

ELNE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025



**DIMENSIONS OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP –
EXPLORING TOGETHER**



Wednesday, 14th May 2025 Brussels, Belgium

EVENT REPORT

ELNE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

DIMENSIONS OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP – EXPLORING TOGETHER

On 14 May 2025, the Educational Leadership Network Europe (ELNE) hosted its second Annual Conference in Brussels, bringing together education leaders, practitioners, students, parents, civil society and policymakers from across Europe. The Conference provided a dynamic platform for refining ELNE's shared understanding of collaborative educational and school leadership and discussing how it can drive more inclusive and democratic education systems.

Opening remarks by the ELNE Leaders set the tone of the day by highlighting the essential link between education and society. In the face of global challenges and shifting policy landscape, they stressed the urgency of bottom-up, inclusive decision-making in a rapidly changing world.



The high-level panel that followed explored systemic approaches to inclusive education, with contributions from the European Parliament, the Polish Presidency of the Council, the European Commission, and Cedefop. The discussion highlighted the need for intersectional collaboration and more personalised learning approaches.

To continue, ELNE's Research Committee presented the ELNE draft definition of collaborative educational and school leadership, grounded in three foundational dimensions: culture, structure, and resources. These were positioned as essential pillars for creating democratic and resilient education systems. Through small working group discussions, Conference delegates provided input and feedback to refine the draft definition, acknowledging the diversity of leadership practices across Europe, shared challenges and a persistent gap between research and practice.



The next part of the programme focused on best practices that illustrated how collaborative leadership can be implemented both systemically and at the institutional level. The presented initiatives demonstrated that inclusive policymaking can be achieved through student-led campaigns, cross-sector stakeholder engagement, and co-designed projects. Examples highlighted the importance of dialogue, trust, and shared ownership in shaping educational policies that reflect the needs of all actors. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of middle leadership and local autonomy. While time and resources were identified as barriers, all examples reinforced the idea that meaningful collaboration, supported by clear structures and strong interpersonal relationships, leads to more democratic and effective school leadership.



Additionally, working group discussions took place in between panels and revealed that a common understanding of collaborative leadership remains elusive across Europe. Many participants noted the lack of shared terminology and frameworks, and highlighted barriers such as administrative constraints and limited stakeholder engagement. However, these dialogues also reinforced the desire to find context-sensitive, participatory models of school leadership.



The day concluded with closing remarks from the European Commission's DG for Education and Culture and the ELNE leaders, who called for continued exploration of best practices and further integration of collaborative leadership at all levels. It was highlighted that leadership is not innate but learned, and that the speed of societal change demands more agile, responsive education systems. Collaborative leadership, it was concluded, must be lived, not merely defined.

As ELNE moves forward, this Conference marked another milestone in reinforcing the Community's commitment to democratic and inclusive education systems across Europe.

Follow ELNE on social media:



@elnenetwork



ELNENetwork



Educational Leadership
Network Europe