate that the **inputs** (such as time or resources) are **proportionate to the outputs**.

4. ROLES OF DIFFERENT ACTORS

- a) The network promotes cooperation between actors, in particular teachers:
 - a) giving **time and permission** for dedicated activities;
 - b) assuring **recognition**;
 - c) giving them a **voice** and using that **feedback**;
 - d) assuring a climate of **trust**.
- b) Actors are made **aware of their role** within the network, especially those in a key position to lead, moderate or evaluate activity or dissemination (as this may be **different to their daily professional tasks**).
- c) **Leadership** is supported as an important factor in the network: both **school leaders** with multiple areas of responsibility and the effective **distribution of leadership** are important within networks.

5. CAPACITY-BUILDING OF ACTORS

- a) Networking - as a part of a teacher's **collaborative competence**⁵ - is introduced at the stage of **Initial Teacher Education (ITE)** and developed through **Continued Professional Development (CPD)**.

⁵ This includes specific skills of peer learning, self-reflection and self-evaluation, resource creation and sharing (including OER and digital tools),

- b) There is both **horizontal and vertical cooperation** within the network, as well as between networks and the school education system more broadly. This may be supported by the use of digital technology.
- c) Actors working as **mediators** between system levels are offered particular support, training or increased capacity to act and take decisions, compared to their daily professional tasks.
- d) **Targeted outreach** is made with adequate support and resources to ensure that all schools that need to benefit from network participation can do so.
- e) Care is taken not to **overload** particular actors or points with tasks or expectations - this will weaken the **capacity to act** and therefore the connections and the network as a whole.

6. CROSS-SECTORAL WORKING

- a) The network is able to establish strong **links** between different sectors and stakeholders via i) identifying points of **shared interest** that resonate with individual or organisational priorities, and, if necessary, ii) aligning **policy development cycles** of different sectors.
- b) The network is able to support **evidence-based** policymaking and practice by **making connections** between **actor-led experimentation** and external **pedagogical research**, such as between schools and universities.
- c) The intersections between networks at local, regional, national and international levels are identified and

collaborative project management, and communicating outside of the school community.

exploited as spaces for hidden innovations to be discovered, shared and replicated. These opportunities are enhanced where **multiple networks overlap** and different actors are well-connected.

7. NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

- a) The network is both **flexible** and **well-supported with resources** in order to maximise its impact and enable innovation.
- b) The timeframe of the network is carefully considered, recognising that networks may be **temporary** or more **long-term**. They may be **emerging** or **shifting** in form and purpose. They may exist as an **initial phase** of a broader or longer strategic plan, such as establishing and embedded a **culture** of collaboration. Networks may be established at the point of project planning in order to carry out that activity but may also make **lasting connections** of which project activity may be one part.
- c) The development of the network is **guided by the actors** with ownership, recognising that more active / connected actors may be best used as ambassadors to strengthen, broaden or steer the development of the network.

- d) It is understood that networks can inform decisions about the **optimum distribution of resources** across / within education systems, including the extent to which budgets are centralised or decentralised.

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE & EVIDENCE

- a) Mechanisms for **monitoring** and **evaluation** are established in the life cycle as key to understanding the effectiveness of a network, including how or whether it has a) engaged the relevant stakeholders; b) stimulated the desired actions and behaviours, and c) achieved the desired results or outcomes.
- b) It has been considered if and how progress and outcomes will be **measured**, to establish a need for and define key **indicators**, and to decide **how and by whom** they will be measured.
- c) **Self-reflection** and self-evaluation by all actors is established as key to the mutual and ongoing development of a network.
- d) Appropriate data generated by networks are taken into account at both **local and national** levels of decision-making.

6. List of country and stakeholder examples

- ▶ **Box 1: Examples of inter/transnational policy networks in a European context** 13
 ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education), ATEE (Association for Teacher Education in Europe), European Schoolnet, SIRIUS and UNESCO Associated Schools Project.
- ▶ **Case Study 1: Cross-border networks of schools: European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE)**..... 15
 The organisation brings together Steiner Waldorf school associations from 28 European countries to report on important developments in the member countries, to exchange good practice and to coordinate joint activities and advocacy around shared goals.
- ▶ **Example: NCCA Curriculum consultation (Ireland)**..... 18
 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) uses online consultation process to inform policy development.
- ▶ **Box 2: National Policy Networks**..... 18
Schoolnetwork21 (Switzerland) aims to foster sustainable development within schools, covering topics ranging from human rights, to health promotion and environmental sustainability.

National Pilot Programmes for Pedagogical Innovation and Curricular Flexibility (Portugal) aims to provide additional freedoms to school clusters and to work collaboratively to develop localised solutions to policy issues.
- ▶ **Case Study 2: Making new links across closed networks for professional and institutional development (Croatia)** 19
 State-initiated networks of County Council leaders carry out and coordinate the tasks of professional development of teachers, educational school experts and principals.
- ▶ **Case Study 3: Targeted support to curriculum teaching and learning (Greece)**..... 21
 State-initiated **Network of Environmental Education Centres (EECs)** functions as learning and training organisations, raising students’ awareness and training teachers on environmental issues, and embedding environmental education within the secondary education phase.
- ▶ **Box 3: Strengthening regional and sub-regional educational governance** 23
 OECD recommendation to **Estonia** and policy examples from **United Kingdom(England)** and **Italy** presenting networks as an opportunity to facilitate cooperation between various educational stakeholders and actors and to stimulate a more coordinated approach towards school improvement.
- ▶ **Case Study 4: Regional networks for local implementation (Norway)** 25
 Networks of various local stakeholders create a co-operation forum and aim to stimulate local ownership and assure responsible use of the received grants.

- ▶ **Case Study 5: First steps in using an established regional network for new teacher professional development policy action (Sweden)** 27
State-initiated network of regional coordinators aims to build a systematic approach to Continued Professional Development (CPD).
- ▶ **Example: Primary school networks (Cyprus).....** 30
System of primary school networks and teacher learning communities, recognised by the state and incorporated into the educational system.
- ▶ **Example: School Excellence Fund – clusters and networks to support innovation (Ireland)** 31
School Excellence Fund (SEF) was established to enable schools to apply for funding to implement innovative programmes which are context-specific and aimed at improving learning outcomes.
- ▶ **Case Study 6: Transition from one structural leadership to another (Catholic Education Flanders / EFEE).....** 32
Network of schools aiming to (re)define and expand the role of their school boards and the competences of school leaders.
- ▶ **Case Study 7: Supporting learning and cooperation between innovative schools (Finland)....** 33
The 'Lighthouse' project is a national network that aims to support and increase common learning and cooperation between schools, encourage goal-oriented development and experimentation, and help to share the new pedagogical approaches and innovation.
- ▶ **Case Study 8: Making new links across closed networks for professional and institutional development (Portugal)** 35
The Priority Intervention Educational Territories Programme (TEIP) is an educational policy measure promoting inclusion through the support of schools and school clusters located in the most disadvantaged/ challenging regions.
- ▶ **Case Study 9: Horizontal learning between 'high' and 'low' performing schools (Serbia).....** 37
The SHARE project focuses on the development and verification of a program of horizontal learning and its implementation among schools based on the networking of the teachers between schools.
- ▶ **Box 4: 'ECEC and primary education' Network** 39
State-initiated national project aiming to strengthen continuity in early language learning, and improve the co-operation of schools and kindergartens to support learner transitions.
- ▶ **Example: Evidence-sharing networks (United Kingdom(England))** 40
Research Schools Network, Evidence Based Teachers Network and Evidence Based Education Network were launched to facilitate the sharing of data and ideas among teachers, university researchers and others involved in education.
- ▶ **Example: Financial resources for regional support between schools (Latvia)** 40
A state measure providing funds for individual schools to facilitate cooperation between schools and individual teachers and their joint development.

- ▶ **Example: School reform law 107/2015 (Italy)**..... 40
A state measure providing funds for individual schools to act as lead schools, organising training activities and developing a network of teachers.
- ▶ **Case Study 10: Using networks for school management and teacher learning within national education projects (Slovenia)** 41
School Development Teams (SDTs) were established to support development and implementation of solutions and best practices, to promote learning and continued professional growth and to support school leaders in school development planning.
- ▶ **Example: eTwinning (Europe)**..... 43
eTwinning, part of the Erasmus+ programme, provides a forum in which all educational actors can collaborate, develop projects and participate in an international community of practice.
- ▶ **Example: Platforma Doskonaleniewsieci (Poland)** 43
The teacher peer education project aims to support schools and community centres to implement the new national teacher development programme.
- ▶ **Example: Web Procomún (Spain)** 44
The online community aims to create a space enabling teachers to communicate and to share resources.
- ▶ **Case Study 11: Online platforms to support teacher cooperation (Belgium(Flanders))** 45
'KlasCement' is a peer-to-peer Open Educational Resources platform for teachers, functioning as a repository for teaching materials and lesson plans, uploaded and shared by users.
- ▶ **Box 5: Examples of multi-stakeholder networks for specific groups of learners** 47
Drop-out network and Central help desk in Antwerp city (Belgium); School Completion Programme (Ireland); Mental Health Services and Schools Link Pilot Programme (United Kingdom(England)); Network to promote reading literacy campaign (Iceland); Prevention of and Intervention to Early School Leaving (Latvia).
- ▶ **Example: National network of VET schools and employers (Slovakia)** 48
Act on Vocational Education and Training (61/2015) requires that employers participate actively within the dual system of secondary school education, to strengthen links with the labour market and to ensure a breadth of VET opportunities.
- ▶ **Case Study 12: From partnerships to networks in local settings (Eurocities)** 49
Analysis of different types of networks of educational actors and stakeholders and the appropriate methods of facilitating them.

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