



**Towards a sustainable whole school
approach for quality and inclusive
education.**

Policy recommendations 2022

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Background

The European Union is at a crossroads of defining new policy strategies on education and training for the next decade. The *European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders* is a Europe-wide network of different organisations (policymakers, practitioners, researchers and other stakeholders) that aims to promote co-operation, policy development and implementation at different levels, and to support the European Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders. This network builds on existing activities developed at European level, especially initiatives and projects supported through European Union programmes in the field of education, for example, the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL).

We acknowledge and wish to contribute to the implementation of the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted by the EU leaders, which states, "*Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.*" The leading principle for our work is that the mission of education is social and personal development.

The project in its third year focused on supporting teachers and school leaders towards a sustainable whole school approach for quality and inclusive education.. The following recommendations are based on research evidence¹ that project partners have compiled within a framework of topics for the third year: *Teachers' and school leaders' competences and support for effective blended learning; A whole school support and networking to ensure school success for all; A whole school approach for sustainable development, with a particular focus on the role and competences of school leaders to support the implementation of it; Schools as learning communities to support teachers' and school leaders' professional learning and well-being.* These recommendations provide an opportunity for policy makers and stakeholders in education to align them with different national, regional and institutional circumstances, within a framework of enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders in education that includes consultation within their own constituencies.

The focus of the third year of the project was on supporting school leadership and teaching towards a sustainable school approach for quality and inclusive education. To do this, we call on **EU institutions, the EU Member States, national, regional, and local decision-makers** to:

- I. **Ensure the development of the whole school approach² with the support and collaboration of governments in order to contribute to the school success for all by:**
 1. Fostering teamwork and a collaborative atmosphere as pre-conditions of a whole school approach in the education sector at different levels. It is important to facilitate and encourage more interaction among schools of the local community and beyond. Also, collaboration between school leaders, parents, teachers and students of the same school

¹ Further information about the research outcome can be found here: <https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/research/>

² According to UNESCO, the whole school approach is the educational process that "involves addressing the needs of learners, staff and the wider community, not only within the curriculum, but across the whole-school and learning environment. It implies collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these".



should be enhanced with a focus on the needs of the students, which should be at the core of the curriculum development processes.

2. Raising awareness of the good examples and on-going development of the whole school approach and support further research to increase the scientific and cultural background of this practice across Europe.
3. Identifying decision makers at national, local and institutional level who are key for the implementation of a whole school approach and maintain collaboration between them and the schools. Enhance collaborative decision making as core element of the whole school approach at the school level, and ensure regular dialogue between school leaders, teachers, parents and students with policy makers to set common goals at national and local levels.
4. Acknowledging that decision makers, school leaders, teachers, parents and students need to improve their sense of community and learn new competences in order to create a whole school approach atmosphere. This requires the introduction of whole school approach in initial and continuous professional development of school leaders and school staff, and in training to parents.

II. Guarantee the provision of high quality and inclusive education on sustainable development by:

5. Adopting a holistic educational practice, including education for sustainable development as an interdisciplinary, participatory and interactive learning activity, which helps developing social, entrepreneurial and digital competences according to the age of the students, and ensures intergenerational learning for the students and their families on sustainability.
6. Supporting cooperation between decision makers, local communities and school actors and among the school actors within educational institutions. These are important in order to meet the needs of students and the local community in developing sustainable education via necessary changes in the school environment, education materials, and teaching and learning methods.
7. Providing quality theoretical and practical professional development for the school leaders and school staff on sustainability to increase awareness of the students on their responsibilities as citizens and human beings to fight against climate change and ensure a social change.



III. Support the improvement and introduction of quality blended learning³ to education by:

8. Empowering and trusting teachers and school leaders as change agents at school, local/regional or national level and “true educational designers”, by granting them a level of autonomy in decision-making about their strategy for a blended learning approach.
9. Identifying possible elements and variations of blended learning in the education system and school curricula based on quality research and good practices while supporting further research on blended learning in different education sectors.
10. Supporting the improvement and the use of new pedagogical methods, pedagogical skills, and key competences for teachers through quality initial education and continuous professional development opportunities, and providing tools and resources for the schools to practice quality blended learning in its different forms.

IV. Promote schools as learning communities to support teachers’ and school leaders’ professional learning and well-being by:

11. Providing effective support and sustainable resources to the education system and schools in order to ensure professional well-being and learning for the teachers, school leaders, students and families.
12. Improving research to support the professional learning and well-being of the teachers and school leaders in order to meet the identified challenges with a systematic approach.
13. Raising awareness of the significant role of consultation with stakeholders, and ensuring collective bargaining and social dialogue with education trade unions and education employers in supporting teachers’ and school leaders’ professional well-being and learning.

³ According to the European Commission “Blended learning in school education: guidelines for the start of the academic year 2020/21”, blended learning “is understood as a hybrid approach that combines learning in school with distance learning, including online learning. Blended learning is a flexible model that can support a project or course of study to progress, whilst not requiring teachers and learners to be in the same physical space at all times”.