



SYNERGIES REPORT

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
SYNERGY IN THE EEPN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	3
Synergy all across.....	4
SYNERGY WITHIN THE NETWORK	4
Fostering synergy in the network	4
Synergizing across the life-cycle of the network	5
SYNERGY WITH STAKEHOLDERS.....	7
Leveraging the activities of other networks and initiatives	7

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INTRODUCTION

The word “synergy” is classical in origin, coming from the Greek roots “syn” (meaning “together”) and “ergon” (meaning “work”). The contemporary term, however, means much more than merely “working together.” Synergy refers to the cooperation of different agents to produce a combined effect which is greater than the sum of their separate effects.

Synergy is thus central to the conception and conceptualization of the European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders (EEPN). One of the main reasons for the existence of a European network like EEPN is to provide the shared space and means of collaboration so that its members can achieve a combined power that will have a greater impact than the total power achieved by each member working separately. The aim of this “synergy report” is to highlight the need and possibilities for the development of synergies at the various aspects and stages of EEPN.

SYNERGY IN THE EEPN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The network aspires to help its members to combine their forces and to work together in order to inform and facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate policies on teachers and school leaders at different governance levels in Europe – and to do this more richly and fully than any single one or all individual network members separately could achieve.

The centrality of synergy in EEPN is clearly evident in its objectives. The first set of specific objectives of the network calls for

- creating and continuously developing a broad, sustainable and inclusive network;
- facilitating dialogue and co-operation among experts from policy, research and practice; and
- promoting and supporting continuous collaboration among partners in the network and with other relevant stakeholders at international, European, national, regional and local levels, including other networks and projects funded through EU programmes.

Through this intensive and continuous collaboration and exchange, the network aims to promote and support evidence-informed policy-making.

In addition, the second set of specific objectives of EEPN stipulates that the network will not simply analyse, but importantly also co-create knowledge on the opportunities, challenges and policy approaches in different education systems.

What is more, drawing on the multitude of perspectives, voices, expertise and experiences of the network partners, according to the third set of specific objectives, EEPN aims to identify, share and promote good policy practice and stimulate innovation and strategic development in policy, implementation and provision at different governance levels, with a focus on the involvement of national, regional and local stakeholders.

Last but not least, synergy should also enhance EEPN’s efforts to disseminate its results and recommendations within and beyond the network, informing EU-level debate, targeting policy-makers at different governance levels, practitioners, researchers and stakeholders across Europe, as well as contributing to the European Commission’s relevant dissemination mechanisms and tools.

Synergy all across

Synergy is a wished and expected element of the workings of EEPN across the board and throughout its timeline. An analysis of the network objectives can identify the following important aspects of the targeted synergetic effect:

- a broad, inclusive and sustainable network
- diversity of perspectives, including policy, research, and practice
- continuous dialogue, co-operation, collaboration, co-creation of knowledge.

Through these, EEPN will create the conditions for the generation of outputs such as:

- evidence-informed policy making
- identified, shared and promoted good policy practice
- stimulation of innovation and strategic development in policy, implementation and provision at different governance levels.

All of the above can be fully achieved only through a strong synergy – not by any one or more network members alone, nor by all of them working in isolation.

The EEPN members should pursue such synergy at three levels:

- within the network
- with other relevant stakeholders at various levels (trans-continental, European, national, regional, local); as well as
- by leveraging the activities of other networks, initiatives and EU-funded projects, in order to enhance the chances of achieving the goals of EEPN.

SYNERGY WITHIN THE NETWORK

Synergetic action among network partners is the most fundamental aspect of synergy in EEPN. Already at its starting phase, the consortium consists of 27 members from 18 countries. Constituting an inclusive and sustainable network of key actors representing school leaders, teachers, parents, education employers, policy makers, education policy centres and educational researchers, EEPN members together are truly more than all of them separately. This constellation of different perspectives, experiences and expertise is necessary so that EEPN can drive positive change in education in a bottom-up approach, and support evidence-informed policy making in a top-down approach.

Fostering synergy in the network

A priority of the design, enactment, and management of EEPN is therefore to arrange the dynamics, discussions and decision-making processes in the network in ways that will facilitate achieving collaborative results through the combination of contributions from network partners with different characteristics and strengths – so that network members can fully function as “multipliers” rather than as mere “additions.”

It is also important to note that in the course of the four years of EEPN operation, new partners may join the network, while others may discontinue their participation. With any such changes in the composition of the network, the new emerging shape of the teams of network members will be a new, unique combination which will generate new opportunities and challenges for synergetic results.

Therefore, adaptability and continuous adjustment of the efforts for synergy to the current realities of the network are of paramount importance.

Further, to achieve synergy within the network, enabling and facilitating effective teamwork is essential. Therefore, a constant in the efforts of the management team of EEPN is giving priority to helping unify the team of the diverse network members and facilitating it to perform as a cohesive group. Some important driving principles in this are presented below.

Clarity and transparency of the goals

All network members need to know, agree and share the same clearly defined objectives for the network. Each network member should understand what success looks like and how they are meant to help achieve it, whereby different network members will obviously be filling different functions. The objectives of the network can work as a motivator and a way to create a “shared vision” within EEPN. Everyone in the network should relate to these objectives and see the value in their, and others’, contributions towards the achievement of these objectives.

Communication

EEPN places emphasis on members communicating openly and regularly, mostly digitally at a distance but also through the network face-to-face events, so that each network member knows what the other members do in the network, their needs and what they need from them. This is especially important in the planning phases, as well as whenever adjustments to the plan and new decisions are required during the enactment of tasks. In this communication within the network, it is essential to strike the right balance between assertiveness and empathy, clearly explaining needs or instructions, and being mindful of the burden or stress one may be placing on others.

Empowerment

EEPN is dedicated to providing each and all of its members with the encouragement, tools, and authority that will enable them to use their power and expertise effectively towards the goals of the network. Beyond providing the structures and means for cooperation, this also includes instilling trust and the belief that the network as a whole and its members are fully capable of fulfilling the goals of the network and completing the tasks at hand.

Commitment

The network is founded on, and fosters, team members’ personal commitment and dedication to the overall success of EEPN’s venture. This is grounded on network members’ common and complementary values, interests and strengths.

Synergizing across the life-cycle of the network

Synergizing is a continuous priority across the life-cycle of the network. In the yearly work flow, during the prioritization, research and consolidation phases, network members are to collaborate genuinely in order to define and agree on overarching questions, propose research assignments, analyse and summarise differences and similarities, and formulate recommendations based on inspiring practices, projects, and research.

To support this synergizing, each year will have its own process chart to guide and visualise the phases and cycles of the process, including partners’ and other stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities in the process. The annual charts will follow the project plan described in the application. However, in order to prepare a consistent and cohesive sustainable process, the yearly charts including their objectives will follow the results and lessons learnt in the preceding annual processes. In addition, the charts will take into consideration the changes in the EEPN network and its surrounding operational environment.

The process chart for general work flow is presented in Figure 1. Figure 2 depicts the process leading to the first EEPN deliverable: desk research report on the status of various factors affecting teachers' and school leaders' inspiring professional careers. The process for the EEPN first recommendation report will be decided in the meeting in Brussels on June 17 2019, where the draft of this report will be reviewed.

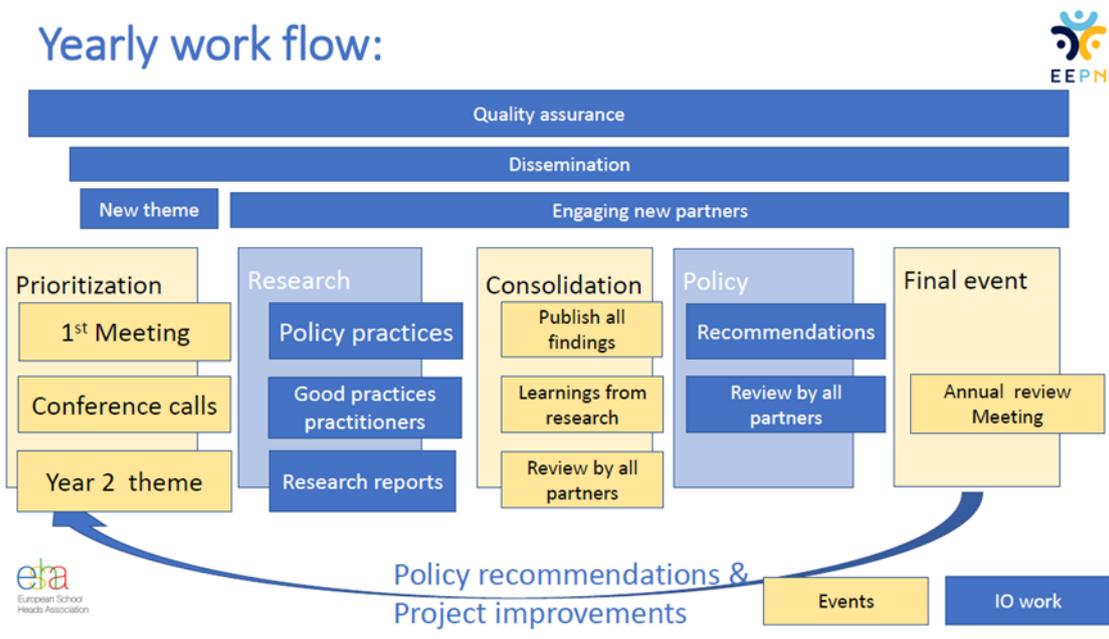


Figure 1. Yearly work flow of EEPN

EEPN Process for First Deliverable: Desk Research on How to make career paths of teachers and school leaders more attractive?

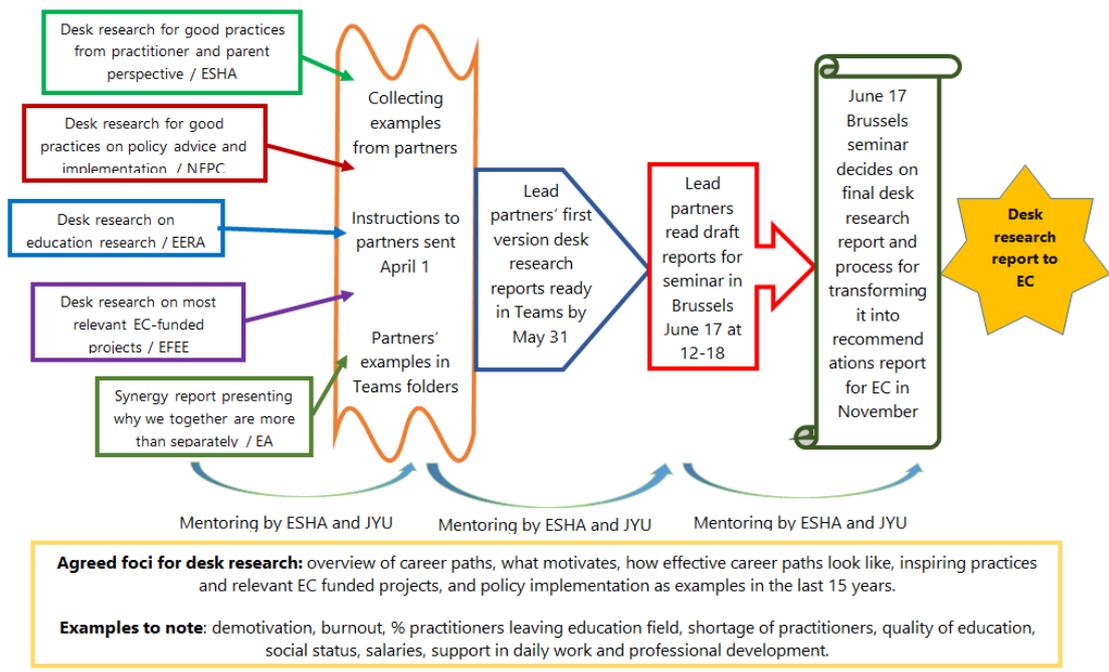


Figure 2. EEPN process for the desk research report in the first year



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Desk Research Report on
Education Research

European Education
Policy Network

SYNERGY WITH STAKEHOLDERS

An important aspect of EEPN is its focus on the engagement of relevant stakeholders, especially policy makers and practitioners, at international, European, national, regional and local levels, beyond the current membership of the network.

In this context, close cooperation with the European Commission as well with national stakeholders is very important, aiming to facilitate the development and enactment of policy on teachers and school leaders at different governance levels, and especially to support the European Commission's policy work.

Leveraging the activities of other networks and initiatives

EEPN actively seeks to build on existing activities developed at European level, especially initiatives and projects supported through European Union programmes in the field of education.

By leveraging the activities of other networks and initiatives, EEPN seeks inspiration and enrichment from existing good networking practices, as well as making best use of existing platforms and mechanisms which may be in operation by such networks or initiatives.