

# ELNE Journal



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## Reflections on Collaborative Leadership

The promise and complexity of collaborative  
leadership in education

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP  
FOR THE FUTURE OF  
EDUCATION

## European Education Month

A comprehensive look at key highlights and  
initiatives from the ELNE's flagship event



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## ELNE Partners







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## *Letter from the Editors*

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to share with you the fifth edition of the ELNE Journal.

In this issue, we continue to explore the role of collaborative leadership for the future of education. The journal brings together a diverse set of materials that reflect the work and thinking happening across the ELNE community and beyond.

We begin by taking a walk through the work of the ELNE Research Committee, who during this ELNE Year has led the process of drafting an ELNE collaborative educational and school leadership definition. In their published paper, the Research Committee recognises the challenge of creating one single and unified European definition for collaborative leadership in education, but identifies common denominators that allow for a shared understanding across Europe and diverse type of stakeholders. It is the input of these stakeholders, then, that complete the work of the Research Committee. You'll find research-based reflections from highly-steemed leadership experts and institutional ELNE members examining both, the promise, and the complexity of collaboration in education.

Furthermore, in this Journal you can find a quick snapshot of the European Education Month 2025. The section compiles key takeaways from dozens of webinars, covering topics like school resilience, inclusive leadership, and the future of teacher development.

Also featured is a collection of contributions under ELNE Voices, where member organisations respond to the question of how they engage with or influence collaborative leadership. These responses highlight both the diversity of contexts in which ELNE members work and the shared challenges they face.

Whether you work in a school, a university, a training centre, or at a policy level, we hope this issue offers insights that are relevant to your context and perhaps challenge some assumptions as well.

Our best wishes,

the ELNE team



## Who are we?

ELNE is the Educational Leadership Network Europe, a passionate and committed community of education stakeholders working to enhance and strengthen collaborative leadership in education in Europe.

Set up under the Erasmus+ framework of the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, ELNE is a prominent network in Europe that involves all different types of stakeholders from all levels of the education and training sector, from Early Childhood Education and Care to Higher Education, Adult Learning, and Teacher Training among others. It has the ultimate goal of improving the learning outcomes for students and is founded on the conviction that quality education is at the heart of social progress.

This Europe-wide, ever-growing network is currently composed of over 60 member organisations from 27 countries, including European-level networks, universities, and various national, regional, and local institutions in the education and training sector. They represent the voices of tens of thousands of education employers, teachers, school heads, parents, students, researchers, policymakers, and more.

ELNE provides its community with a platform to 1) showcase and disseminate exemplary educational research and practices; 2) break the silos by participating in a meaningful dialogue with representatives from other stakeholder groups; and 3) get inspired and empowered to shape the future of education.

## Our work

ELNE aims to promote and support the enhancement of collaborative educational and school leadership in Europe, which is crucial in light of the new needs that schools have. For this, effective collaboration and a full engagement of the actors at an institutional level is needed. In line with the objectives of the European Education Area (EEA), the Network actively works on the reduction of early school leaving; the enhancement of the well-being of students, teachers, and school leaders; the digitisation of schools; and the continuous professional training of teachers and school leaders; among other things.

Every year ELNE launches a set of **calls for applications** in search of the most inspiring practices and research from different places across Europe. These showcases have collaborative leadership as a focus, as a means, and as an ultimate goal. They aim to empower our audience to transfer these successful examples into their own context, adapting them to seize the opportunities and tackle the challenges specific to their situation.

To share and spread the first-hand knowledge acq-

quired from our community of key stakeholders, ELNE has two main channels. The **European Education Month** (EEM), a month-long online forum of dynamic and innovative webinars and events organised by education professionals from across Europe. This month encompasses the **European Educational Leadership Week**, where webinars are collaboratively organised by the ELNE Lead Partners. During the **EEM 2025**, this initiative will focus on Collaborative Leadership for the Future of Education.

The **ELNE Journals** are the main dissemination material of ELNE. They are published three times a year to share the best practices and research collected by ELNE, along with valuable insights from the members of its community.

In addition, ELNE publishes annual **research conclusions** and **policy recommendations**, informing the policy work of international organisations such as the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

## Introduction

(OECD), and national-level decision-makers, in order to support practice- and evidence-informed policymaking and research implementation.

As a result, the ELNE offers a unique value proposition to the different groups of stakeholders that it encompasses: visibility of their work; a source of inspiration for practice and research; the possibility of **contributing to collaboratively finding solutions** for some of the biggest challenges in the education sector; and access to a wide network of education stakeholders. The ELNE offers its members the opportunity to shape the future of education together.

## Our mission

The mission of ELNE is to enhance and strengthen collaborative leadership in education in Europe. Collaborative leadership refers to the process of strategically using the unique skills and knowledge of teachers, school leaders, pupils and parents towards achieving common educational goals. It needs to be effective to ensure the competence development of teachers and school leaders and improve the learning outcomes for students. It has, therefore, a central role in the quality of learning outcomes, as it has the ability to influence the motivation and capacities of students, teachers, school leaders and the school's environment.

But educational leadership is shifting. School leaders, managers and staff in education are taking different or increasingly broader leadership roles. Moreover, teachers, students and parents also need to be considered as leaders, as their self-organised, democratic and independent representative structures are untapped resources that can greatly improve the quality and accessibility of our education systems.

Collaborative educational leadership, we believe, is the key framework to achieving this. For this reason, ELNE's specific objectives are the following:

## Our objectives

1



**Open and connect the silos** by providing a collaborative platform for EU-level cooperation between stakeholders that do not normally engage or exchange. ELNE aims to become a relevant, reputable, and sustainable community for the running of schools and higher education institutions.

2

**Promote joint work between schools, relevant local organisations, and policymakers.**



3



**Identify, share, and promote effective policy practices and stimulate innovation and strategic development in policy implementation and provision** through the collection of relevant research and good practices that can inspire and guide other organisations to implement the EEA goals.

4

**Promote practice- and research-informed policymaking and research implementation.**



5



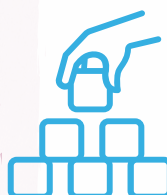
**Support the work of the European Commission's Working Groups and contribute to policy developments towards achieving the goals of the European Education Area** by becoming a forum of discussion where to explore how research and policy guidelines can be implemented at different levels.

6

**Promote a whole schooling approach.**



7



**Support the creation of comprehensive systems and institutional-level changes** and highlight the importance of involving social partners and other relevant stakeholders in decision-making.



# **Background document**

**prepared by the ELNE  
Research Committee**

Ahead of the ELNE Annual Conference, the ELNE Research Committee developed a background document which outlined their ongoing work on the concept of collaborative leadership and its key dimensions. This document was intended not as a final product, but as a working draft - designed to be developed further through discussion and collaboration during the conference itself.

# BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

## PREPARED BY ELNE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

### Introduction

Research and theories on leadership were initially interested in the single leader possessing the formal leadership position in the organisation. This may represent how leadership was also arranged and managed at the time.

Research and theories on both organisations and leadership have since been evolving, looking at educational and school leadership as **multi-actor interaction processes** and at organisations not solely as structures but also as communities of people. There are two fundamental reasons for this. One, the single-leader approach was not sufficient for organisations to reach the missions/goals set for them in the evolving environment. Two, our values have evolved, emphasising inclusion, democracy and ownership in societies, organisations and professional communities. This is neither possible with the single-leader approach. It is essential, however, to emphasise that the transition towards multi-actor leadership processes does not diminish the significance of formal leadership structures across countries. Rather, it fosters synergies in which formally appointed leaders also have an important role as active contributors within educational leadership communities, supporting and co-developing collaborative leadership practices.

The evolution of research on the transition from the single- to the multi-actor leadership has included several phases and applied a corresponding variation of concepts to describe the theories and approaches. This evolution is also explicitly visible in the continuum of the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL 2011-2015), European Education Policy Network (EEPNoSL, 2019-2022) and Educational Leadership Network Europe (ELNE, 2023-2027) as presented in ELNE Journal 3 (2024). In addition, our understanding of what all must be considered and included in education and leadership in education has expanded and deepened.

For the **second ELNE year**, the Research Committee was asked to come up with a definition for collaborative leadership which could serve as a common foundation for ELNE. Based on the work of the EPNoSL, EEPNoSL and particularly ELNE, on research on education and leadership in education, European education policy work and ELNE webinars on inspiring practice, policy and research, we present the following **definition, dimensions and key questions** to guide and support transforming educational organisations and systems into systemic and holistic learning communities which manifest in practice the kind of collaborative leadership we would like educational organisations and systems to have to build corresponding societies and future. The definition and dimensions we put to the test with the whole ELNE community both at the annual conference and elsewhere. We hope that this joint process will guide and support us in forming the ELNE second year policy recommendations and deciding what to focus on in the third year of ELNE.



It is essential to note that the work of the Research Committee is not aimed at providing a universal definition for collaborative leadership but a normative one that both describes the kind of collaborative leadership we would like to see in practice and that would guide and support us in achieving the desired collaborative leadership. In addition, in order to achieve this goal, we must emphasise the bottom-up approach supported by the whole system in a holistic manner. Furthermore, we must focus on achieving the intended collaborative leadership in practice and both accept and relish contextual solutions. Finally, we must provide the preconditions for all actors on all levels of the education system to learn individually and jointly how to reach and manoeuvre in the desired collaborative leadership.

### **DRAFT Definition of Collaborative Educational and School Leadership**

While fully respecting the national competences and responsibilities in education across Europe, ELNE defines collaborative school/educational leadership in the following manner, with the aim of guiding policy dialogue and cooperation.

Collaborative Educational and School Leadership refers to the **multidimensional process** in which relevant actors of education systems – policymakers, practitioners, students, parents, researchers and community partners– actively engage in **shared reflection and decision-making** to fulfil the educational mission of their institutions and systems. A defining characteristic of collaborative leadership is the recognition that stakeholders bring diverse perspectives and forms of expertise, and that they hold different levels of agency and leading roles. This form of leadership is grounded in **common missions, shared values, and collective agency**, and aims to achieve **common goals** that serve all members of the community.

### **Why do we need Collaborative Educational and School Leadership**

Collaborative educational and school leadership fosters **democratic participation, trust, and dialogue**, leading to stronger professional and cooperative relationships, increased quality and inclusiveness of education, improved students' achievements, teacher motivation and commitment, and sustainable and transformative school development. It promotes organisational learning and effective adaptation by recognizing and empowering school community stakeholders and enhancing their resilience.

Collaborative educational and school leadership strengthens collective capacity and skills, empowering leading teams to respond creatively to change. It contributes to a focused school culture rooted in shared values, mutual responsibility and respect, recognition and equity. This model aligns with democratic principles, creating inclusive, transparent, and responsive school environments and systems, as also supported and promoted by institutions such as the European Commission and the Council of Europe.



## The challenges and dilemmas of Collaborative Educational and School Leadership

Collaborative educational and school leadership poses several **challenges** if it is to be effective and have an impact on student success<sup>1</sup>:

- It requires the school to consider professional and organizational learning, particularly by supporting teachers and implementing professional development for management teams.
- It requires a change in school culture, with an openness to horizontal relations and social cooperation, as opposed to more strictly hierarchical visions of management, while limiting relations of conflict and power within the organisation.
- It requires the school community to adapt over a long period of time to bring about a lasting transformation of the school and to create a space for dialogue and mutual understanding.

Collaborative educational and school leadership also raises **dilemmas** for school management:

- Short-term decision-making vs. long-term vision of the school project.
- Formal, instrumental approach to allocating tasks and activities vs. recognition of informal processes and tasks.
- Acceptance of autonomy, but also accountability on the part of teachers, students, parents and other staff.
- Reconciling the management of human resources and the evaluation of skills, while maintaining justice, care, and ethics in relations within the school.

## Dimensions of Collaborative Leadership: Culture, Structure, and Resources

Collaborative leadership is a paradigm that emphasizes collective action, shared goals, and inclusive decision-making. It challenges traditional hierarchical models of leadership by fostering environments where dialogue, trust, and mutual respect are central. Three **foundational dimensions support this model: culture, structure, and resources**. Each plays a critical role in enabling and sustaining collaborative practices within organizations and communities.

### 1. Culture: Fostering Values of Openness, Respect, and Trust

The cultural dimension of collaborative educational and school leadership refers to the shared values, beliefs, and behaviours that shape how individuals within a group interact and make decisions. At its core, collaborative leadership requires a culture grounded in openness, respect, and trust. **Openness** involves a willingness to listen to diverse perspectives, accept feedback, and remain receptive to new ideas. **Respect** ensures that all members feel valued and heard, regardless of status or background. **Trust**, perhaps the most essential cultural element, allows for vulnerability, transparency, and authentic dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup>Some identified elements that imply student success include student engagement, academic outcome, career goals, well-being and mental health, among others

Moreover, collaboration thrives in a **dialogic culture** where communication is not merely transactional but deeply relational. Dialogue in this context is more than conversation; it is a process through which understanding is co-constructed. Leaders must model this by actively listening and creating safe spaces for genuine exchange. When these cultural elements are cultivated, they generate a climate of psychological safety, where individuals feel empowered to contribute meaningfully to collective efforts.

## 2. Structure: Democratic Frameworks for Sustainability and Resilience

In addition to culture, the structure of an organization or community profoundly influences its capacity for collaboration. **Democratic structures** are particularly suited for sustaining collaborative leadership because they are inherently inclusive and participatory. Such frameworks promote shared responsibility, distributed leadership, and consensus-based decision-making. These structural qualities are essential for long-term sustainability and resilience, as they encourage adaptability and collective problem-solving.

Within democratic structures, leadership is understood as a shared function rather than a positional role. This **decentralization** allows for broader participation and prevents overreliance on a single leader. It also creates mechanisms for ongoing dialogue, such as regular meetings, collaborative planning sessions, and feedback loops. These structural components institutionalize the practice of dialogue, making it a routine and expected part of organizational life. In times of crisis or change, these structures can provide the resilience needed to navigate uncertainty collectively.

## 3. Resources: Organisational and Physical Support with Institutional Backing

The third dimension -resources- encompasses both **tangible and intangible assets** required to support collaborative leadership. Organisational resources include time, training, facilitation, and access to information. Physical resources might involve meeting spaces, digital platforms, or tools for collaboration. However, effective collaboration also depends on **institutional support** from authorities or leadership bodies. This support must go beyond endorsement; it should be active and sustained, demonstrating a genuine commitment to shared leadership.

Importantly, resource allocation should align with the values of dialogue and participation. For example, time must be allotted for team reflection, relationship-building, and deliberative decision-making. Professional development opportunities should focus on enhancing collaborative competencies, such as communication, conflict resolution, and facilitation skills. Support from authorities—whether in educational institutions, public organizations, or companies- signals that collaborative work is valued and prioritized. Such backing reinforces the legitimacy of the collaborative process and encourages deeper engagement from all stakeholders.

Moreover, access to resources must be equitable. Collaborative leadership flourishes when all participants have what they need to contribute effectively. This requires leaders to be attentive to disparities and proactive in addressing barriers to participation. In this way, the resource dimension also connects back to the cultural and structural dimensions, as resource equity reflects the values of respect and inclusion and supports democratic structures.

## Food for thought

- Is there a common understanding of collaborative school and educational leadership in your country?  
Could an EU-level definition help to improve education systems in your country?
- Do you agree with the proposed EU-level definition in the ELNE conference's background document?  
What suggestions do you have to improve it?

## Additional useful information

Outcomes of the European Commission's Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care:  
[ECEC Documents - EACGroups - EC Public Wiki](#)

ECEC working group on leadership:

- *Strengthening ECEC leadership for quality development and staff retention* - Peer Learning Activity (2024, Germany) - Summary
- *How can ECEC leaders best recruit and manage diverse teams and work with diverse families?* - Peer Learning Activity (2024, Luxembourg) - Summary
- *Leadership in ECEC: an overview of models and practices in Europe* - Report (2024)
  - [Full report](#)
  - [Summary](#)

CEDEFOP work on VET students and staff:

- [Teachers' and trainers' professional development | CEDEFOP](#)
- [Empowering VET teachers: the key to a skilled and inclusive workforce | CEDEFOP](#)



# **Challenging the concept: Reflections on collaborative leadership**

**In this section, following their participation in the EELW webinar “Building a Research Community”, leading researchers share brief reflections on the promise and complexity of collaborative leadership in education.**

**These contributions highlight the varied perspectives on the conditions, challenges and future directions of collaboration in schools and systems across Europe and beyond.**

COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:

# A PERSONAL - PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION



*Prof. Dr. Christopher Day - Professor of Education, University of Nottingham, UK*

## Part 1: Early thoughts

The four questions that I was asked to address by ELNE suggested the need for serious, lengthy and complicated critical thinking. The first asked, ‘What does current research and evidence reveal about the impact of collaborative leadership on key areas such as school resilience, teacher motivation and engagement, student learning and outcomes, or school leaders themselves?’ Why not add ‘wellbeing’, ‘self-efficacy’, ‘expectations’, ‘autonomy’, or ‘retention’ or ‘renewal’ I thought to myself? The second question sought to know more about the conditions necessary to sustain collaborative leadership in schools? I wondered whether it would have been better first to focus on how leaders themselves might establish conditions to stimulate and support collaborative leadership through the school, and in doing so put structures and form relationships which would help to sustain this. In doing so, they would demonstrate their stance to ‘inclusivity’ and ‘collective belonging’, alongside their sense of agency, humanistic values and moral purposes. Much collaborative research across more than 25 countries and involving over 100 researchers has reliably demonstrated over a 20-year period the associations between these and teacher wellbeing and student achievements (Day & Gurr, 2024).

The third question asked about the role of leaders: their relationships with staff, students and the wider community. This caused me to reflect on the nature, varying purposes, and forms of distributed leadership (Leithwood et al;

2009), and its impact on raising levels of teacher commitment and capability.

Addressing the significant issues of our time, whether climate change, the impact of technology on learners, or a fundamental question about the future of humankind, will not be solved by isolated thinkers, actors, or advocates. Those times have long gone.

Our societies, countries, and schools need more connection, not less. While collaborative leadership is not a panacea, the clear and present danger is that without it we exclude and marginalise the voices that could help us move forward. Distributing leadership is important – but not, I thought, to everyone, and unlikely to be effective until a level of informed individual and collective trust had been established! The fourth and final question invited me to speculate about the future of collaborative leadership in education. Well, I thought, I have been in education long enough, conducted and published research and published extensively on teachers’ work and lives, school change, and successful leadership internationally. So maybe I could share my lifelong dream of every teacher as a lifelong learner, regardless of contexts and conditions?

## Part 2: Going deeper

I am running close to the word limit, but here is my best attempt to provide a few signposts towards the possibilities and limitations of collaborative leadership. First, leaders themselves need to identify with the values which are implied by collaboration, such as a



broadening of decision-making from the hierarchical to the horizontal, prioritising task and person.

Research reveals repeatedly that successful principals know that they cannot achieve success by being ‘heroic’, ‘transformational’ or ‘instructional’ only. Second, the meaning of collaboration needs to be more finely tuned. For example, it is different from ‘co-operation’, which is likely to require less emotional commitment, and collegiality which may be ‘contrived’ or ‘mandated’, and so not generate a sense of belonging and collective purpose as in authentic collaboration. Third, not everyone will see the value of making themselves more vulnerable to others, when collaboration is not an integral feature of the work culture. Moreover, even now, and despite structural system changes in a number of countries, there are those who value individual autonomy over collegial autonomy (Frostenson, 2015). Fourth, establishing a culture of openness, respect, competence, and benevolence that signify trust (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) takes time, and leadership courage, especially in policy-driven, results-driven environments. Fifth, motivating people to teach to their best and well everyday requires close-up leadership – distributed or otherwise - by those who are themselves clear in their values, hold broad rather than narrow educational purposes, are articulate, able to communicate clearly, empathetic in their relationships, resilient, always hopeful, able to navigate the dynamics of the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono- system layers of the educational environment – and manage the inevitable internal and external disturbances associated with change that results in improvements for every child and young person in their schools. And the word limit has been breached, so I have no space to visit the outward faces of collaboration - communities of practice, professional learning communities, lesson study, teacher inquiry, school-to-school

networks, and ‘third space’ university-school partnerships – except to report that, when you look at the reported research, it is clear that there are more, but not yet enough, successful collaborative leaders in our schools than you might think!!!

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## COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP :

# FRIEND OR FOE?

*Prof. Alma Harris - Centre for International Research on Leadership in Education (CIRLE), Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK*

The international research evidence about collective or collaborative leadership is unequivocal; it suggests that under the right conditions, the sum can be far greater than the parts (Koh & Askill-Williams, 2021). Contemporary empirical work tends to favour collaborative, shared ways of leading or networking within and between schools, as impactful distributed leadership in action (Harris et al, 2022).

Contemporary research on collective efficacy, professional capital, and learning communities all point to the importance of collaboration as the DNA of school and system improvement (Eckert & Morgan, 2023). However, while collaborative leadership might seem, at face value, to be a cosy friend, the dark art of collaborative engagement also signals a more sinister side (Hargreaves, 2025).

As with all leadership models, theories or perspectives, evaluating the evidence and judging the legitimacy and credence of any leadership concept remains essential. Keeping an open mind and asking for the evidence is, without question, imperative when navigating the busy and expansive leadership literature.

Regarding school reform and change, the collaborative impetus has come late to the party. Globally, accountability and competition have driven the desire for ever-better outcomes, higher standards, and better school and system performance. Nevertheless, post-COVID, one thing is clear: collaborative leadership remains a positive and fundamental requirement of educational change and improvement at scale

(Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023).

Addressing the significant issues of our time, whether climate change, the impact of technology on learners, or a fundamental question about the future of humankind, will not be solved by isolated thinkers, actors, or advocates. Those times have long gone.

Our societies, countries, and schools need more connection, not less. While collaborative leadership is not a panacea, the clear and present danger is that without it we exclude and marginalise the voices that could help us move forward.



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# COLLABORATION WHEN SCHOOL AUTONOMY IS LOW

*Prof. Monica E. Mincu- Institute of Education, University College London, UK*

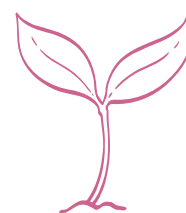
Collaborative leadership is a shared or distributed conception of instructional leadership (Leithwood, 2023), consistently receiving support in research (e.g., Bush, 2015). However, collaboration as a key dimension of leadership is not emphasised in school principals' standards, where these are in place (based on GEM report, D'Addio & April, 2024). A research review showed that in highly autonomous school systems "building trusting relationships with teachers and the senior leadership team proved to be a key leadership strategy related to the distribution of leadership within the school and, through this, the transformation of the social and relational conditions of schools" (Mincu et al, 2024, p.7). Distributing power and creating collaboration is a "disruptive" enterprise even where principals have more power to shape their internal and external relationships: it is about knowing how to join the dots to create coherence and consistency, and thus essentially collaboration (Gu et al., 2023).

Since school systems are diverse in Europe, one key structural condition to ensure collaboration is the degree of school autonomy and local accountability. In other words, the legislation shapes the internal relations between principals, teachers, and middle leaders. In traditionally centralised systems, the State is directly responsible for hiring teachers who are radically autonomous in their decisions (e.g. France and Italy), not required to engage in professional development or work beyond their teaching hours in school and are not accountable to the school principal. A key organisational condition, i.e. leadership as an

organisational quality (Mincu, 2022), is structurally limited or missing. There are some exceptions in those cases where the reform has progressed, such as Romania, where teachers are held accountable not just to external inspectors but also, at the school level, to their school principal.

Where principals act as "super-secretaries" (Mincu, 2024) with reduced organisational and instructional powers, stimulating collaboration is minimal. It is induced by exceptional conditions, such as the school size or extraordinary efforts of individual principals to overcome huge institutional barriers. Despite countless innovative micro-decisions in day-to-day operations, which can significantly transform reality, as a French principal reports (Mincu, 2024), heavy limitations in traditionally centralised countries are due to teachers' status, working hours, areas of competence, and pedagogical freedom. Teachers can legally resist principals' incentives to increase collaboration and school coherence based on the premise that: "in my class, I do what I want". This fuels a culture of fragmentation as a byproduct of the broader governance arrangements, and it is at odds with collaborative cultures and leadership per se.

Specific governance forms and cultures shape school leaders' roles and tasks and impact their ability to support collaboration. Therefore, in school systems where routine administration is the main task, collaboration is not a matter of the will of those involved but must be read as structural barriers to be addressed in reforms.



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# FACILITATING COLLECTIVE LEARNING IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

*Dr Emmy Vrieling- European Association for Practitioner Research on Improving Learning (EAPRIL). Open Universiteit, Netherlands*

In recent years, the value of teacher professional development as a social learning process has gained increasing recognition (Prenger et al., 2021). Working and learning together in teacher professional networks is beneficial as it enhances teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, thereby contributing to improving educational practices. Unlike traditional learning methods that often prioritize the mere replication of information, knowledge construction from a social learning perspective emphasizes the enhancement of ideas through active participation and social interactions within the environment (Vrieling-Teunter et al., 2024). This underscores how vital interactions can lead to deeper insights and innovative understandings.

In teacher networks, participants engage in collective learning driven by a common goal and a shared responsibility for both the learning process and its results (Burini & De Lillo, 2019). This type of learning is marked by interaction and cumulative growth, where the synergy among participants fosters a process of knowledge creation that not only inspires individuals but also promotes their professional development. Network participants bring a variety of perspectives, knowledge, and insights, while the network itself offers research opportunities that would be difficult for any individual teacher to pursue alone (Hargreaves, 2019). The diversity within these networks is

crucial for maximizing learning potential through meaningful exchanges, sparking a process of understanding as learners attempt to connect their personal or collective knowledge with that of others. This collective alignment can ultimately lead to significant learning outcomes.

Collective learning in teacher networks does not occur automatically (Vrieling-Teunter et al., 2024). Due to participants' varied backgrounds, experiences, and skills, it is essential to facilitate and encourage collective learning processes to achieve the intended outcomes:

First, students must be properly prepared for social competencies so that they are enabled to participate efficiently, effectively, and enjoyably in professional networks. This means that the teacher education curriculum must be aligned with this aim (Vrieling-Teunter et al., 2021). For example, it is important to set joint goals (including student goals) that respond to school contexts. Also, it is advised to make students aware of the importance of social learning for the development of social competencies as an integral part of their portfolio.

Additionally, it's important to explore methods of networking learning across various educational environments, including face-to-face, online, blended, and hybrid formats. It's crucial to understand that the online setting can



present challenges, as it reduces chances for social interaction and complicates communication, potentially affecting the feeling of interconnectedness. This is particularly true since it is harder to pick up on nonverbal cues and signals (Kreijns, 2020).

Thirdly, more attention should be paid to the sustainability of the returns of network learning in the institutions involved. Transferring what is learned from the networks into practice requires good brokering, which is a skill that needs facilitation for development (Van denBoom-Muilenburg et al., 2022). The broker helps translate knowledge to the specific context of the school and connects knowledge to school improvement goals at the organizational level. School leaders play a vital role in enabling these efforts.

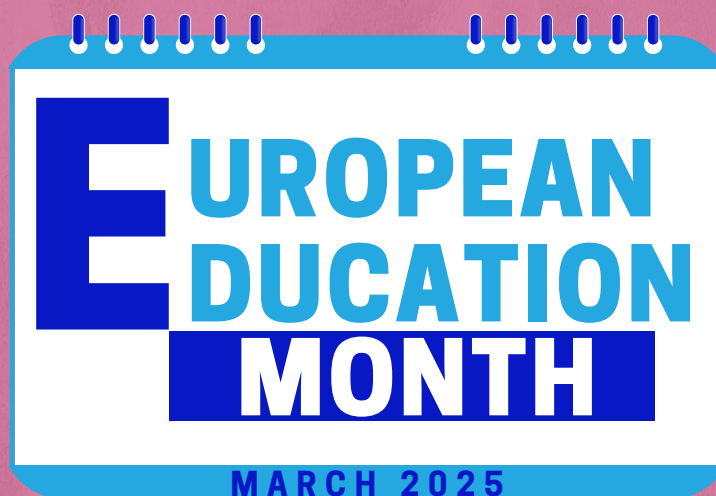


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# European Education Month

*in review*



## LOOKING BACK, THINKING AHEAD

March 2025 marked a successful first edition of the European Education Month (EEM), an initiative led by ELNE to bring together education professionals, researchers, policymakers and more from across Europe. Over the course of the month, dozens of webinars and events were hosted by the ELNE Lead Partners and members of the network, as well as other organisations working across the education sector.

In the pages that follow, you'll find brief summaries of selected webinars, grouped under key themes that emerged throughout the month:

- Inclusive leadership and equity in education
- Collaborative educational leadership and school resilience
- Collaborative leadership and professional development
- Media, policy and technology and collaborative leadership
- On Collaborative Leadership and Sustainability - a future-oriented outlook

Each entry offers a quick snapshot of the discussions and the key insights raised. While each topic addresses different challenges, a common thread connects them: the need for collaborative leadership that builds trust, supports innovation and strengthens the links between research, policy and practice. To explore more, click on the image for each webinar - it will take you directly to the recording.

More than just a series of events, the EEM 2025 was a space for reflection, exchange and constructive dialogue. It allowed us to connect ideas and people across Europe, to showcase the lived experience of our neighbours and to contribute to ongoing conversations with institutions such as the European Commission.



# INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION

This section highlights how collaborative leadership can support equity in education. From well-being focused practices to inclusive school cultures and anti-racist leadership, the webinars underline the need for intentional, sustained efforts. Real inclusion happens when leadership actively centres diverse voices and turns values into action across classrooms, schools, and systems.

## SHAPING THE FUTURE: EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION IN A CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE - FINNISH EDUCATION EMPLOYERS (SIVISTA)

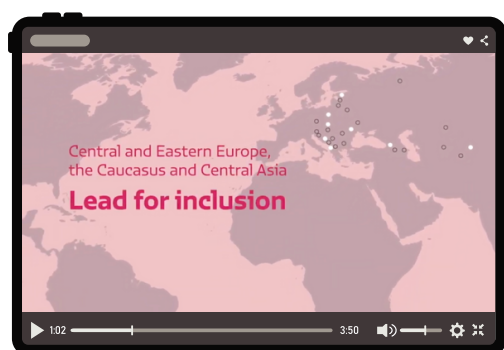
As Europe's population shrinks and ages, immigration has become not just important but necessary; yet attracting talent is one thing, keeping it is another. In Finland, nearly half of international experts leave within five years.

The webinar stressed that successful integration hinges on **collaborative leadership: aligning strategic vision with operational action.**

One key focus? **Early Childhood Education.** Language skills are a make-or-break factor for migrant children's later success, yet participation rates in ECEC remain worryingly low among migrant families. Boosting support and incentives for early education could be a game-changer for integration.



## #LEADFORLEARNING: LEADERSHIP FOR INCLUSION LESSONS FROM CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE CAUCASUS, AND CENTRAL ASIA - UNESCO GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT & NETWORK OF EDUCATION POLICY CENTRES (NEPC)



In this dynamic and interactive webinar, experts from across the region came together to champion **inclusive leadership.**

Drawing on the latest Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Reports, speakers unpacked how **systemic barriers** can be dismantled through strong collaboration between policymakers, educators, and civil society.

The overall message was clear and urgent: to build truly **equitable education systems**, we must empower leaders who are committed to inclusion and give them the tools, knowledge, and communities they need.

## ENABLE FINAL CONFERENCE: COLLECTIVE INSIGHTS FOR INCLUSIVE AND TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS - SIRIUS NETWORK

How do we build schools that don't just teach migrant and refugee children, but **heal and empower** them?

The ENABLE Final Conference offered powerful answers, blending education, mental health, and community engagement into a **holistic model** for school integration.

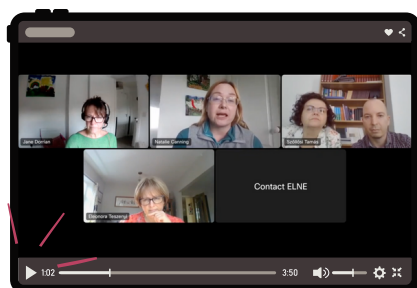
Key takeaways included:

- Bridging the gap between **policy and practice** on trauma and intercultural competence.
- Launching the **ENABLE Policy Toolkit**, a hands-on resource packed with checklists, scenarios, and guidelines.
- Highlighting the urgent need for **school-wide strategies** and **better mental health infrastructure**.

Using a lively "World Café" discussion format, participants explored what it really takes to turn inclusive ideals into a daily school reality.



## UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS THROUGH HUNGARIAN PEDAGOGIC PRACTICE - OPEN UNIVERSITY, UK



Sometimes leadership isn't about grand strategies, it's about **adapting in the moment**.

The key takeaway message from the webinar was the changing nature of collaborative leadership, and how some aspects are planned, others are incidental but both elements are essential for success.

## INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP: HOW TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE IN SCHOOLS - EUROPEAN SCHOOL HEADS ASSOCIATION (ESHA)

What does it actually look like to lead inclusively?

Loes van Wessum delivered a down-to-earth and inspiring session, focusing on **practical leadership moves** that make people feel seen and valued.

One standout strategy?

Instead of letting the loudest voices dominate, leaders should **actively invite everyone's input**: true inclusivity doesn't just happen; it's **intentionally nurtured**, one meeting, one conversation at a time.



## SUPPORTING AND WORKING WITH RACIALISED TEACHERS: WHAT KIND OF COLLABORATION ARE RACIALISED TEACHERS LOOKING FOR? - SPARK TEACHERS



This bold, honest webinar tackled some hard truths about racism and exclusion in educational institutions.

Speakers called for **transparent, reflective anti-racist policies**, not just vague commitments, and urged institutions to embed D&I values right from the recruitment stage.

Other powerful points included:

- **Reworking professional development** pathways to better support Black and Brown educators.
- **Engaging white leadership teams** more actively, moving them from passive "allies" to real drivers of change.

Facing uncomfortable but necessary questions about whiteness, systemic inequality, and the need for structural reform.

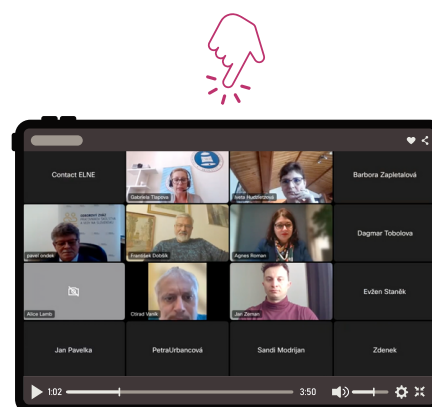
## COLLABORATIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL RESILIENCE

What strengthens a school's ability to adapt and endure through change, pressure, or crisis? These webinars explore how leadership grounded in trust, collaboration, and strong community ties fosters resilience. From Croatia to Ireland and Poland, one message is clear: meaningful leadership isn't just about structures; it's about relationships, shared responsibility, and the capacity to grow through challenge.

## SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: NAVIGATING STATUS AND SUPPORT - ČMOS PŠ

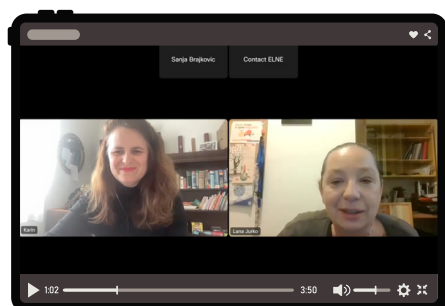
In the Czech Republic, school principals occupy a crucial yet often under-supported role. The following webinar, co-organised by the Czech and Moravian Trade Union of Teachers (ČMOS PŠ) and ETUCE, unpacked the *realities faced by school leaders*. Despite legislative amendments aimed at refining leadership practices, headmasters still grapple with a heavy administrative burden, **40%** of their time is spent on paperwork, while only **22%** is dedicated to actual pedagogical work. Even more concerning, **85%** of headmasters report never receiving formal feedback on their performance. This lack of evaluation not only stifles growth but also disconnects leadership from the pedagogical core of education.

The discussion also highlighted the broader European context: *the role of headmasters should extend beyond managerial tasks to embody true pedagogical leadership*. Yet, with limited funding, excessive responsibilities, and minimal career development opportunities, this vision remains distant for many Czech school leaders. Participants called for more social dialogue, enhanced teacher involvement in decision-making, and clearer pathways for career advancement to bolster school resilience.





## POST-DISASTER SCHOOLS THROUGH THE LENS OF ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE: DISRUPTION AND ENDURANCE - NETWORK OF EDUCATION POLICY CENTRES (NEPC)



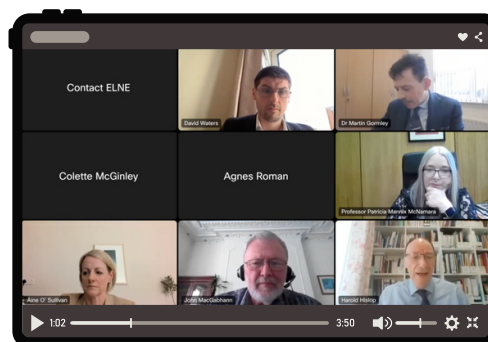
**Natural disasters** test the limits of **school resilience** like nothing else. This webinar showcased a case study from Croatia, where primary schools braved floods and earthquakes between 2022 and 2023. The findings? Resilience isn't just about sturdy infrastructure, it's about *community ties*, *strong leadership*, and *a culture of solidarity*. Schools that transformed into community hubs during crises not only survived but became lifelines for their communities.

The discussion pointed out that school culture, characterised by trust and collegiality, plays a decisive role in recovery. If tensions existed before disaster struck, they only magnified under pressure. Moreover, leaders who acted decisively and with compassion made the greatest impact. The takeaway? Building resilience is not just a structural issue, it's **deeply rooted in social connections and prepared leadership**.

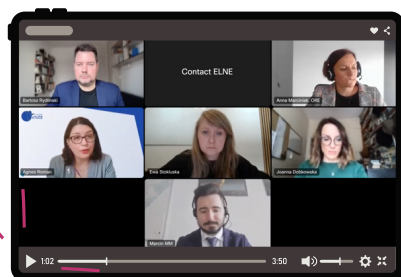
## HOW TO FACILITATE EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP - LESSONS FROM THE IRISH EXPERIENCE - TEACHERS' UNION OF IRELAND (TUI)

When it comes to building resilience through collaborative leadership, Ireland's educational landscape provides insightful lessons. In a thought-provoking webinar led by the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) and ETUCE, speakers delved into the transformative power of shared leadership. The emphasis? **Democracy** in school leadership isn't just a concept, it's a necessity. Collaborative leadership, marked by joint decision-making and collective ownership, is seen as key to weathering crises and nurturing school communities.

Yet, it's not all smooth sailing. Irish schools face dwindling interest in senior leadership roles and rising burnout among existing leaders, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The session underscored that sustainable leadership is not just about filling roles but building a culture of trust, empowerment, and structured social dialogue. Surprisingly, unionised schools demonstrated stronger collective responsibility, even reporting fewer COVID-19 cases, a testament to the strength of solidarity and shared vision in turbulent times.



## SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS IN INTRODUCING CURRICULUM REFORM IN EDUCATION, INCLUDING SUPPORT FOR NOVICE TEACHERS AS A FACTOR IN ENSURING HIGHER RESILIENCE AND QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION - ZNP



Poland's education system is facing a **demographic crisis**: over 23,000 teaching positions remain unfilled, and the workforce is rapidly aging. Against this backdrop, the webinar focused on the role of curriculum reform and teacher support in boosting school resilience. Key insights included the need for *distributed leadership*, *robust professional development*, and *a transformative school culture that values democratic decision-making*.

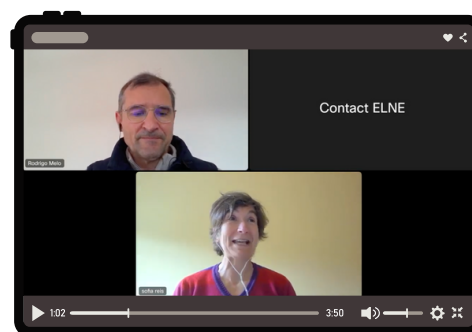
Poland's Ministry of Education is pushing for **reform** by 2026, with initiatives aimed at not just academic performance but *emotional well-being* and *a sense of belonging for students*. While financial support is ramping up, the real challenge lies in changing school culture and empowering teachers through stronger collaboration and leadership training. Only by **engaging all stakeholders**, teachers, students, and parents, can the system evolve sustainably.

In this section, whether in the face of legislative hurdles, natural disasters, or demographic challenges, one truth stands clear: resilient education systems are built on trust, shared leadership, and unwavering community ties.

## TURBULENCE RESISTANT SCHOOLS: LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE - ASSOCIAÇÃO DE ESTABELECIMENTOS DE ENSINO PARTICULAR E COOPERATIVO (AEEP)

What does it take to lead a school through **turbulent times**? In this webinar, Sofia Reis, former ECNAIS Secretary General and a seasoned educational leader, shared insights from her doctoral research on the founders of independent schools in **post-communist Eastern Europe**. These leaders faced extraordinary **challenges**, from securing physical spaces amid restrictive property laws to navigating ambiguous regulations in the aftermath of the Iron Curtain. Yet, despite these obstacles, they transformed personal conviction into **collective momentum**, building **student-centred** schools from the ground up.

Reis emphasised that true leadership in such contexts is not an individual trait but a **collective effort**. These pioneers succeeded by aligning diverse groups: teachers, parents, and administrators, around a shared educational mission. They redefined conventional leadership by combining *strategic communication with a deep sense of community*, transforming chaotic inputs into clear, purposeful action. Their stories are a testament to the power of collaboration in uncertain times, reminding us that resilience often begins with a strong, united team.



## FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP TO IMPROVE PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING IN EDUCATION - EFEE & ETUCE



How can schools better prioritise the mental well-being of students, teachers, and leaders? This vision drove the conversation in a recent webinar exploring the **APRES COVID project**, where experts shared practical strategies to boost psychosocial health in education. Discussions highlighted the **overlapping challenges faced by school leaders** and the **importance of teacher collaboration** to ease stress and combat isolation.

Portugal's **School Coexistence Observatory (SCO)** emerged as a standout initiative, focusing on creating safer, more supportive school environments through research and proactive measures against indiscipline and violence. Meanwhile, findings from the **EuCARE project** revealed how deeply the pandemic affected students' mental health, particularly among secondary school students, underlining the need for reimagined educational support.

At its core, the webinar made one thing clear: building resilient school communities starts with collaborative leadership that **prioritises well-being, safety, and collective growth**.

## COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section highlights how collaboration fuels professional growth and effective leadership. From peer learning and networked communities to partnerships with businesses and researchers, shared leadership drives innovation and resilience. These insights showcase practical ways collaboration shapes leadership in diverse educational settings.

## INTEGRATING EDUCATIONAL POLICY, RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND PRACTICE: A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS FOR LEADERS - UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

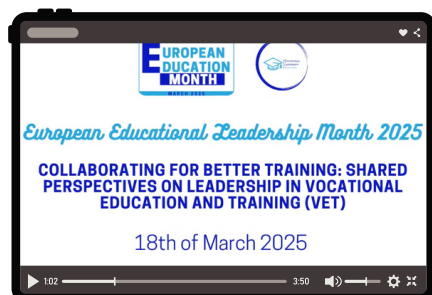
This webinar highlighted the **pedagogical development model** of the Institute of Educational Leadership, emphasising the **integration of policy, research, development, and practice**. The model encourages leaders to **reflect on their own practices**, promoting a cycle of **collaborative leadership** and **peer learning**.

- Key insight: Collaborative leadership must **consider the sociocultural context**; what works in one area might not fit another.
- A standout practice: **Pedagogical discussions with the whole community** help to align practical and theoretical perspectives, fostering an inclusive and reflective culture.
- Practical tip: Involve staff in the leadership process by "**managing by walking around**" and creating a **supportive atmosphere** where everyone feels valued.
- Challenge: How do we balance **teacher identity and agency** with evolving educational objectives? Reflecting on this can help educators stay relevant and resilient.





## COLLABORATING FOR BETTER TRAINING: LEADERSHIP IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) - FEDERATION FOR EUROPEAN EDUCATION (FEDE)



In this session, FEDE explored how **vocational education and training** can become a hub for collaborative leadership by **connecting educational institutions and businesses**.

- Key insight: **Shared leadership** between schools and businesses strengthens **employability** and bridges **education with real-world practices**.
- Practical example: The **École Nomade** project immerses students in company settings, fostering hands-on learning and building real-world skills.
- Highlight: **Inclusivity as a leadership goal** - integrating **sustainability and diversity** into training practices was emphasised, showcasing how educational initiatives can also foster **citizenship skills**.
- Takeaway: **Collaboration with businesses** is not just beneficial for students but also fosters **innovation and adaptability** in teaching practices.

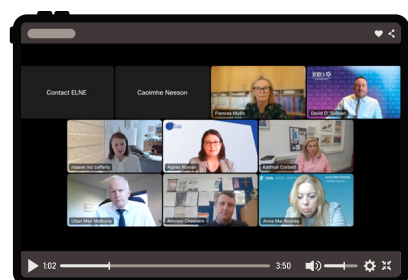
## ENIRDELM: BUILDING NETWORKS ACROSS EUROPE FOR COLLABORATIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP - ENIRDELM

This webinar emphasised the **power of networking** to support **resilient and adaptable leadership**. Established in the 1990s, ENIRDELM connects educational leaders from **Eastern and Western Europe** to share challenges and solutions.

- Key insight: **Community-driven leadership** can thrive even in challenging environments when supported by **voluntary commitment** and a **shared vision**.
- Challenge: Addressing the **generation shift** and evolving educational challenges, especially with **tightening resources**.
- Tip: Encourage **cross-border collaboration** to strengthen leadership capacities, fostering **learning communities** that bridge diverse contexts.



## SUPPORTING PRINCIPALS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP - IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS' ORGANISATION (INTO)



This webinar explored **distributed leadership** within Irish schools, focusing on how **school culture** and **open communication** are pivotal for leadership success.

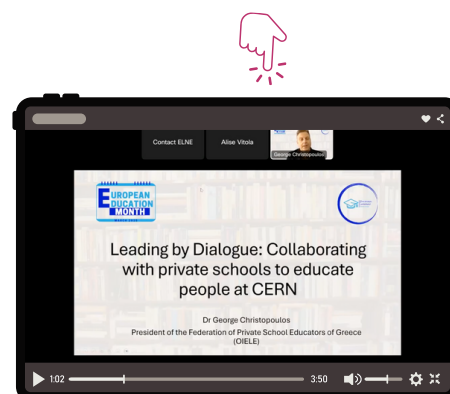
- Highlight: A key challenge is the **gender gap in leadership**, despite a predominantly female teaching workforce, leadership roles are still male dominated.
- Practical approach: Providing **structured support and training** for novice principals, such as **networked professional development** and **regular collaboration sessions**.
- Insight: **Building supportive networks** among principals and stakeholders helps create a **resilient leadership culture**.

## LEADING BY DIALOGUE: ENHANCING SCIENCE EDUCATION THROUGH COLLABORATION - FEDERATION OF PRIVATE EDUCATORS OF GREECE (OIELE)

This session showcased an initiative to enhance science education by collaborating with private schools and scientific institutions.

- Key insight: **Cross-sector collaboration** fosters innovative teaching methods and breaks the traditional silos between education and research.
- Best practice: Integrating **scientific exploration** with early education, such as using **child-friendly experiments** to introduce physics concepts at the kindergarten level.
- Takeaway: Building a **dialogue between educators and researchers** can make complex topics engaging and inspire lifelong learning.

Last but not least, a memorable message: "Never stop trying to make your dreams come true, until then, paint them!"



## BUILDING BRIDGES: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCS) FOR NETWORKED LEARNING - UNIVERSITY OF CATANIA & UNIVERSITY OF MALTA



This webinar advocated for **networked learning** as a way to **reduce the sense of isolation among educators**. PLCs are a space where educators share experiences, collaborate on challenges, and build a culture of collective growth.

- Core principle: "**The collection is stronger than the addition of its individuals**", fostering relationships, trust, and collegiality within educational settings.
- Challenge: Overcoming the tendency toward isolation by actively creating opportunities for **dialogue and shared practice**.
- Practical approach: Build bridges between schools, connecting educators from different contexts to **share innovations** and **support each other's growth**.

## MEDIA, POLICY AND TECHNOLOGY AND COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

This section highlights how collaboration fuels professional growth and effective leadership.

From peer learning and networked communities to partnerships with businesses and researchers, shared leadership drives innovation and resilience. These insights showcase practical ways collaboration shapes leadership in diverse educational settings.

### AI IN THE CLASSROOM: BUILDING COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE THROUGH LEADERSHIP - EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF EDUCATION EMPLOYERS (EFEE)

How can Artificial Intelligence reshape the classroom? The webinar explored this question, framing AI not as a replacement for teachers, but as a powerful tool for enhancing learning. The key takeaway? **Pedagogy** comes first; AI is only effective when integrated with thoughtful teaching strategies.

Educators were challenged to **rethink teacher training**, prioritizing ethical use, critical engagement, and creative problem-solving. AI is not a magic fix; it requires digital literacy and strategic implementation to truly support learning outcomes.

Leadership also emerged as crucial: empowering teachers to experiment without fear, encouraging a growth mindset, and fostering collaboration across disciplines. “Start small,” one expert advised, test simple AI tools, learn by doing, and **build confidence gradually**.

The big question? What kind of innovation are we prepared to invest in? Schools need clear strategies to ensure AI serves students’ learning journeys, not just technological hype.



### HOW MASS MEDIA REPORTS ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP ISSUES - UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA



How does the media shape public perception of educational leadership? A content analysis of **121 Croatian news sources** revealed that stories often focus on leadership competencies, crisis management, and the selection of school principals. But the real challenge? Political influence in leadership appointments, overshadowing merit and transparency.

The study proposed four key recommendations:

1. **Amend the current law** to reduce political bias.
2. Ensure **merit-based selection** of principals.
3. Test **professional competencies** during the hiring process.
4. **Develop a national system** for principal training and development.

The takeaway? If we want effective school leadership, we need **systemic reform**, and media coverage can play a crucial role in driving that change.



## CYBER SECURITY FOR KIDS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN? - EUROPEAN SCHOOL HEADS ASSOCIATION (ESHA)

In the digital age, cybersecurity isn't optional, it's essential. The webinar unpacked what it takes to create a school vision and policy for Cyber Security for Kids, focusing on behavioral vulnerabilities as the weakest link.

A standout initiative was the **SuperCyberKids Project**, which uses a game-based platform to teach 8–14-year-olds about digital safety. Participants also brainstormed pathways to integrate cybersecurity into school policies, emphasizing hands-on learning and digital responsibility.

The bottom line? Cyber literacy starts young, and schools play a critical role in building that foundation.



## ON COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY - A FUTURE ORIENTED OUTLOOK

What does it take to lead schools toward a more sustainable future? These webinars explored how whole-school approaches and cross-sector collaboration can embed sustainability into education. From student-led projects to community partnerships, the focus is on empowering all stakeholders to act, together, for lasting environmental, social, and educational change.

## SCHOOLS FOR SUSTAINABILITY CITIZENSHIP: PLAN YOUR SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION WITH THE WHOLE SCHOOL - EUROPEAN SCHOOL HEADS ASSOCIATION (ESHA)

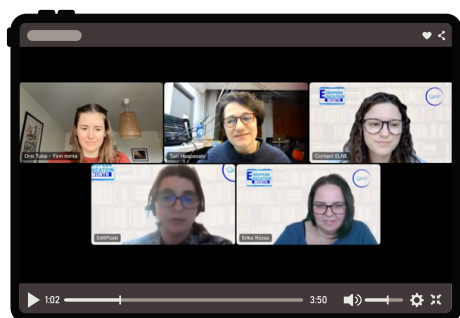
In the webinar workshop "Schools for Sustainability Citizenship," Myrthe Stienstra from ESHA, an ELNE Lead Partner, introduced the concept of **Sustainability Citizenship**, not just as a curriculum topic but as a transformative mindset. A Sustainability Citizen recognises the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic systems and actively contributes to sustainable change.

The session emphasized a whole-school approach to sustainability, tackling issues like climate anxiety and collective self-efficacy. Participants explored how schools are already engaging students and teachers in **green initiatives**, while noting challenges like involving parents more deeply. Breakout discussions led to practical ideas like classroom challenges on electricity and water usage, small wins for immediate impact.

The key takeaway? Building a community of sustainability citizens requires involvement from everyone, school leaders, teachers, parents, and students alike.



## DIMENSIONS OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP – EXPLORING TOGETHER INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS IN SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION - ALTEREDU



The webinar showcased a Finnish-Hungarian pilot project promoting sustainability through student-centered, interdisciplinary learning. Led by educators from Hungary and Finland, the project implemented **Phenomenon-Based Learning (PhBL)**, emphasizing real-world environmental issues like fast fashion, food waste, and recycling.

One standout element was **stakeholder involvement**: local businesses, NGOs, and parents actively contributed to sustainability goals, reinforcing learning outcomes and community impact. Students developed critical thinking, teamwork, and responsible decision-making, while teachers reported enhanced pedagogical skills and a deeper appreciation for student autonomy.

The session demonstrated how international collaboration, and hands-on learning can inspire meaningful change within and beyond the classroom.

# ELNE Voices



In its 50 years of existence, OBESSU, for and together with Member School Student Unions, has always invested in alliances among students, teachers, and school leaders to foster a whole-school approach to educational leadership. Through meaningful cooperation, we promote and help cultivate inclusive and democratic decision-making in learning environments. One of the concrete examples of this is the "InclusiVET" project, where OBESSU partnered with school heads, management, and student support staff to ensure the creation and reinforcement of inclusive student engagement in Vocational Education and Training. Through this and other similar initiatives, OBESSU keeps showcasing its commitment to empowering students as equal partners in educational leadership and their role towards improving our schools and education.

How do ELNE's member organisations engage in or influence collaborative educational leadership?

In general, independent schools lay responsibility as low as possible in the school organisation. Autonomy is key. To make this all possible, the position of the headmaster/principal etc is crucial. Strong leadership provides autonomy, puts others in their strength. In this way collaborative educational leadership finds its way down from the top of the pyramid to the base.



Teachers make a difference every day and therefore need to be empowered; put teachers in the lead. To achieve this, strong collaborative leadership is needed. Leadership that acknowledges teachers' efforts and achievements, that supports teachers, allows teachers the freedom to innovate and cultivates a sense of agency and professionalism, that invests in professional development of teachers, that involves teachers in shared decision-making, that ensures access to important resources (time, technology) and builds on a culture of mutual growth and shared leadership. Strong collaborative leadership will lead to strong teachers and with that, strong education for children.

The Federation for European Education (FEDE), as a federation of higher education and vocational training institutions, actively promotes a model of collaborative educational leadership. This is achieved through curriculum development, the creation of pedagogical resources, the organisation of evaluation sessions, and initiatives aimed at strengthening learner empowerment. For instance, each year, the FEDE Human Rights Prize provides FEDE students with a platform to advocate for human rights through concrete projects applying the competencies acquired during their studies. These productions are subsequently integrated into the FEDE's pedagogical resources, fostering collaborative learning and civic engagement across its network.





The Hungarian Rectors' Conference, as an active partner of the ELNE project, regularly involves the leaders of Hungarian higher education institutions and their affiliated practice schools in the activities of the network. As part of our networking efforts, we have launched an internal news channel on our website, send professional newsletters, and actively engage the communities of teacher training committees and practice schools. Our experts contribute case studies and research summaries to the ELNE Journal, and we actively participate in conferences and workshops to support the dissemination of collaborative leadership models at national and European levels. We also maintain an active dialogue with the government and other educational stakeholders to foster joint educational developments.

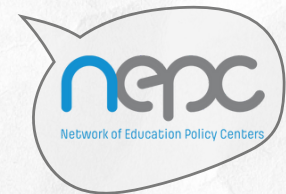


Through its initiative 'Lead for EcoJustice,' NEPC, aims to transform schools toward a sustainable and eco-just future. The initiative encourages collaborative leadership by supporting school teams who can lead the process. It seeks to enhance processes according to ecojustice principles and positively influence the well-being of all beings, offering motivation for sustainability by:

- Defining key competences for school leadership in ecojustice education
- Creating a professional development program for leadership teams in Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Serbia
- Developing 'Ready for ecojustice,' a self-assessment tool for schools,
- Publishing resources for school leadership teams,
- Organizing conferences as learning opportunities.

Funded by the EU, the project aligns with educational calls to appreciate nature, justice, and sustainability. For more information and resources, please visit the website. [www.edupolicy.net](http://www.edupolicy.net)

How do ELNE's member organisations engage in or influence collaborative educational leadership?

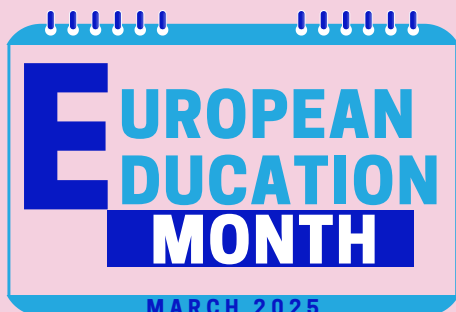


OIELE - Federation of Private Educators of Greece (Greece) engages in collaborative educational leadership by partnering with stakeholders across sectors to bridge gaps in science education, as seen in the "Leading by Dialogue" initiative. In cooperation of OIELE, KANEP-GSEE, CERN, and over 40 private schools, we co-developed an annual training program that empowers educators—especially non-science teachers—with hands-on experience in modern physics. By fostering trust, shared investment, and open access, we demonstrate how sustained dialogue and collaboration can transform professional development in education.

The Finnish Association for the Development of Vocational Education and Training AMKE is a cooperative organization of vocational education providers. Our members educate approximately 99 percent of vocational education students in Finland. We are a collaboration and advocacy organization.

In Finland, the development of vocational education, including legislation, is carried out in cooperation with the central government and stakeholders. In development work, AMKE collaborates closely with, for example, teachers' organizations, student organizations, and labor and business organizations. Currently, Finland is undergoing a major reform of vocational education financing, learning support and operational management. We are also planning, together with the Ministry of Education, a reform of adult education (continuing learning), which would be implemented in the next government term (2027-2031).





The European Education Month ran during the month of March 2025.

All past sessions have been uploaded to the official ELNE YouTube channel, so you can catch up anytime. Don't miss out!



**Missed a webinar?**

**Wondering how to catch up on all the insights?**



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