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ABSTRACT

This deliverable reports on the processes that were put in place, the resources developed and the outcomes of these processes which were aimed to:

- stimulate high level cooperation on school leadership policy development between policy makers and other stakeholders across a wide range of European countries or states/regions, and
- support national/regional policy making communities to take ownership of school leadership policy action planning.

EPNoSL actively promoted national or state/regional policy making structures engage in collaborative and knowledge sharing activities with a wide range of stakeholders that resulted in the development of:

- 18 national or state/regional School Leadership Action Plans (Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany- Berlin and Brandenburg, Germany- Lower Saxony, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom-Scotland), and
- 2 Action Plans by Europe-wide stakeholder associations (the European Federation of Education Employers –EFEE and the European Trade Union Committee for Education -ETUCE).

The Action Plans focus on School Leadership policy priorities based on the identified problem space(s) school leadership policy strategic orientations. The challenges aimed to be addressed by School Leadership policy planning are centered on two critical policy issues: a) equity and learning performance, and b) school system governance and human resources. Planning on school leadership policies, depending on the needs of each national or state/regional context, is oriented to address these challenges through:

- heightened emphasis on and recognition of the role of school leadership in measures aimed to foster inclusion, fairness and improved learning performance for all in school education,
- new capacity building opportunities and requirements on and from school leadership, and
- introduction and implementation of new legislation on school autonomy.

The deliverable concludes with the identification of policy planning support needs for future policy developments on school leadership. These needs being:

- Needs for research evidence to support the identification and valid documentation of school leadership challenges and the setting of school leadership policy priorities.

- Needs for methodologies and tools for engaging in policy planning a wide range of school stakeholders, establishing sustainable and constructive dialogue and reaching consensus.
- Needs for impact assessment mechanisms, methodologies and tools in order to get valid feedback from the course and impact of the various stages of school leadership policy implementation.
- Needs for support to achieve comprehensiveness and coherence in policy planning and implementation in the context of even increasing complexity in the economic and social environment policy makers and schools function.

INTRODUCTION

The WP4 “Consensus Building on Strategy Developed Approaches to School Leadership” represents the culmination and refinement of the processes established by EPNoSL, through the development of resources and networking, to empower national structures responsible for school education policy development and implementation (i.e. national or state/regional ministries of education and their agencies responsible for planning) to engage in school leadership policy reflection and policy planning.

The wider aims of this WP was to stimulate high level cooperation between policy makers and stakeholders, namely practitioners and researchers, in the field of school education across Europe and to support national/regional policy making communities to take ownership of school leadership policy action planning processes.

The objectives of WP4 “Consensus Building on Strategy Developed Approaches to School Leadership” were:

- to identify national/regional Good Practices on/for SL policy and subsequently to highlight these from a regional perspective,
- to put in place a collaborative process for motivating and supporting Policy Authorities to structure and culture their specific policy agendas on School Leadership, and
- to ensure that the voices of Ministries and other authorities and stakeholder bodies are integrated into the National / Regional Plans on/for School Leadership development.

The main interconnected, cooperative and knowledge exchange, processes that EPNoSL put in motion to support the needs of policy makers and engage them actively in school leadership policy planning were, briefly, based on:

The development and validation of the “School Leadership Toolkit for Equity and Learning” (see EPNoSL Del. 2.2., 2015). The purpose of the School Leadership Toolkit, comprised of 8 toolsets, is to provide policy makers, school authorities, schools, researchers and leadership training institutes with the tools to reflect upon, identify challenges and prioritize areas for policy action to support and enhance school leadership for equity and learning.

The enhancement of networking on school leadership policy development at national/regional levels (see EPNoSL Del. 3.1., 2015). The EPNoSL national/regional networks were extended and cooperation was strengthened amongst stakeholders. Overall around 7.000 individuals were involved (more than 550 policy makers). Among the institutions involved, 20 represented Ministries of Education, 55 regional or local authorities and 18 other types of public bodies. Evidence indicated wide use of the international discourse on school leadership in these networks. Furthermore the analysis of the stakeholder involvement showed that all main stakeholder groups – practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers engaged in dialogue in different ways with diverse content, thus actively contributing to a translational knowledge sharing.

The development of case studies to identify and disseminate good practices in the field of school leadership policy in Europe (see EPNoSL Del. 3.3., 2015). The goal was to showcase national school leadership policies that have proven their effectiveness and efficiency or are promising practices in terms of enhancing equity and learning. In total 14 case studies were documented from Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, the Netherlands and UK – Scotland. Nearly all case studies were in some way related to educating school leaders (e.g. formal qualification programmes, professional development opportunities for school leaders, building teachers’ capacity as leaders etc) and/or distributed leadership. To a lesser extent good practices covered the policy areas of school autonomy, accountability and inclusion.

The utilization of the EPNoSL Virtual Platform (see EPNoSL Del. 3.2., 2015). The platform was used to deliver 5 webinars aiming to generate dialogue between different stakeholders across Europe on particular areas of school leadership through the EPNoSL toolkit and the related case studies. The interactions and discussions during the webinars enriched both the toolsets and the case studies in several ways and contributed to deepening the understandings on school leadership development.

The culmination and refinement of the above processes, being the critical milestones to empower national/regional structures responsible for school education policy development and implementation, resulted in the drafting of 18 national/regional School Leadership Action Plans and of 2 School Leadership Action Plans from European associations. In particular, action plans were developed for:

National or State/Regional Action Plans

1. Austria
2. Belgium-Flanders
3. Denmark
4. Estonia
5. Finland
6. Germany- Berlin and Brandenburg
7. Germany- Lower Saxony
8. Greece
9. Hungary
10. Italy
11. Latvia
12. Lithuania
13. Malta
14. Portugal
15. Slovenia
16. Spain
17. Sweden
18. United Kingdom-Scotland

Associations’ Action Plans

1. European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE)
2. European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)

In the following chapters the specific methodology followed to develop the Action Plans is presented, followed by a synthetic discussion of their strategic orientation. This deliverable concludes with recommendations regarding further steps that can be taken

at national and/or regional/state level to further promote the relevance, coherence, transparency, and sustainability of school leadership policy action plans.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACTION PLANNING METHODOLOGY

EPNoSL put in place a process and developed supporting tools through which consensus building emerged between national policy structures and practitioners' perspectives and needs towards school leadership action planning.

The process, was based on the following steps:

- The existing National Networks were restructured for that their form and operation was driven by the policy sector as opposed by EPNoSL. The EPNoSL resources (WP2 and WP3 outputs) became the point of reference for discussion between EPNoSL and all European (LLL Programme participants) Ministries of Education. EPNoSL supported in the manner specified by each Ministry the uptake of a national or state/regional forum, on the theme of SL. To further support this process, on-line forums were developed in 20 languages (see <http://forums.schoolleadership.eu/>).
- EPNoSL invited all European Ministries to assign Ministry representatives for a Ministerial Level EPNoSL and organized dedicated to Action Planning events in the form of focus group discussions, workshops, conference meetings etc. The discussions were on how to transform EPNoSL findings / understandings onto policy initiatives. The WP2 outputs constituted the points of reference to the discourse which oriented the design of Action Plans. This process had already begun with the coordinator's communication with the EC Member States Ministers of Education.
- EPNoSL designed sample (Regional) Learning Tradition Action Plans, which were reviewed from the EPNoSL Ministries so as to ensure that these are appropriate tools to guide strategy development by the national / regional education policy makers. The generic Action Plans were presented and extensively discussed in Nice Peer Learning Activity (Sept. 2014).
- EPNoSL supported each individual Ministry / regional education policy structure in designing context relevant Action Plans. Support was provided in the form requested by each Ministry.

A critical need that was diagnosed during the implementation of EPNoSL cooperative and knowledge exchange activities and processes, aiming to empower policy makers in school leadership policy reflection and policy planning, was the need for recommendations and guidelines on what constitutes a good action plan and what steps can be followed to develop one. This need emerged during the validation processes of the *"School Leadership Toolkit for Equity and Learning"*, the webinars, the networking activities and in particular during the EPNoSL's Nice Peer Learning Activity (Sept. 2014) where the preliminary work on regional school leadership action plans was presented and discussed (see EPNoSL Del. 5.2, p. 18-21). While the Toolkit included all the basic school leadership policy lines upon which policy makers and other stakeholders were supported to reflect upon, what was further needed was an extra toolset on *how policy makers could reach consensus with other critical stakeholders in the field of school leadership and transform their shared ideas into a concrete policy plan.*



The “**School Leadership Policy Action Planning Toolset for equity and learning**” was therefore developed and made available to policy makers and other stakeholders (see Annex I).¹ The Toolset focused on the following:

- what is a policy action plan?
- why policy action planning can be beneficial to policy making and policy implementation?
- the scope of policy action planning,
- dealing with complexity in policy action planning,
- principles guiding school leadership policy action planning,
- getting started: first steps towards action planning, and
- the school leadership action plan template.

As it was stressed, policy planning is an iterative process. Action plans can offer valid guidance to policy makers and implementers when, on the basis of well organised and structured policy assessment cycles, they get **refined and adjusted or even altered** in the light of valid and reliable feedback obtained from policy implementation.

The Toolset proposed the following steps to get started with school leadership action planning:

The organisation at national or state/regional level of a kick-off event where EPNoSL members/experts meet with representatives of competent education policy making authorities and critical stakeholders to discuss, reach consensus and plan policies that are aimed to promote and empower school leadership for equity and learning.

What would be the major focus of this event was a first major concern. In a kick-off policy planning event it was expected that participants will:

- develop a shared understanding of the overarching aims and objectives of school policy planning in their national/regional/state context in view of the policy challenges of equity and learning in schools, and
- specify what is the place and role of school leadership policies (if any) within them.

On the above basis, participants were advised to go on and discuss various school leadership policy options that may address challenges of equity and learning, and the scope and rationale of such policies. In later meetings, the school leadership policy planning team was suggested to deepen into those policy options that appear to be more promising, given that they satisfy the criteria adopted, such as feasibility, cost-effectiveness, sustainability etc.

Who to invite in this event was a second major concern. EPNoSL strongly supported the engagement of all critical stakeholders already from the policy planning phase and not just on, the usually short, public consultation phase, or during the implementation phase. Yet, the group of participants was suggested to be kept relatively small in order to secure that all voices have ample time to be heard, that participants get to know each other better and develop trust, that the group can elaborate in-depth on different issues, specify differences in views and discuss ways to reach consensus. In latter stages of

¹ For the on-line version see: http://toolkit.schoolleadership.eu/planning_intro.php

policy planning, the group could be widened depending on the feedback and expert consultancy needs.

A third important concern was to ensure that all participants were well informed about what was expected from them during this first event. To facilitate the action planning process, EPNoSL developed **an Action Plan Template** so that participants can get a better idea of the tasks ahead.

A fourth important concern was to ensure that by the end of the kick-off meeting all participants would have developed a shared understanding and would have agreed on an agenda for their next meetings.

ACTION PLANNING IN ACTION

The methods and the steps followed by school leadership policy action planning teams varied, depending on the idiosyncrasies of the national policy landscape, the established traditions in policy formation, the current stage of the latest education policy cycle and the national or state/regional EPNoSL partners' reach to stakeholders and particularly Ministries of Education. For example, in some EU countries, there are explicit government guidelines and established regulations regarding the principles and methodologies for the development and final approval of policy action plans developed by government agencies or other public institutions. In other EU countries such principles and methodologies are less clearly articulated and mostly apply to policy programmes co-funded by the EU.

Overall, among the 18 national or state/regional School Leadership Action Plans that have been developed, 10 have been initiated, coordinated and drafted by members of agencies under the respective Ministries of Education (Belgium-Flanders, Berlin/Brandenburg and Lower Saxony federal states of Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom-Scotland), 5 have been initiated, coordinated and drafted by academics/researchers in discussions with members of their country's Ministry of Education (Austria – University of Innsbruck in discussions with the Ministry of Education and Women Affairs; Estonia - University of Tartu in discussions with the Ministry of Education and Research; Hungary - Tempus Public Foundation in discussions with the Ministry of Human Capacities and the Ministry for National Economy; Portugal - Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias in discussions with the Ministry of Education and Science; and Sweden - Umea University in discussions with the Ministry of Education and Research). Finally 3 action plans were drafted by academics/researchers who consulted the adopted national school policy strategy documents but, despite efforts, did not manage to engage directly in discussions with representatives of national policy making bodies (Finland, Denmark and Lithuania). In Denmark, for example, the national EPNoSL network met 4 times between 2012 and 2014 with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders but the Ministry of Education despite being invited was not made possible to participate. Effort is currently being made to engage policy makers via a new widened network on research in school leadership with participation from universities (Copenhagen Business School and DP and Aarhus University), the National Institute for Research in Municipalities and regions and University Colleges (UC Copenhagen, UC Metropole). This network has the potential of developing and making use of leadership data, concepts and theories.

Given distinct national or state/regional policy making backgrounds, some action planning teams were able to put in place a pluralist and collaborative approach that can be rightfully characterized as good practice in policy planning. In the paragraphs that follow, the steps taken towards consensus building between policy structures and practitioners and the development of school leadership action plans are briefly presented for the cases of Austria, of Flanders-Belgium, of the Federal States of Berlin and Brandenburg and of Lower Saxony in Germany, of Hungary and finally of the European Trade Union Committee for Education.

In **Flanders, Belgium**, the development of the action plan was initiated by members of the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Community. The first activity involved a survey amongst starting school leaders. The purpose was to define their needs for initial training and continuous professional development. The results from the survey were combined in a report with conclusions and policy recommendations. The report was then shared with the organizers of training programmes for school leaders, school leaders, researchers and colleagues from the Ministry. It has also been sent to the stakeholders which are involved in the official policy process (umbrella organizations of school boards and trade unions).

The development of the action plan involved several stakeholders. The plan as such was developed by a conceptual team of three policy makers from the Department of Education and Training with the involvement of two school leaders: one school leader of a primary school and one of a secondary school. The preparation of different actions involved meetings and brainstorming sessions with:

- researchers from different Flemish universities,
- colleagues from the Ministry,
- organisers of training programmes for school leaders, and
- organizations of school leaders

Overall, during the action planning process, the conceptual team had 8 meetings, 2 extra meetings were organized with the participation of researchers, 6 meetings with trainers of training programmes and 3 meetings with organizations of school leaders.

The involvement of the different stakeholders led to interesting discussions and in the end to realistic actions and recommendations. The process of the development of the action plan led to contacts with new stakeholders, initiated discussions between school leaders and researchers or other stakeholders. The topic of school leadership development gained the attention of stakeholders such as the trade unions and the umbrella organizations of school boards. It further led to the organization of a conference and to the establishment of the “*School leader of the Year*” by the educational magazine “Klasse”.

Involving two Federal States, **Berlin and Brandenburg, Germany**, the State Institute for School and Media (LISUM), a joint institution of these states striving for a harmonization of the existing systems in educational policy, initiated its own school leadership policy action planning processes. The action plan was developed between October 2014 and May 2015. The results, on the one hand, will be integrated into projects that LISUM itself implements on behalf of the two Ministries of Education and, on the other hand, will guide the actions of the Ministries, the school councils and the schools. The action plan was based upon the experiences of the school leader education programmes at LISUM, the resources and results from the EPNoSL project and other



research, from the expectations of relevant experts in the two Ministries, from a case study about inclusion and from the results of two national conferences (see EPN_oSL Del. 3.3, 2015).

A wide range of stakeholders were involved in the development of the action plan:

- representatives of the departments responsible for school leader education in the two Ministries,
- experienced trainers in the school leader education programmes at LISUM,
- LISUM colleagues,
- school leaders from different school types,
- researchers from different universities and institutes from German-speaking countries, and
- political decision-makers from different political parties.

Overall there were organized 5 meetings in the two Ministries and 4 further meetings at LISUM with trainers, researchers and business organizations.

The involvement of stakeholders gave strong impetus to the process of school leadership policy action planning and led to binding agreements with the two Ministries (administrative regulations were created). The stakeholders decided together to hold regular national conferences on the subjects of equity and learning seen also from the perspective of school leadership and agreed to support long-term measures (e.g. school leadership programmes on inclusion).

In the Federal State of **Lower Saxony, Germany**, the State Institute for School Development (NLQ) involved in the development of the action plan several stakeholders, including:

- representatives of the department responsible for school leader education in the Lower Saxony Ministry of Education,
- the department for school leadership training at NLQ,
- experienced trainers involved in the school leader education for the more than 3,500 schools in Lower Saxony,
- school leaders from different school types,
- researchers from different universities and institutes from German-speaking countries, and
- political decision-makers from different political parties.

The stakeholders involved in action planning decided to hold regular national conferences on the subjects of equity and learning. As a result, the 3rd EPN_oSL Berlin Conference on School Leadership, jointly organised in cooperation between the Lower Saxony State Institute for School Development (NLQ) and LISUM Berlin-Brandenburg, is planned for September 2015 and a decision on a continuation in September 2016 has already been taken. Furthermore, collaboration led to binding agreements with the Ministry, e.g. on inclusive education.

In **Hungary**, the school leadership action plan was developed by the Knowledge Centre of Tempus Public Foundation (TPF). The consultation phase involved the presentation and discussion of its early drafts at two forums:

a) *The 22nd meeting of the Education Indicator Working Group (EIWG) on 3rd June 2015.* The EIWG was established by the Ministry of Education in 2005 as a consultative expert group consisting of members of the Ministry of Education (today: Ministry of Human Capacities) and the Ministry for National Economy, researchers and representatives of professional organisations.

The presentation included a brief description of EPNoSL, the short presentation of the EPNoSL Policy Toolkit and a presentation of the draft Hungarian Action Plan. In total 30 individuals participated in this event. Among them, 8 were policy makers from the Ministry of Human Capacities and the Ministry for National Economy, 9 were policy implementers at the national level (R&D, central educational service provision under ministerial supervision), and 7 were researchers.

The draft Action Plan was then circulated among the members of the EIWG, who were invited to review the draft, give feedback and suggestions for improvement. Feedback was due in July 2015.

b) *High-level consultation at the Ministry of Human Capacities on 11th June 2015.* The consultation, which was consisted of a presentation of EPNoSL (the network, toolkit, case studies) and of the Hungarian draft Action Plan, was followed by a discussion. In total 9 individuals participated in the meeting. Among them 5 were from the Ministry (Vice state secretary of school education, head of school education development department, an officer of the same department, two officers from the department of international affairs) and 4 from the Tempus Public Foundation (director, head of knowledge centre, 2 coordinators).

The Action Plan was positively received at both meetings. The representatives of the State Secretariat of School Education showed a clearly open and positive attitude to the Action Plan and expressed their commitment to support TPF in realizing it and in raising awareness of the EPNoSL results in Hungary. For this purpose 3 specific steps of further co-operation were agreed upon:

- The Ministry will initiate a consultation with the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development, which will be responsible for developing an interactive knowledge portal for schools. The aim of the consultation would be to discuss the possibilities of integrating EPNoSL results (toolkit and case studies) into this portal.
- The State Secretariat of School Education will initiate a consultation with the Educational Institution Development State Secretariat to discuss what part TPF could play in providing short term training courses for school leaders in specific areas, such as early school leaving.
- Tempus Public Foundation will be invited to review and provide feedback on the ministerial plans with regards to the introduction of early warning systems.

The development process of the school leadership policy action plan for **Austria** started in 2013 when the University of Innsbruck brought together stakeholders of the whole Austrian school system dealing with school leadership for a kick-off-meeting, under the auspices of EPNoSL, having as a main question “A new leadership culture in the Austrian education system?” As a result of this meeting an “Initiative Group on Leadership Culture in Schools” was formed. This is a highly engaged group of experts from academia and practice which connects innovative representatives from all relevant institutions at horizontal and vertical system levels, e.g. regional and national policy makers aiming to

create innovative ideas for the development of “next practices” on leadership culture in the Austria education system. Furthermore, a committee of experts on “Leadership culture in schools” is working on the topic “School leadership and school improvement” for the “National Education Report Austria 2016” using data from research in education as well as selected theoretical approaches and results from EPNoSL.

The stakeholders who participated in the action plan development were the following:

- *First conference of the “Austrian Policy Network on School Leadership” (APNoSL):* The participants were high ranking representatives from all institutions of higher education from all Austrian provinces and all levels of the Austrian school system: Ministry of Education and Women Affairs, Inspectors, University Colleges of Education (rectors and people responsible for school leader education), Universities (researchers, Leadership Academy), the Center for Learning Schools (ZLS), and school heads (from different school types).
- *“Initiative Group on Leadership Culture in Schools”.* The group as met so far 3 times with the participation of representatives of all relevant institutions: school heads, inspectors, representatives of University Colleges of Education and the Federal Institute of Education Research, Innovation & Development (BIFIE) of the Austrian School System.
- *Expert Group on “Leadership culture in schools”.* The group has met so far 2 times with the participation of experts from the University of Innsbruck, the University College of Education of Lower Austria, the BIFIE and representatives of school heads.

The action plan of Austria is a result of the collective thinking of people representing policy, research, teacher education (pre- and in-service) and practitioners covering several Austrian provinces. As a result, the creative potential of all involved stakeholders set the direction of further activities with a view to equity and learning.

On its behalf, the **European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)** developed its own action plan. The process to develop ETUCE’s School Leadership Action Plan commenced with the development and adoption of the organisation’s policy on school leadership in Budapest in 2012. The new policy came up with concrete recommendations or actions for ETUCE members, focusing on various aspects of leadership, ranging from training, recruitment, professional development, professional autonomy, social dialogue and conditions of service, among others. The leadership policy was developed by the ETUCE Secretariat with the full involvement of a Europe-wide school leadership working group, comprising school leaders and education union officials.

In 2014-2015, ETUCE and Education International further refined the organisation’s core leadership principles based on insights from research studies and emerging developments. The draft was sent to ETUCE and EI member organisations for comments and more than five organisations/countries provided valuable written input.

The draft was also subjected to a validation process through a leadership conference which was held in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 3 and 4 May 2015. The validation meeting was attended by 50 participants, mainly comprising school leaders, union officials and experts/academics. The ETUCE Secretariat used the input of this consultative and validation process to finalise the action plan which was submitted to the European Policy Network on School Leadership.

It should be noted that ETUCE's Action Plan is embedded in its programme and budget, thus ensuring effective implementation, follow-up and sustainability. As indicated in the Action Plan, two major leadership conferences are planned in July 2015 and 2017.

THE PROBLEM SPACE(S) OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP POLICY STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS

A major challenge in school leadership policy planning is to clarify what is the **policy problem(s) space** upon which this should be oriented.

As it was proposed and extensively discussed and documented by EPNoSL, school leadership can contribute to solutions of the policy problems/challenges of equity and learning in schools across Europe. Equity and learning in schools have different characteristics as policy problems/challenges, depending on the national or state/regional context they are observed. For example, the causes of these problems may be somewhat different from national to national context and different factors may affect them in ways that are unique to each context.

In turn, leadership in European schools (its quality and effectiveness) is a policy problem/challenge on its own, affected by various factors (e.g., professionalism of school leaders, room of maneuver they have to manage and lead their school, etc) which demands its own policy solutions. EPNoSL identified a number of potential policy solutions, focusing particularly on the areas of school autonomy, accountability, distributed leadership and the preparation and professional development of school leaders. Each one of these policy areas also represents a different policy problem/challenge that requires its own policy solutions adapted to the needs of the respective national or state/regional contexts.

In the following sub-chapters, action plans are reviewed and synthesized focusing in particular on what they identify as main policy challenges or problems that need to be addressed by school leadership policy planning.

In most action plans the major problem/challenge identified which school leadership policies have to strategically address is that of *equity* and *learning performance*. This problem/challenge orientation is most critical, for their own particular historic and socio-economic reasons, in German speaking countries (Germany and Austria), in Flanders-Belgium, in Hungary, in the Baltic states (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia), and in Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Malta).

EQUITY AND LEARNING CHALLENGES THAT REQUIRE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP POLICY ACTION

The action plans for the federal states of **Lower Saxony, and of Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany** stressed the critical need to address challenges of equity not only in schools in those three states but in all of Germany. As it was pointed out, the yearly “Opportunity Mirror” (Chancenspiegel) study by the Bertelsmann foundation on how just and efficient the school systems of each of the 16 German states are, shows that students of the ninth grade from higher social classes, have a two year difference of knowledge and competencies of up to two years in comparison with their class mates from families with low educational level. Furthermore it shows large disparities in



student performance and participation between states and different regions as well as between cities and rural areas. In Germany social injustice and inequality of opportunity in education remains on the top of policy discussions about education. In 2013 the Vodafone Foundation Germany study revealed that 61% of the teachers feel that, due to their different social backgrounds, children have no equal opportunity of chances. Children from problematic family backgrounds in Germany are facing great disadvantages concerning their educational achievements. In Germany parents are less widely supported by institutions in early childhood development. Thus, children enter the educational system at the age of six with very different preconditions. Particularly children from families with a migration background where German is not spoken at home often have great deficits in language acquisition. However, even though teachers and parents alike are aware of the reasons for inequality of chances, there is a general status-quo-orientation: Both groups likewise adhere to the traditional educational system.

Data about the Austrian school system presented in the action plan for **Austria** point out inequality and low achievement in basic skills and generally average results in the competences of students. PISA results show that more than 30% of the tested students did not reach the minimum competences in one domain, 14% failed in all three domains. Early school leavers (5,6%) are not included. The results show that there is a connection between high-risk-students and family background (income, low education, migration, spoken language of every day life). The share of low-achieving 15-years olds in reading is more than 25%; data show that the share of low achievers at the end of primary school is much smaller (16%).

In Austria education seems inherited: 56% of people of the age of 25 to 44 years from families with tertiary educational attainment have an academic degree, whereas only 7% of people between 25 and 44 years from families with secondary school qualification do so. Early decisions about school careers at the age of 10 are influenced by family and language competences. The evaluation results of the reform project New Middle School (NMS) show that the social background of the family still effects equity. But there is a positive trend that more children change from New Middle Schools (45,9%) to a higher level school than children from the former type of school, "Hauptschule" (39,3%).

Overall, the challenges of equity and learning in schools identified in the action plans of Germany's federal states of Lower Saxony and of Berlin and Brandenburg and Austria's are mostly affecting children from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly children with an immigration background, and appear to be accentuated by:

- low level of pre-school support to children in families where German is not the main language spoken at home that may inhibit their progress in achieving national language proficiency during the critical first years of schooling, and
- early ability-based tracking (selection of school type/system before the age of 15).

In **Flanders-Belgium** the next 5 years school population is projected to increase in primary and secondary education. There is also a change in population of several Flemish cities. Most cities will be confronted with growing numbers of inhabitants and most of the newcomers will be immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe. For example in cities such as Antwerpen, Mechelen en Genk, it is expected that the group of inhabitants from 0 to 19 years old will be as much as 23 to 24% of the overall population. A large

number of the new families which immigrate to Flanders don't speak Dutch. This situation is likely to put a huge pressure on schools on how to respond to the needs of an increasingly linguistically diverse student population. Early tracking, mostly within schools, is also a factor that can create challenges of equity.

Hungary also faces serious challenges in terms of equity in education. As in Germany, Austria, Flanders-Belgium, early tracking in Hungary's school system is claimed to influence students' future achievement and job perspectives at a too early age. The failure of the students belonging to sensitive groups (students of Roma ethnicity, students with low socio-economic background, children of unemployed parents, etc.) is in strong connection with the selection mechanisms of the Hungarian school system. According to OECD PISA results the Hungarian education system is among the least equitable education systems in the OECD meaning that social background highly influences students' achievement. ESL in Hungary alarmingly increased from 10.5% to 11.9% between 2010 and 2013. Hungary is among the very few countries with an increasing rate.

In the **Baltic states** there are also reported in the respective action plans a wide range of equity and learning challenges in schools that require school leadership policies. In **Estonia** the phenomenon of 'school dropout' (especially among males) is high across all levels and types of education. However, there are also identified a variety of other equity challenges such as dominant study careers towards "male and female specialties", which increase gender segregation in schools and later in the labor market. Furthermore, vocational education is not recognized as an opportunity for good quality studies. Finally, according to the action plan, Russian-language basic schools do not provide good Estonian language skills.

In **Latvia**, according to Eurostat data for 2013, the percentage of children living in a household at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 38,4 which is the 4th highest percentage from EU-28. Pupils from rural areas are in more disadvantaged situation. Furthermore, the OECD PISA results from 2006, 2009 and 2012 show that the number of high performing students in reading, mathematics and science is low and continues to decrease. There is a tendency that boys' achievement is lower than those of the girls. According to MoES data, the number of students taking centralized examinations in Chemistry, Physics and Biology is decreasing and so is the number of higher education science and technology program graduates. Although in recent years, according to MoES, the number of VET students has increased (5,7%) still more pupils choose general secondary education. In 2014 proportion was 60:40 in favor of general secondary education. In 2008 the rate of ESL was 15, 5%, and although in 2012 this share decreased to 10, 2% it is still necessary to implement preventive measures for those at risk. In recent years more pupils with special needs choose to attend mainstream schools. However, not all schools are ready to accommodate those students because schools lack support staff and teachers are not trained to work with SEN students.

In Latvia the demographic situation has a negative impact on education. Population is decreasing both because the number of deaths is higher than the number of births and because of emigration. According to the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB) the number of students in 2020 in general secondary education will be 11,6 thousand less than in 2012. This will directly affect existing schools and will force local governments to take unpopular decisions, e.g., close down several schools. The major task for the

coming years is to restructure the existing school network and at the same time maintain education quality and equity.

In **Lithuania**, there is high socioeconomic differentiation among the population (incomes differ by 6-7 times); furthermore, there are high socioeconomic and educational disparities between cities, towns and villages or certain regions. For example, there are regions and /or schools where 50 % or more children and youth get subsidized lunch at school. Students' achievements have high correlation with their socioeconomic background. Educational experts stress that differentiation in students' achievements because of socioeconomic reasons has reached a risky and serious level. Lithuania's action plan also reports high numbers of children and youth (in comparison to other EU countries) with psychological and other health problems and the worst protection of children rights in the EU (especially protection from violence). In Lithuania there are also high rates of emigration and hence of children and youth living without parents (in comparison to other EU countries).

In **Mediterranean countries** challenges of equity and learning performance in schools are also important issues in the political dialogue. In **Italy**, for example, a major issue identified in its action plan is the increasing presence of non-Italian students in the schools and the consequent need to find the most effective strategies to welcome them, offering appropriate learning opportunities. It is estimated that about 40% of schools are hosting 15% or more non-Italian students. Unlike other countries with long experience of immigration inflows, like Germany, this phenomenon is recent in Italy. Not only attendance and immigration data underlines the quick dynamics characterizing the presence of non-Italian students in schools, it also evidences the difficulty these students face in their learning and how this is inappropriately tackled. Following the OECD 2013 TALIS research, more than a quarter of Italian lower secondary teachers report that they are in strong need for professional development in the domain of intercultural education and this is the third higher percentage among OECD countries. A relevant challenge is also that of the learning gap between the north and the south of the country, and of a broad between-schools variance, as emerges both from international (PISA) and national (INVALSI) achievement tests. These gaps do not seem to narrow, as shown by the results of the 2015 national test.

In **Malta's** action plan it was reported serious gaps in student performance, high drop-out rates from school, further and higher education and, perhaps most importantly, lack of solid understanding of equity issues and cultural relevant pedagogies on the part of school leaders and teachers.

In **Greece's** action plan it was identified the need to strengthen the inclusion and support of at risk / vulnerable and SEN groups in the school, especially in times of economic and social crisis and hardship. As it was stressed, the situation on inclusion and support of at risk and SEN students has further deteriorated due to the economic crisis in Greece. One key issue identified in the "education policy outlook for Greece" compiled by the OECD in accordance with the Greek government, is the "need to support vulnerable social groups in compulsory education and ensure more effective access to education for children with disabilities and Special Educational Needs (SEN)) (OECD, 2015: 235). The need for inclusive leadership and support for SEN students and their families was further identified in the EPNoSL national networking event held in Athens by the Institute for Education Policy in 2013.

The above challenges of equity and learning in schools present some similar patterns across countries or wider regions:

- Schools in countries or regions with high immigrant inflows from non-EU countries (e.g. Greece, Italy, Spain and Malta) have to respond to the needs of a student population that is increasingly diverse linguistically and culturally but also may lack essential care such as adequate housing or nutrition.
- Schools in countries or regions with high rates of emigration (e.g. the Baltic states) tend to see the number of their students considerably decreased but on the other hand they may have to cater for the needs of a growing number of children whose parents have emigrated.
- Schools in countries facing the impact of the economic crisis and of the austerity measures introduced (e.g. Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal) have to deal with a rapidly increasing number of students whose families are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, particularly families with low or medium educated parents.
- Considerable long-standing disparities in student performance are observed between regions of a single country, between urban centers, smaller cities and rural areas, and between different types of school programmes (vocational vs general or comprehensive).

Challenges such as the above cannot simply be tackled by school leadership policy actions; they require wider and more comprehensive actions encompassing the social, the economic and potentially the health and other sectors besides education. Nevertheless, school governance and leadership have a high potential to respond to regional/local problems and challenges, and thus greatly contribute to, for example, reducing early school leaving, or enhancing the learning performance of the low achievers.

SCHOOL SYSTEM GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES CHALLENGES

A critical challenge that was further identified in several action plans has to do with the attractiveness of the teaching profession in general and in particular of school management posts and the ageing of the teaching workforce.

ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION AND THE AGEING WORKFORCE

The recruitment of school leaders is a serious issue in **Lower Saxony**, Germany. It is very difficult to identify capable leaders for primary and lower secondary schools, particularly for smaller units. The reasons for this are an inadequate remuneration and high teaching obligations, which leaves insufficient time for administrative tasks. School leaders' associations in Lower Saxony (Schulleitungsverband Niedersachsen, Direktorenvereinigung Niedersachsen, Philologenverband Niedersachsen) keep arguing for the necessity of professionalization of school leadership and more autonomy for schools. The current opposition in the Lower Saxony parliament (the Liberal Democrats) takes up these issues and demands higher remuneration for school heads.

Across the **Baltic states**, the teaching profession does not constitute an attractive career path. According to **Estonia's** action plan teaching as a profession is not attractive: the proportion of young people, particularly males, in the teaching profession is low,

interest in enrolling in the teacher education programmes is limited, and among those who have been trained to be teachers, many choose not to work in schools.

In 2009 in **Latvia** the amount of earmarked subsidies for teacher salaries paid to local authorities decreased by 50% and a new model of teacher remuneration ‘money follows a pupil’ was introduced. Teachers received different salaries for the same workload. In municipalities with small number of pupils teachers’ salaries are still very low compared to municipalities with more pupils. Furthermore, the teaching staff is aging. According to MoES data in the school year 2013/2014 more than 40% of the teachers were over 50. In brief, in Latvia is difficult for schools to attract young professionals.

In **Lithuania’s** action plan the challenges to attract talented professionals in schools have to do with low teachers’ salaries (in comparison to other EU countries), narrow possibilities for self-realization as educator, lack of motivating and cooperative aspects at the work place, and lack of professional career possibilities. Furthermore it is reported lack of self esteem and a tendency for secure one’s position against control because of a long lasting tradition of strict management requirements.

In **Greece’s** action plan the “limited and rather unfulfilling and unrewarding role of the school principals” is identified as a critical challenge. The drastic cuts in teachers’ salaries, including those of headteachers, introduced during the past five years, had a negative impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

The trends identified in the above action plans regarding the diminishing attractiveness of the teaching profession and the aging of the teaching workforce are confirmed by a recent report commissioned by the European Commission² which indicates that “... in most European countries [apart from Ireland, Finland, Scotland], the teaching profession has lost much of its capacity to attract the best candidates. Among the main reasons: decline of the prestige of the teaching profession, deterioration of working conditions and relatively low salaries compared with other intellectual professions... The ageing of the teaching population in several countries [particularly in Germany, Italy and Sweden] further adds to the structural risk of an imminent shortage of qualified teachers” (p.10).

The implication of the diminishing attractiveness of the teaching profession is that schools have difficulties in recruiting talented new professionals and hence prospective school leaders aspiring to have a fulfilling career in the school system. From a wider perspective this situation, together with the ageing teaching workforce, critically affects the capacity of the school systems to innovate and change.

CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND SCHOOLS’ ROOM FOR MANEUVER

The promotion of leadership in schools is highly related to the room for maneuver that schools have to take decisions and implement context-sensitive interventions (e.g.

² See *Study on Policy Measures to improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe* (2013). Vol. 1. Final report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2013/teaching-profession1_en.pdf



choice of pedagogic methods and learning content, management of resources etc) that are responsive to the school-specific challenges of equity and learning.

Over-regulation of the school life, centralization in decision making and burdensome bureaucracy can greatly inhibit the flourishing of leadership in schools.

The school leadership policy action plans annexed in this deliverable point to and reflect the wide variation and complexity in the established traditions and emerging trends regarding school autonomy.

The school leadership action plans in some of the **countries in the Mediterranean** clearly identify critical challenges regarding school autonomy as a ground upon which school leadership can flourish.

Over-regulation, centralization and bureaucracy characterize **Greece's** school system, which, according to its action plan, greatly inhibit the development of leadership at school level. Greece has one of the most centralized governance structures in education among OECD countries. In particular, when it comes to decisions taken at the local and school level concerning curriculum, learning and assessment, Greece comes last. What actually happened during the last decade or so was a de-concentration of administrative decision-taking procedures, with regional and prefectural educational authorities acting mostly as local annexes of the Ministry of Education. While municipalities took over the ownership of school buildings and infrastructures, the operational and maintenance funding still came from the central government through the regional authorities. Moreover, these changes did not affect the allocation and management of the human resources of education, limiting even further the possibilities for local educational autonomy. The centralized character of the system has frequently resulted in a kind of leveling uniformity that did not benefit those in greater need for positive action and compensatory educational initiatives such as the disadvantaged, poor, remote and ethnically diverse communities and at-risk groups. It has also prevented significant stakeholders as local communities / collectivities and parents, to claim an active leadership role for the benefit of schools.

In **Italy** over-regulation and bureaucracy in dealing with a wide spectrum of school management and administration issues pose considerable challenges to the development of school leadership. By the end of the 1990s legislation was introduced to regulate and widen school autonomy. The new laws restructured the school organizational framework and reinforced the role of the school heads, as key actors in the shift from government to governance, as the leaders of the new local networks. In fact, with the new responsibilities linked to school autonomy, headteachers were given a new status in the hierarchical rank of civil servants, as well as some salary improvements. The autonomy legislation produced a new accountability framework; "in theory" this was meant to be different from the former, when accountability only referred to financial matters and accounting and to compliance with formal procedures and norms. According to the legislation introduced in the early '00s the school heads became responsible "for the results of the educational service", and this was considered as a major innovation. However, for several years what the process of 'results' evaluation' meant was difficult to define, given the web of bureaucratic constraints, which limited the decision making powers of school heads. For instance headteachers had no role in staff appointments and career development, both managed at national level; their power was in fact limited to issues of timetables, leaves of absence, minor disciplinary reprimands and financial rewards. Financial autonomy, despite some



innovations was also considered more virtual than concrete; the inflexibility of the budget management regulations did not leave room for relevant choices, particularly when funding is reduced. The expected evaluation process was never put in place. For more than the past 15 years Italian headteachers have only been formally accountable to the 20 Regional Directorates, the Ministry's local offices at regional level, while their school budget was supervised through periodical financial audits. Thus no relevant change actually took place in their accountability practices.

As is pointed out in **Portugal's** action plan there is need to pay attention to how policy actions in relation to school autonomy affect school leadership. The schools' evaluation regime introduced in 2002, and other legislation introduced up to 2012, such as the teachers' performance evaluation and the school heads' evaluation, were justified by policy makers as tools for deepening school autonomy. However, it gradually became clear that the new schools' autonomy regime set diversified demands on school heads: from *administrative* ones (concerning the material, human and financial resources), to *epistemological* ones (specific knowledge on educational policies and its regulation, administration /management / governance, pedagogy, didactics, psychology, etc), to *cultural* ones (behavior patterns, and individual and collective values). School heads lacked adequate knowledge and skills to respond to this wide range of new demands, which become even more pressing in socio-economically deprived areas. Thus it is important for, at least, the Portuguese national case to make the distinction between the concepts of the "decreed autonomy" and of the "constructed autonomy". The "decreed autonomy" concept refers to policy in general terms. The "constructed autonomy" refers to autonomy policy ownership and implementation at school level. It refers to the enactment of autonomy policy at school level, which in Portugal depends mainly on:

- the individual characteristics of the appointed heads, on their previous training and on their willingness to develop professionally, and
- on the contextual conditions, where the specific school's culture fits in.

When the autonomy regime is decreed, some administrative conditions are established for schools and for professionals to make use of extended decision-making powers, but attention is not paid neither to the epistemological, nor to the cultural conditions necessary for educational change.

While over-regulation, bureaucracy and lack of a systemic capacity to take ownership of widened autonomy at school level may pose considerable challenges in school leadership development in some Mediterranean countries, in other countries with strong and long-standing traditions in wide school autonomy, such as Sweden, the challenges have to do with:

- how to secure that schools do work on the basis of the national education strategies, and
- how to ensure that school heads are not overburdened with the increased management tasks in the context of widened school autonomy, which limit their potentials for pedagogic leadership.

The challenges for the **Swedish school system** regarding to school autonomy and leadership are identified in a newly reported Swedish Public Inquiry "The Principal and the Chain of Command" led by Professor Olof Johansson, member of EPNoSL, and commissioned by the Minister for Education.

According to this report, many principals feel that they are unable to allocate sufficient time to their role as pedagogical leaders due to their large administrative burden. Previous studies have also shown that many principals experience difficulties managing the tasks they are responsible for. This Inquiry indicates that many of the problems principals experience result from deficiencies in the school system's 'chain of command'. This chain of command refers to the sequence consisting of 'central government→ school governing body→ governing body's management→ principals→ teachers'. One problem is that the dialogue conducted between the various levels in the chain of command is often unclear in various respects. Consequently, the dialogue *does not result in a common strategy on how to achieve the national goals in each individual school*. Hence, there is a great need to develop knowledge of the national strategy among school governing bodies and the different leadership layers established between the school leader/administrative director and the principal.

The Inquiry's overall conclusion is that there is a great need to reinforce principals' pedagogical leadership capacity. Well-developed active pedagogical leadership is a prerequisite for successfully fostering pupils' knowledge development. For it is specifically through active pedagogical leadership focusing on learning that the principal gains the knowledge required to organize and staff the school, to develop the staffs' expertise and skills, and to allocate resources where they are most needed. The question is *how* the pedagogical leadership capacity of principals can be strengthened. The report suggests that there is primarily a need for *cultural changes* aimed at paving the way for principals' pedagogical leadership. The responsible governing bodies and the leading officials representing these bodies need to follow up the work of principals to a greater extent and clarify the existing demands for change in the management and leadership of individual schools. It is also important, however, that interaction, support, leadership and management develop within the entire chain of command.

As reflected in the action plans, in many EU countries the major policy orientation, on the one hand, is to widen school autonomy in relatively centralized systems and to maintain it (if not further it) in relatively decentralized ones. On the other hand, it is to establish accountability mechanisms as an instrument at the hands of central governments (national or state/regional) to steer and control schools.

In the federal state of **Lower Saxony, Germany**, school leadership has been professionalized with the implementation of the school law in 2007 which strengthened school autonomy. School leadership teams are now to a certain degree responsible for their own budgets which they can allocate freely for quality development and for the professional development of the staff. Schools can opt for a form of *distributed leadership* by involving their middle management in leadership tasks (kollegiale Schulleitung). Moreover, school heads lead the school board consisting of teachers, parents and students to whom they have to report. On the behalf of the Ministry of Education, the school authorities monitor the quality of schools through inspections.

An exception to the policy trend for more school autonomy represents **Hungary**. In this country since 2012 a complete restructuring of the school system administration and management was introduced. A more centralised system was built, a central bureau (Klebelsberg Institution Maintenance Centre) was established and the county and district level authorities became the school maintainers instead of the local municipalities.

The school education reform resulted in the following:

- In general, state schools have a more restricted decision making competence over a number of areas (e.g. applying for a tender, decision about the employment or promotion of a teacher).
- School principals and teachers are appointed and employed by the central bureau.³
- State schools have no financial independence; institutional needs can be fulfilled through the Maintenance Centre by a bureaucratic procedure.
- 10% deviation from the mandatory national curriculum is allowed to schools as compared to 20% before the new legislation was introduced.
- The supply system of the school textbooks became centralised: textbook orders can be arranged through a specific system run by a governmental company which is based on a textbook list approved by the Ministry of Human Resources.

In Hungary, furthermore, a quality development system including a career path model for teachers was introduced in 2014. The quality development system includes the regular external evaluation of teachers, school leaders and schools. An inspectorate and pedagogical services were established, teams of evaluation experts as well as education counselors have been formed. The rollout of further elements of the reform are planned for 2015 (related to the professional development of teachers, institutional action plans for addressing weak performance, and extending competence measurement).

Overall, in Hungary there is evidence of a growing centralization in decision making, away from schools towards upper levels in the school system administration hierarchy and in parallel a strengthening of accountability and inspection mechanisms. In turn, such policies create the ground for new challenges regarding school leadership development in schools.

³ Until 2012 teachers' recruitment was the responsibility and competence of the school head; in the new system, it is not anymore. In practice however school heads still have an important influence in recruiting teachers.

SCHOOL EDUCATION POLICY STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Having outlined the three major challenges (equity and learning, school system governance and school autonomy, and human resources), that were identified as issues requiring school leadership action planning, we now turn to present and discuss the proposed strategic policy actions aiming to address them.

Most of the action planning activities reported in this deliverable are based on the wider national education and training strategies adopted by each country in its latest policy development cycle. These plans further elaborate on the existing strategies and identify areas where school leadership policies can be specified. In contrast, the action plans of Austria, Finland and Greece outline wider visions for the future of schools and the role of school leadership. These visions require radical changes in the ways the schools and the school system as a whole traditionally get things done in these national contexts.

VISIONS OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

According to **Austria's** action plan, the challenges of equity and learning in the Austrian education system need a *systemic change* on all levels of the system. School heads must initiate change by acting as school leaders and not only as managers. Managing a school might not be sufficient a strategy to develop an inclusive school towards equity and learning. Professionalization and acting of school heads as professionals are crucial factors for successful quality development of schools in particular and the whole system at large.

The increase in school autonomy puts more responsibility to school heads, who will have to acquire other competences and attitudes which have become more important, such as leading and managing change, teaching, self, others and the institution for equity and learning. These aims *need a new leadership culture*, which concerns the selection and education of school leaders as *change agents*, and also further professionalization within the lifelong-learning of school leaders. Therefore an *overall policy for school leadership is necessary*.

According to **Finland's** action plan, challenges related to equity and learning are seamlessly interconnected with the overall societal development of the country. The operational environment in and for which the welfare state had been established in Finland during the '80s started changing radically and rapidly both internally and externally. Internally, the changes fall on demography, economy and values. Considering values, one finds a radical turn from the state-led system-oriented centralized governance with which the welfare state was established to the conversation-based strategy-oriented distributed governance with which Finland attempts to meet present and future challenges. Externally, the changes focus on a global paradigm shift and an overhaul of values. The global paradigm shift stands for a fundamental change in our operational environment, thinking and operating. In Finland, the Nordic welfare state

and its equity in learning were created in a paradigm which represented the Newtonian world. The Newtonian world was simple, controllable and law-abiding. We are rapidly moving into a Quantum world. The Quantum world is complex, ambiguous and chaotic. It is characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability which require novel ways to lead and manage. Decisions and solutions must be designed in collaboration in networks where the various stakeholders are regarded as equal partners. The necessity of many-best methods, emphasis on appropriateness and flexibility, and trust as a fundamental leadership and management tool must be recognized, understood and accepted.

The challenges for school leadership policy action related to equity in learning in Finland are:

- Schools have to be developed as part of the education system in alignment with the general societal development. In addition, schools have an essential role in developing society towards the set societal goals through education. These two challenges require school leadership policy actions that support the development of schools according to the goals set for the development.
- Schools have to be developed during a time that contains several challenges for the development work. The paradigm shift in itself is demanding and there are no fixed operations models for the Quantum paradigm. In addition, demographic and economic changes create demands for additional structural changes in the national education system, in local provisions of education and in schools. Furthermore, the strict financial situation provides scarce resources for the development work. Lastly, the value shifts require new kind of approaches to lead and manage the national education system, local provisions of education and schools. This presupposes school leadership policy actions that support the development of schools according to the resources and needs of the operational environment.
- Schools have to be developed in ways and into communities that meet the demands of the Quantum paradigm. Schools have to become communities of learners that operate according to the principles of distributed leadership within the education policy frameworks of globally determined goals for education, the European Union, the national education system and the local provision of education. This calls for novel school leadership and management. School leadership policy actions have to determine what this means and how it is achieved.
- Schools have to be led and managed so that at no point the rights of its various stakeholders are endangered. This calls for school leadership policy actions that motivate and support professional school leadership of high quality.

Greece's action plan was inspired by the government plan to render schools as cultural centers of the neighborhood, also as a means for dealing with the consequences of the "humanitarian crisis" in Greek society due to the 5-year long austerity policies and the reduction of government spending on education and social policies. Elaborating on this issue, during a press conference the Minister of Education stated that combating the effects of the crisis is a task "that has to be undertaken by the society itself. The school should be a living cell for the neighborhood for social participation." Such an initiative would challenge the limited school autonomy and the passive role of the school principals in Greece while giving voice to underprivileged groups and requiring school communities and local stakeholders to concert their efforts.

It has been substantially documented that family-school-community partnerships enhance student attendance (a predictor of early school leaving) especially for students

of low socio-economic status, increase levels of societal engagement and connectedness and improve the quality of education services. In view of the policy initiatives needed for the Greek system of education to maximize school autonomy, strengthen school leadership and effectively support disadvantaged and at risk groups, it is argued that there is the need to re-conceptualize schools as *community hubs*. While there is no single or precise definition of a community hub, it could be maintained that it represents a conveniently located public place that is recognized and valued in the local community as a gathering place, and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programs, services and events.

Rendering schools as community hubs, “living cells” for the local communities could help get ahead or avert the effects of financial crisis and dramatically improve equity and learning, especially in economically deprived areas and for disadvantaged groups. Support for the idea of a school as a community focal point is not new. In many countries parents, educators and politicians view integration of family and community as essential to both the education and social environment of a child and the community the child lives. In Joy G. Dryfoos in 1994 coined the term “full-service schools” referring to one form of this idea. She argues that “the concept of ‘full service schools’ is an example of our ability to construct solutions at the local level that bring forces together in times of stress”. Schonert-Reichl, a Canadian scholar, notes that “Community connections ground children and give a sense of belonging that can help to counteract challenges in their lives”, an issue that acquires greater importance in times of crisis. The wide spectrum of functions and services provided by such an institution makes the School-as-Community-Hub a significant challenge to school leadership. It departs from notions of “a school as an isolated standalone academic institution that children just attend during the day, and weaves schools deep into the social fabric of communities and neighborhoods”. It demands a re-definition of education needs and priorities of the community and working partnerships between school boards, municipalities, and local / regional government authorities. Furthermore, effective community involvement would require schools and school leaders to reject neo-liberal competition as an underlying ideology and adopt community and cooperation as central values, as they would increasingly seek to involve stakeholders and individuals in planning and shared responsibility, ownership and accountability.

POLICY PLANNING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES OF EQUITY AND LEARNING: THE IMPORTANCE PLACED ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

As pointed out earlier, most of the action plans build upon existing national or state/regional strategies on education and training.

The new legislation for schools in **Lower Saxony**, Germany, (June 2015) provides the following regulations in order to foster equity and learning:

- further implementation of inclusive education,
- simplified procedures for opening comprehensive schools and massive increase in resources for comprehensive schools,
- more financial and personnel resources for all-day schools, and
- extension of duration of secondary and upper-secondary education from eight to nine years.



This plan of actions is supported by the government coalition (SPD and Green Party) and partly opposed by the opposition (CDU and FDP).

According to the Framework for School Quality (Orientierungsrahmen Schulqualität) inclusive education is described as the general goal as well as basic principle for all educational activities in Lower Saxony. *School leaders are responsible for the implementation of these concepts.*

In general, the following actions may help to overcome inequalities in Lower Saxony education:

- development of a broader dialogue between educational experts, politicians and the interested public about these issues,
- development of a constructive *cooperation between school leaders, teachers and parents* in order to foster mutual understanding and to promote early warnings for school problems,
- free extra-curricular support (individual coaching and homework supervision etc.), and
- *awareness-raising among school leaders about their responsibility for equity and learning.*

In **Berlin and Brandenburg** the subject of inclusion is by now a central part of the curriculum of the basic teacher education and is included in the individual subjects. Furthermore, *related programmes on the qualification of school leaders and teachers have been developed.* Currently the State Institute for School and Media (LISUM), a joint institution of these states striving for a harmonization of the existing systems in educational policy, is working among other things on projects with the aim of *supporting school leaders and teachers*, in their interaction with students with disabilities, talented students, and students from particular cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

There are also established the so-called “pilot schools” at the primary school level and new educational programmes for all school leaders. A counseling system for teachers is being build, where e.g. a teacher becomes an “inclusion counselor” supporting the school leader and the teachers. After the pilot projects for the primary school, the focus will turn towards higher level schools and their development to an inclusive school. The “Berlin day of school leaders” will become a tradition and the cooperation between state institutes will be extended and intensified. Central topics such as leadership for equity and learning, accountability, educating school leaders and policy response will be included and developed further.

The basic rationale behind the planned actions is *the increasing tasks and responsibilities for school leaders*, in the context of an ever-growing independence of schools. *The idea is to strengthen the concept of leadership.* School leaders have taken on a new role in recent years. Today, directing a school means to lead it. School leaders have to accept their leading role, in order to adjust to this larger responsibility. They cannot be lonely heroes, but need to guide a leading team. New tasks also need new competences and new content in managing and leading.

In **Austria** the introduction of the *New Middle School* is a priority measure by the Ministry of Education and Women Affairs, which tries to implement methods for individualization and differentiation. The creation of all-day schools is also a main policy

instrument which should answer equity problems and improve the quality of education at large. Moreover, a quality monitoring system has been introduced (SQA for general education schools, QIBB for vocational and professional schools) which aims at assessing improvement on all levels of the system and provide evidence for improvement both on the school and systems levels.

Changes at the school level are accompanied by reforms in teacher education: The new teacher education curricula no longer mirror the different types of schools future teachers are educated for. *Inclusion has become a compulsory specialisation offered in each programme.* School autonomy (concerning personnel, budgeting and curricula) is another important contribution to improving education and learning for all students set out by policies of the Ministry for Education and Women Affairs.

In **Estonia**, the *Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020* defines as central strategic goal to address equity and learning challenges the change in the approach to learning. The goal is an approach to learning that supports each learner's individual and social development, the acquisition of learning skills, creativity and entrepreneurship at all levels and in all types of education. To achieve the goal, the following measures have been planned:

- Ensuring content and volume of studies are concordant with curricular objectives.
- Changing assessment and evaluation principles.
- Developing an *in-service education system for the teachers and the heads of basic schools, kindergartens and vocational schools.*
- Creating and supporting forms of cooperation that support the implementation of the approach to learning.
- Developing Centres of Competence.

In **Latvia** the *National Development Plan 2014–2020* (NDP2020) is hierarchically the highest national-level medium-term planning document and is closely related to the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 and the National Reform Programme for the Implementation of the EU2020 Strategy. One of the twelve strategic objectives set out in NDP2020 is development of competencies. To achieve this objective the aims for the school education sector are:

1. To provide all children and young people with high-quality and competitive elementary and secondary education and with access to activities outside the formal education system, reduce the proportion of children and young people with poor basic skills, while increasing the share of those pupils who exhibit higher competency levels.
2. Based on international trends and labour market projections, create an adaptive and competitive system of vocational education.

On the basis of the above, the *scope of school leadership policies* is to:

- Reduce and prevent early school-leaving and promote equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training.

- Improve VET relevance to labor market needs, facilitate transition from education to work, strengthen quality of VET system by developing new curricula and implementing work-based learning approach.

In **Lithuania** in 2013 the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania ratified the *National Education Strategy for 2013-2022*. Considering the main educational policy priorities, the main objectives are:

- To enrich learning environment as well as practical learning possibilities, broaden non- formal education schools' spectrum and a variety of school activities, especially taking into account cultural, *leadership*, entrepreneurship, professional competence development possibilities, support volunteering initiatives, together organizing regular dialog on the priorities.
- To ensure the priority to education for the people from social disadvantage groups, victims of human trade, social risk groups and special needs groups.
- To develop integration of formal and non-formal education, establish open and flexible learning methods.
- To match principles of equal opportunities for all in the schools' aims and structure of educational system.

POLICY PLANNING TO ENHANCE SCHOOL SYSTEM GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES CHALLENGES

PLANS ON PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

In **Germany** there is a nation-wide network of state institute staff, who work in the qualification of school leaders. This network elaborates common concepts and toolkits on inclusive school leadership. The programmes are to be implemented in inter-state cooperation.

In the federal states of **Berlin and Brandenburg** in **Germany** there is a well-developed system of preparation for the job of a school leader. Future school leaders work intensively on future challenges and describe their leadership concept. When they apply for the position of a school leader, they need a certificate on this educational programme. Long serving school leaders have professional development opportunities through mentoring programmes and other related modules. On top of the above, the following new professional development policies are planned:

- In a programme of 120 hours, future school leaders will be prepared for their job. During seminars and an internship they will be dealing with:
 - The leadership concept.
 - School and teaching development.
 - The quality concept.
 - Organization and administration.
- School leaders can chose among their own topics. Space is given to reflection of people's own leadership practice through experience exchange. The long professional experience of participants serves as the basis to present and

explain pedagogical innovations and aims of teaching development. A particular focus is placed on the results of national and international studies on school performance.

- A special work group deals with the questions of which form and what elements should be included in the selection process for candidates for the position of a school leader.

While **Scotland** has had a Standard for Headship and a route to it known as the Scottish Qualification for Headship for many years it was never a mandatory requirement for new Heads to have the qualification on appointment to post. It was possible to meet the Standard for Headship in other ways but the Scottish Government has now decided that from 2018 it will be *mandatory* to have such a qualification. To that end Scottish College For Educational Leadership (SCEL) is developing a new national *Into Headship* programme, which designed to ensure aspirant and new Head Teachers are supported to develop and continue to build the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding required of senior leaders with the ultimate aim of enhancing outcomes for young people across Scotland. The intention is that the *Into Headship* qualification will become part of a coherent master's pathway which will include the following three stages:



As can be seen the first stage, currently under development, is the Into Headship element, which recently received GTC Scotland accreditation. The SCEL will then go on to develop the other identified elements to deliver the desired coherence.

Another area of SCEL's support for head teachers is its Fellowship Programme which is designed to provide advanced development opportunities for head teachers in schools and heads of establishments in early years centres. Its design principles are underpinned by the model of professional learning that integrates reflection on practice, cognitive development, experiential learning and collaborative learning. Through the programme participants will be able to extend their professional learning and widen their leadership experience while taking forward an aspect of policy development that enables them to engage with policy formation and implementation at local, national and international levels. The participants in the first cohort of the SCEL Fellowship Programme have now completed it and certainly appear to embody in a really positive way the aims of the programme.

Another recent initiative from SCEL is to develop a system of Regional Network Leaders. What is envisaged is a team of eight Regional Network Leaders to represent SCEL across geographical groups of local authorities. The Regional Network Leaders will become the eyes, ears, voice, heart and energy of the College and will work on behalf of SCEL for approximately 10 days per year, representing and promoting the college at regional and national events and liaising with local partners in identifying needs.

SCEL is therefore endeavoring to develop the Scottish education system through promoting strong educational leadership. In tandem with the Scottish Teacher Education Standards such leadership will be seen as encompassing all teachers, and all

levels of teachers. Students and new teachers, through experienced un-promoted teachers and those teachers in middle leadership posts, plus all the way to Head Teachers, every teacher will have a leadership contribution to make.

The Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland - GTCS) Order 2011 (Scottish Government, 2011) sets the GTCS a legal duty to 'make and publish a scheme setting out measures to be undertaken for the purposes of allowing it to keep itself informed about the standards of education and training of registered teachers.' The GTCS has chosen to entitle this "Professional Update", a scheme which is premised on teachers having a responsibility to consider their own development needs and an entitlement to a system of supportive Professional Review and Development, leading to a confirmation that they are maintaining the high standards required of a teacher. While this development has a quality assurance element it is also another important factor in supporting teachers' life-long learning, an element that adds weight to the argument made above about the benefits of having teachers as accomplished, autonomous professionals.

The intention is that as teachers progress through their careers the Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning will help them to identify, plan and develop their own professional learning needs and to ensure continuing development of professional practice. If we have teachers who are themselves accomplished, autonomous professionals *then they should in turn be a support for the school leadership.*

Malta's plans for new professional development activities for school leaders were based on an analysis of data collected from the CPD done in the last 2 years, and will be further elaborated during workshops on related topics and issues. An application was already submitted for an EU grant to assist with this work. The Ministry of Education in particular is planning for:

- CPD programmes for school leaders with respect to diversity, multiculturalism and equity;
- Induction programmes for principals, school heads and assistant management to include principles of equity, diversity and multiculturalism.

Currently planning and organization of several CPD initiatives is being carried out with the objective of improving the skills and competencies of the teaching personnel. The "all together now" programme was initiated last year and was executed in various schools. The aim of this CPD initiative was to entice personnel to reflect upon their practices in a way that makes them think of diversity. CPD initiatives are also being planned to implement the Learning Outcomes Framework. This educational innovation ensures that all children achieve regardless of ability. It is proposed that schools will identify the educational training needs for the implementation of this new curriculum. In future, the Institute for Education will also certify the provision of regular and continuous professional development at a level where this may be achieved in the most effective manner. The *EPNoSL toolkit* and resources will be utilized and further developed through the Erasmus+ Project: *Creation of Continuous Professional Development Programme for Educators* over the next three years.

Portugal's action plan places priority on the policy goal of school leadership capacity building for equity and learning, for two reasons:

- to improve school leaders' training, which is a priority since the autonomy regime was implemented;
- research shows that school leadership practices have not set equity and learning as a priority. Given that the national exams results is the paramount criterion in school evaluation, leadership practices have adopted mainly elitist values and used legitimate and illegitimate resources to select and segregate students. The issues of "equity and learning" should urgently be part of the initial and continuous training programmes not only for school leaders but for every teacher.

The leaders' training for equity and learning should be action oriented, framed by an holistic vision, on using a strategic planning for a specific context (each particular school, with their allocated teachers, enrolled students, and parents). Based on the above mentioned principles, the Ministry of Education, invited Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias to design a training course proposal addressing school leaders professional development, foreseeing to support its implementation. The Ministry suggested involving the Teacher's Training Centres in its discussion and implementation.

In response to the European Commission's country-specific recommendations, in November 2014, **Hungary** adopted a strategy for addressing the problem of early school leaving. Effective school leadership is among the institutional goals of the strategy. As it is stated in the action plan, the most important premise of early school leaving is the school; it is thus indispensable to strengthen the role and responsibility of school leaders. This must relate to the competences and responsibility of the school leader. Tools supporting the objective are:

- programmes for school leader development that raise awareness of their responsibility, sensitize leaders to the problem of ESL, and facilitate solutions,
- opportunities for peer-learning in institutions which responded to similar challenges in terms of ESL successfully,
- expert visits with leaders of human/support partner institutions
- familiarization of leaders with local early warning system preventing ESL,
- employment of experts (e.g. social educators, child protection officers, youth workers, etc.) and coordinators or mentors supporting the prevention of ESL according to the needs of the school.

In line with the above objectives, Hungary's action plan focuses on:

- a) improving leader competencies through enhanced opportunities for professional learning, and
- b) fostering networking, dialogue and co-operation between educational actors and professionals of co-sectors.

The two objectives planned in the area of school leadership are as follows:

Objective 1: Empowering school leaders to tackle early school leaving

In order to efficiently and consciously combat early school leaving, school leaders need knowledge on what ESL involves, how this problem can be tackled, they need specific tools, professional support as well as opportunities to co-operate on these issues.

Objective 2: Fostering professional collaboration and networking among school leaders, teachers, as well as with educational experts and professionals from the youth, employment, cultural and health sectors.

Besides formal courses, non-formal and informal learning opportunities are crucial for school leaders and teachers to be able to update their knowledge and skills. Networking and professional collaboration are major premises of learning. Since challenges regarding equity are linked to societal and economic problems, education alone is not capable of solving them.

The projects below aim to complement and support policy on equity and are planned for mid term (2015 – 2020) with specific outputs for a short term (July 2015 – December 2017).

Project 1: Empowering school leaders to tackle early school leaving

This project aims to contribute to reducing the number of early school leavers by emphasizing the importance of cross-sectoral co-operation through system level as well as practice-oriented solutions. It has two strongly interrelated pillars: enhancing school leaders' knowledge and providing them with professional support for combating early school leaving.

Project 2: Fostering professional collaboration and networking

The main aim of activities in the project is to involve stakeholders in knowledge exchange activities and to facilitate and strengthen professional collaboration and networking.

In **Sweden's** action plan a multi-annual national action programme to strengthen schools' chain of command in relation to the national goals is proposed by the Swedish Public Inquiry "The Principal and the Chain of Command" led by Professor Olof Johansson. The programme is proposed to enter into force on 1 January 2017 and end on 1 January 2022, after which time an evaluation should be carried out. The official report, with all proposals, will soon be sent out for consultation and that should be born in mind that the Government has not yet decided about possible measures. It is proposed that the action programme consist of the following:

A government recruitment training programme for prospective head teachers

The Inquiry chair proposes that a new recruitment training programme ought to be established that is intended for teachers and others who are interested in future leadership roles at various levels in the school system. The aim of the training programme is to promote recruitment of school leaders, but it will also provide continuing professional development for people who have, or will have, other leadership roles, such as team leaders. It is proposed that the recruitment training programme for prospective head teachers consist of 10 higher education credits, at a cost of SEK 20 000 per place. A total of 500 places per year is proposed. The total cost of a national recruitment training programme would consequently be SEK 10 million annually. The Swedish National Agency for Education will receive a sum equivalent to 6 per cent of the programme costs to produce a steering document for the programme and its evaluation, and to cover administration of the national admission process.

A somewhat adjusted focus for the National School Leadership Training Programme

It is proposed that the existing National School Leadership Training Programme should be adjusted somewhat. The programme should be focused more on the national assignment and the local chain of command, from the governing body and its various managers to head teachers and teachers. It is important that head teachers learn about their role in the central government chain of command and also learn to make demands

on the local governing body and its representatives concerning support, leadership and management to ensure a school system that effectively achieves the national goals and promotes good pupil outcomes in terms of both knowledge and social maturity. The programme can be adjusted in this way without allocating additional funds.

A compulsory advanced education programme following the National School Leadership Training Programme

It is proposed that the introduction into the Education Act of an obligation for school governing bodies to ensure that their principals take an advanced education programme as soon as possible once three years have passed since they completed the compulsory National School Leadership Training Programme. The programme should primarily deal with role of the systematic quality enhancement work in the school's chain of command. It is proposed that the advanced programme consist of 10 higher education credits. It is proposed that SEK 15 million annually should be allocated to this programme, which will permit around 550 places per year. The Swedish National Agency for Education receives a sum based on 6% of the course cost to cover their work in relation to administration of the admission process.

Training programme for school leaders

It is proposed that a training programme should be established for school leaders and other managers who are under the school leader but above the principal in the chain of command. Principals' management problems should be analyzed during the programme and, in addition, efforts to remedy these management problems should be initiated, i.e. the course should be both theoretical and practical, focusing on operational analyses and support, management and leadership. It is proposed that this training programme for school leaders consist of 10 higher education credits, at a cost of SEK 28 000 per place and year. A total of 200 places annually is proposed. The cost of the programme will be SEK 5.6 million per year. The Swedish National Agency for Education receives a sum based on 6% of the course cost to cover their work in relation to administration of the admission process.

Training for teachers on the school management system

The Inquiry chair also proposes a renewed and strengthened discussion of the emphasis on and scope of knowledge and understanding of the national chain of command in teacher education programmes. Knowledge and understanding of the function of the chain of command can be developed and improved in most teacher education programmes.

Training and dialogue for elected representatives

Furthermore, it is also proposed that the Government should consider education and training for members of municipal committees with responsibility for schools. This should be possible through regional and/or local conferences. It may be best to hold such training the year after a general election.

Overall, most if not all the action plans place considerable emphasis on policy actions that have the potential to foster the professional development of school leaders as a means to drive innovation and change in schools, promote fairness and inclusion and foster learning for both the teachers and the students. In brief, professional development of school leaders is perceived as the core element of school leadership policies.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE PLANS

Planning on changes in the governance of schools is undeniably a much more demanding political activity as compared to professional development actions. This is particularly so in school systems which are characterized by a considerable degree of long standing over-regulation and bureaucracy. It is therefore very important to stress that in Italy a new law introduced in July 2015 aims to reform the system by enhancing school autonomy and lessen the impact of bureaucracy.

In **Italy** the newly introduced Law n. 107 (July 2015) designs a broad framework with the intention to enhance school autonomy and lessen the impact of bureaucracy. It concerns a variety of stakeholders and a specific focus is devoted to headteachers, their responsibilities and evaluation.

Headteachers will have more responsibility in the preparation of the school plan and will have some chance, starting from 2016, to select their teams. This will be done within each local area, by identifying the most suitable teachers after considering their CV and its relevance with respect to the school plan. Teachers are still appointed by the Ministry, however headteachers have more options to select their staff, in that they can choose among the qualified teachers available in their region. The law specifies that operations will take place transparently in order to avoid risks of corruption and nepotism: headteachers will have to make public all information.

Headteachers will also have more freedom and responsibility in other fields: deciding the size of classes and in promoting initiatives to identify and reward excellence, organizing activities in the field of professional development, of the relationships between the school and the work world, on the organization of school networks. Their work is expected to be evaluated and the results will impact on their additional pay.

This new law further identifies the 5 criteria that will lead headteachers' evaluation, which mirror effectively the new conception of their role:

- a) Management and organizational skills aimed at improving achievement, fairness, transparency, efficiency and effective management of the school plan, in relation to the targets and goals expected for the three years period of their contract,
- b) quality of human resources management and skilfulness in appraising and rewarding staff commitment and performance both at individual and collegial level,
- c) degree of appreciation of the leadership displayed and its results by the social and professional community,
- d) contribution to the improvement of students' success in achievement and attainment. Skilfulness in organising and monitoring educational processes, with regard in particular to evaluation, self-evaluation and social accountability,
- e) joint management of the school, skilfulness in fostering participation and collaboration between diverse stakeholders and components of the school community, ability in managing relations with the social context and network of schools.

Headteachers will therefore be judged for several abilities and skills, among which social, relational and "political" aspects have a considerable relevance. Emphasis is put on their skills in promoting evaluation/self-evaluation and appraising and rewarding teachers, issues which were only unformally tackled until now.

In **Spain** the governance of the school system is shared between the central government and the autonomous regions. In this national case the challenge is how to coordinate policy across the different levels of formation and implementation. According to the action plan, the government has been working on:

- Warranting a certain degree of *autonomy* in the organizational issues, educational projects and responsibility to the regions, within certain guidelines.
- Creating a committee where all regions have been taking part and together have developed a final report with the main ideas related to *autonomy* and *cooperation*. This committee has included the discussions, learning and sharing of knowledge to facilitate the development of the law and the implementation of school leadership and educational autonomy policies, through effective action bases on the characteristics of the entire Spanish territory.
- Setting and adjusting the organizational and curricular activities within the framework of the powers and responsibilities of the State, the Autonomous Communities, local corporations and schools.
- The Government has promoted the participation of the educational community in the organization and governance of the schools.
- The Educational Administrations have encouraged and enhanced the autonomy of schools and have evaluated results and implemented appropriate action plans.
- Granting the educational centers pedagogic, organizational and managerial autonomy within the framework of new law and the regulations that will be developed.

ADVANCES IN POLICY DISCOURSE AND POLICY PLANNING ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

This chapter concludes with a brief overview of the advances identified in the policy discourse and policy planning on school leadership as compared to EPNoSL's period 1 state of the art review and discussion of the European scenery on school leadership (EPNoSL Period 1 WP2, 2012).

- One of the most striking advance has been the inclusion of "*for equity and learning*" in the school leadership policy discourse. EPNoSL had a pivotal role in mainstreaming the idea that the policy discourse on school leadership has to become more specific and gain more clarity regarding what should be the purpose of policies targeting to promote leadership in schools, this being the most critical challenge that school systems face across Europe: equity and learning. Other more abstract challenges discussed in the policy discourse such as school "change" or "innovation" actually lacked conceptual content and orientation that would specify "what for" and were focusing merely on processes.
- Another striking advance in the Europe-wide discourse on school leadership is to challenge the dominant idea that this concept refers to the knowledge, competencies and skills of school managers or head teachers. EPNoSL managed to mainstream the idea that school leadership represents the collective ability of schools to harness the potential of the established and emergent processes and dynamics of school life in order to achieve wide consensus on a purpose,



generate and lead coordinated action between individual members of the school community and groups that results in changes which address challenges of inclusion, equity and learning, in the management and learning from these changes, in the sustainment of those changes that work best for the benefit of all the students in the school and in reflective inquiry and experimentation upon further changes or new methods and novel activities that have the potential to respond effectively to emerging challenges related to equity and learning.

- Finally, it has been a striking advance in the Europe-wide discourse and policy planning on school leadership the development, validation and dissemination of recourses for school leadership policy planning, such as the School Leadership Toolkit, the case studies, and the webinars, and the establishment of wide and multi-voiced networks at national and state/regional levels particularly in countries where the school leadership discourse was conducted among a few enthusiastic academics and practitioners. The culmination of these efforts is represented in the action plans on school leadership reported here, a result which would be simply impossible to expect in many European countries just a couple of years ago.

POLICY PLANNING SUPPORT NEEDS FOR FUTURE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Overall, the major *lessons learned* from the processes that were put in motion by EPNoSL at national or state/regional level towards the development of the school leadership action plans are the following:

Policy making bodies (i.e. Ministries of Education with their policy planning or policy implementation agencies/units) need to be directly engaged into school leadership action planning from the very first moment. Critical reasons why this is important are the following:

- Where members of policy making bodies initiated and coordinated action planning it was proved easy to engage a wide variety of stakeholders in discussions and consultation. This is because Ministry agencies, being responsible for policy formation and ultimately implementation, can attract the direct interest and attention of critical stakeholders in the field of school leadership that have the aspiration to affect the policy agenda. Furthermore, Ministry agencies tend to have more financial or other resources to organize high profile policy-consultation events as compared to other stakeholders.
- Ministry agencies have, in principle, a better and deeper understanding of the wider national school education strategies and how these may relate to school leadership. Therefore, action planning originating from them can be more relevant and more coherent in relation to the national education policy goals and objectives. This is clearly reflected in the school leadership policy action plans produced.
- Ministry agencies have access to detailed information about the financial aspects of policy planning (e.g. budgets available to strategies/programmes or projects under planning, potential sources of funding), tend to have a better grasp of legislative/technical/bureaucratic aspects of policy planning (e.g. technicalities involved in impact assessment, new legislation that may need to be introduced) and greater understanding of challenges in policy implementation (e.g. greater experience on the actual capacity of the existing implementation mechanisms). Such knowledge and experience is absolutely necessary for the formulation of school leadership action plans that are both applicable and sustainable.
- On the basis of democratic principles and of how government is traditionally exercised in EU countries, national or regional/state policy development and planning belongs to the legislatively defined competent government/state entities; ultimately it is up to these entities to engage other stakeholders in policy formation and planning and not the other way around. Therefore, Ministry agencies often tend to be rather reluctant taking ownership of policy planning initiated by independent agencies such as universities or expert groups. In the cases where school leadership policy action planning was initiated by academics/researchers or experts not directly affiliated to a Ministry of Education agency it was proved considerably difficult to engage policy-makers in planning activities and more importantly to achieve the Ministry's commitment on it.



On the other hand, school leadership action planning originating from organisations that are independent from the national or state/regional Ministry of Education (but do achieve to attract the interest and active backing of the latter) can have the following advantages:

- Academics/researchers or experts in the field of school leadership policy can bring into policy planning innovative ideas that go beyond established/traditional ways of doing things or can offer imaginative ways on how to proceed with policy specification. This is because academics/researchers tend to have better grasp of the international discourse on school leadership and a deeper understanding of the latest available research and scientific evidence. This is clearly the case with many of the action plans attached to the deliverable.
- Academics/researchers and experts are usually less involved in the everyday school politics realities faced by Ministries of Education and the demands placed upon them to balance between, on the one hand, adopted policy visions and strategies and, on the other, pressures from and promises made to various stakeholder groups and implementation mechanisms. Therefore school leadership policy planning initiated by academics/researchers and experts can be proved more efficient in proposing school leadership reforms that otherwise would have been faced with great suspicion or resistance from political parties in the opposition or pressure groups that are in long-standing disputes with the government. Overall, action plans initiated and coordinated by academics/researchers and experts can be proved more pluralistic in terms of the different policy perspectives or policy options considered and achieve greater policy consensus, particularly in cases where the wider political climate affects negatively the potentials for cross-party agreement on a government-initiated policy.

It should, however, be stressed that the policy-making communities and the academic/research communities have developed, in most national or state/regional cases reported here, very close ties. Academics/researchers as individuals or as representatives of independent institutions (such as universities, research centres or teacher professional development organizations) often participate in expert groups commissioned by Ministries of Education to perform school education policy needs assessment and evaluation, policy formulation or policy planning activities. This is, for example, reflected in the case of Sweden where the Ministry of Education recently commissioned a public inquiry which resulted on a report entitled “The Principal and the Chain of Command” to a group of experts (with the direct involvement of EPNoSL members) in order to assess emerging demands for changes in the management and leadership of individual schools and their implications in relation school leadership training. Members of the academic/research communities in various national cases have also been involved in the formulation or specification of the national school strategy or have proposed and/or implemented programmes and projects as part of this strategy.

In the process of the development of the action plans various other types of stakeholders were also involved mainly middle-level education officials such as inspectors and administrators but also of representatives of school managers, which facilitated the grounding of the plans on the capacities of implementation mechanisms. On the other hand, it has to be admitted that the involvement of teachers and parents was much less systematic in the development of the school leadership action plans annexed with this deliverable and presented considerable challenges. A major challenge originated from the concerns of the teaching communities in some EU countries

regarding the orientation, aims and uses of newly introduced school education policies on school and teacher assessment processes and related quality assurance and accountability mechanisms. For example, teacher associations in countries that have been harshly affected by the recent economic crisis, such as Greece, distrusted and resisted the implementation of school and teacher assessment policies, on the ground that these may be used as a pretext to justify salary cuts or layoffs in the context of wider austerity policies. In such cases, school managing bodies and headteachers are often caught in the middle; on the one hand, they have to implement assessment processes on the basis of the legislative framework and directives from the Ministry of Education and, on the other, they have to respond to the concerns of school staff on their actual use and implications. Parents' associations, although critical stakeholders, tend to also have little direct influence in school leadership policy planning. Usually policy makers consider parents as members of the electorate whose interests and concerns have to be taken into account so as to ensure their re-election prospects. In this perspective, parents are perceived in practice as "beneficiaries" of school policies and much less as partners in policy planning.

Further support to policy makers in formulating and implementing school leadership policies has to be focused on the following.

Detailed and varied evidence on equity and learning challenges in schools and the impact of school leadership on different types of schools, school levels, school types and student populations. Quantitative and qualitative research need to support evidence- and place-based policy formation. Currently in most EU countries systematic research on these issues is quite scarce and therefore policy makers are limited in their efforts to examine the potential of different policy options on school leadership.

The shift from government to governance require that policy makers are willing to accept the multiplicity of perspectives and recognize the importance of school leaders, school staff, parents, students and the local communities not only in the enactment but also in the formulation of policies as equal partners in the policy process as a whole. From this perspective, policy makers need methodologies and tools for engaging in policy planning a wide range of school stakeholders, establishing sustainable and constructive dialogue and reaching consensus.

Policy makers need to be able to get valid feedback from the course and impact of the various stages of school leadership policy implementation. Therefore they need to be supported by impact assessment mechanisms, methodologies and tools.

Finally, in the context of even increasing complexity in the economic and social environment policy makers function, they need support to achieve comprehensiveness and coherence in policy planning and implementation. Policy actions affecting school leadership in one area, such as, for example, reforms in the procedures and criteria for the selection of school leaders, or the introduction of new professional programmes in the preparation of school leaders, can have multiple implications in others, including the level of financing required, the institutions and programmes to prepare school leaders, or the degree and character of flexibility (over curricula, budget allocation etc.) that schools should have in order for a new generation of school leaders to be able to actually shape and implement school-level policies and practices aiming to foster equity and learning.