

# JOURNAL



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## Final report:

Transforming Schools into Learning  
Communities

Vision  
to  
Action



ELNE Policy Recommendations  
and research conclusions



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## ELNE Partners

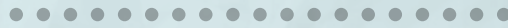


EUROPEAN  
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**1**

**LETTER FROM THE EDITORS**

*ELNE Journal Editors*

**2**

**ELNE: AN INTRODUCTION**

**4**

**ELNE 2023 - 2024: FINAL  
REPORT**

**11**

**ELNE 2023 - 2024:  
ANALYSIS AND  
CONCLUSIONS**

**14**

**POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

*ELNE Partners*

**18**

**ELNE 2024-2025:  
LOOKING AHEAD**

**21**

**EVENTS AND PROJECT  
ACTIVITIES**

## Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

After a promising first year of work at the Educational Leadership Network Europe, this third edition of the Journal is the cumulation of the collaborative efforts which have brought this Network to life since its kick-off in September 2023.

Here, you will first find the ELNE Final Report for 2023-2024. This report encapsulates the impact of the year's activities, the role of ELNE as change agents through the ELNE policy recommendations and more. These insights coming from the Research Community and other members from the ELNE community are a testament to the collaborative nature that defines our network.

Central to this edition are the policy recommendations, developed by our Network. These recommendations provide a framework for education stakeholders across Europe, and beyond, to address current challenges in the education sector. These recommendations, which have been shaped by the practices and research showcased by ELNE throughout the year, are a guide for stakeholders to begin the journey of implementing effective and sustainable change in education.

Reflecting on this past year, we have been inspired by the lively exchanges that have emerged from the ELNE community. This Journal not only represents progress but serves as a springboard for ongoing dialogue and action. With this, we hope that the ideas, recommendations and conclusions presented here will empower you to make your move and participate in fruitful actions in your own educational community.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we are excited to build on the momentum gained and continue our collaborative efforts within the ELNE community.

Our best wishes,

Silvia, Valentina and Axelle

## Who are we?

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

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

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

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

## Our work

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

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

To share and spread the first-hand knowledge acq-

quired from our community of key stakeholders, ELNE has two main channels. The **European Educational Leadership Week** (EELW) is a week-long online forum made up of dynamic and innovative webinars that are collaboratively organised by ELNE members and other national organisations and universities. At the EELW, educational research, school best practices, and ongoing policy work are shared with a wide audience of stakeholders in a live format, actively engaging them in the conversation.

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

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

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

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

## Our mission

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

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

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

1



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

2

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



3



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

4

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



5



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

6

**Promote a whole schooling approach.**



7



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

# ELNE 2023 - 2024: Final Report



The Research Committee of ELNE is an integral body of the Network. Its reputable members with extensive experience in the field of educational leadership ensure the quality of the work that the Network performs in its efforts to promote and enhance collaborative educational and school leadership. Furthermore, following and exemplifying the overarching topic of the first year of ELNE, ‘**Transforming schools into learning communities**’ the Research Committee has made it its mission to become a learning community itself, where collaborative leadership is at the

core. This report is a deep dive into the great work that has been bringing this Network to life over the past year, which could only have been achieved through the joint and passionate efforts of all its community members. Here you will find out about this process, followed by the Research Committee’s analysis and conclusions. We will also begin to look ahead into the second year’s work under the overarching theme ‘**Dimensions of collaborative leadership – Exploring together**’.



# ELNE 2023-2024: Transforming Schools into Learning Communities

## The long and winding road to educational policy

ELNE came to be in the summer of 2022 and finally kicked off its work in mid-2023, becoming the third European network for education policy and leadership after the European Policy Network on School Leadership (EPNoSL, 2011-2015), and the European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders (EEPN, 2019-2022). In its efforts to achieve its main objectives, namely, to promote and ensure collaborative educational and school leadership, ELNE draws from the work of its two predecessors.

EPNoSL, the first of these networks, engaged a wide variety of education policy, professional, academic and school communities focusing on school leadership for equity and learning. It worked to respond to the needs for school leadership, policy reflections and planning. The Network made reviews of literature, conducted empirical research, and prepared papers and other contributions on its focus. The core of its work was then synthesised in the final report of 2015, the *Toolkit for School Leadership for equity and learning*, which set equity and learning as the primary objectives of school leadership. You can read the report [here](#).

As its title implies, the EPNoSL final report is a toolkit to support various actors in their unique roads to work for equity and learning. Based on the conceptual part, there are eight toolsets for this purpose: school autonomy, school accountability, distributed leadership, educating school leaders, teacher leadership, promoting collaboration, policy response, and policy assessment. The Toolkit provides perspectives on equity, learning, and public policy on school leadership which contain the belief in the ability of school leadership to

solve policy problems in this field; the wicked character of the challenges; the contextual and collaborative nature of school leadership; and the policy goals for school leadership to reach its objectives of equity and learning. Furthermore, the policy goals comprise the promotion of equity and learning in three ways: i.e. through an enabling school leadership environment; school leadership capacity; and policy evaluation research for equity and learning. It also highlights the importance of political commitments and priorities; financial resources; policy coherence; policy ownership; empowerment and trust; as well as believing in inclusive schools, which are presented as the critical factors for school leadership policy.

This report does not provide a single unified way for reaching the objectives because its framework is 'based on the assumption that there is no unique road to policy development on school leadership for equity and learning. There are different ways for EU Member States to achieve an advanced level of school leadership policy development for equity and learning'.

In 2019, the European Education Policy Network (EEPN) succeeded EPNoSL. Like ELNE and EPNoSL, EEPN was a Europe-wide network of relevant organisations –policymakers, practitioners, researchers and stakeholders– assigned to promote cooperation, policy development and implementation at different governance levels, and to support the European Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders. It was built on existing activities already developed at the European level, especially initiatives and projects supported through European Union programmes in the field of education.

The EEPN focused on conducting desk-research studies on topics that were agreed together with the European Commission and on producing policy recommendations based on the studies. The focus of the first year of EEPN was on how to make teacher and school leader careers more attractive in different European countries. The second year concentrated on new roles and competences for teachers and school leaders in the digital age. The main topic of the third year was ‘Teachers and school leaders towards a sustainable whole school approach for quality and inclusive education’. These reports are available at the EEPN website: <https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/>

Finally, the EEPN was succeeded by the Educational Leadership Network Europe (ELNE) in 2023. ELNE combined the successful elements of its two predecessors with an important twist. Rather than focusing on conducting research and preparing policy recommendations, ELNE’s focus is on supporting practice, research and policy to work seamlessly together so that their collaboration has a systemic, holistic and concrete impact on education policy, research and practice. ELNE aims to become a sustainable and relevant change agent in the European education and training sector.

The main outcomes of EPNoSL were acknowledging the importance of school leadership for education, establishing the learning community to advance this, laying the framework for research, policy and practice for this purpose, and getting the learning community committed to continuing the work after the determined project period. The establishment of EEPN and then of ELNE was vital for this process to continue. What kept the process alive was not the organisational structures, but the learning community established. This continuum is fundamental, as establishing and particularly enacting sustainable education policy appears to take a lot of time. If we want to enable unique roads that both acknowledge diversity and provide ownership to all actors in a democratic European Union, we cannot work with siloed, restricted and closed processes.

Providing and developing the operational continuum is one of the most valuable outcomes of the first year of work at ELNE.

In comparison to its two predecessors, ELNE introduced important innovations. Firstly, students and parents were brought to the forefront of the discussion and became co-leaders of the Network, along with the education employers, teachers, and school heads. Secondly, ELNE made a conscious decision to involve the authentic voices of all members in educational communities through its bottom-up approach. To work on collaborative school leadership policy, the Network itself needs to demonstrate and ensure collaborative leadership within its framework, with its members feeling respected and trusted and having a sense of ownership.

### The roadmap of ELNE’s 2023 - 2024 activities

In its first year of work, ELNE decided on ‘**Transforming schools into learning communities**’ as the overarching theme to guide its activities of 2023-2024. Learning communities perfectly embody the premise of collaborative educational leadership that ELNE aims to help enhance across Europe. The shift from traditional schools to this more dynamic and interactive approach to education encourages a culture where every stakeholder –teachers, students, parents, and school leaders– actively participates in the learning and decision-making processes. In learning communities, leadership is shared, fostering mutual respect, trust, and a sense of ownership.

We collectively believe that leadership can be a facilitator and a driver for developing more global approaches to education, bringing an ecosystem to work in broader cooperation within local communities, producing well-being for teachers and students alike, and helping to improve student success and reduce social inequalities. In very brief terms, one could summarise that fair education depends on excellent leadership.

And hence, this is what ELNE looked like in 2023-2024.

# ROADMAP

## ≠ October 2023

### Collection of best practices and research summaries

To the Call for Inspiring Showcases, we received 30 good practices, 15 research summaries. Out of these 45 applicants, 14 practitioners and researchers were invited to speak at the Practice and Research Corners of the European Educational Leadership Week (EELW), [go see them now!](#)

You can also read more about these inspiring showcases in the [first and second ELNE Journals](#).

## 30 good practices on ...



Innovative learning environments conducive to leadership practices



Bottom-up practices led by multiple stakeholders



Peer learning activities and shared methods and practices

## 15 research summaries on ...



Transformation of the educational profession in/to leadership practices



Transformation of the learning context and environments



Innovative research on educational leadership for the shortage of educational staff and empowerment of educators

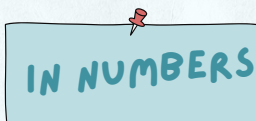




## February 2024

### European Educational Leadership Week (EELW)

Over 5 days, ELNE network and new community members organised 30 webinars in which they were able to exchange with the audience, spark dialogue, and inspire new thinking. Policymaking representatives from the European Commission, the OECD, or the UN, among others, participated alongside practitioners, researchers, parents, and students in these webinars.



**30** WEBINARS      **486** PARTICIPANTS

**1,165** REGISTRATIONS      **50** COUNTRIES

**450** NEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS!



## April 2024

### ELNE Journal: Inspiring Showcases, examples from Europe

The first ELNE Journal explored the good practices received in the ELNE call for Inspiring Showcases. Each practice is followed by a reflective commentary from members of the Research Committee, looking at what made each unique practice successful and transferable.



## ELNE Annual Conference

The inaugural Annual Conference of ELNE brought together around 100 education stakeholders from across Europe to reflect on the first year of work and shape future directions, focusing on collaborative leadership and learning communities.

Key discussions covered the attractiveness of the teaching profession, educators' well-being, and stakeholder cooperation, emphasising the need for stronger collaboration and evidence-informed policymaking. The event laid the groundwork for ELNE's future work.



[Read the report here!](#)



## 🚩 June 2024

### ELNE Journal: Redefining Research

The second edition of the ELNE Journal focused on innovative educational research from across Europe, aiming to bridge the gap between theory and practice. While the previous ELNE Journal highlighted exemplary educational practices and collaboration, this edition centered on the research summaries received from the ELNE call, showcasing solutions to critical education challenges.

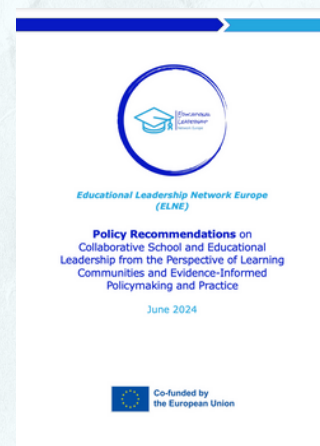


 **Here!**

## ELNE Journal: Vision to Action. Final Report and Policy Recommendations

Here we are! The third Journal of the first ELNE year encompasses the Final Report, exploring everything from the journey of how ELNE came to be to the conclusions of the work of this year.

Further, this edition of the Journal also features Policy Recommendations on ‘Collaborative school and educational leadership from the perspective of learning communities and evidence-informed policymaking and practice’. Inspired by the outcomes of the past year, these recommendations pave the way for the future of ELNE and the community it has formed so far!



**[Read the recommendations in more languages here!](#)**

# ELNE 2023 - 2024: Analysis and Conclusions

## From knowledge to practice

In its first year of work, the Educational Leadership Network Europe (ELNE) has been effective in the development of education leadership through the production, mediation, and use of knowledge. The production of knowledge has been a critical component of ELNE's work, as it provides the foundation for informed decision-making and informed-based practice. However, the production of knowledge is often limited to the academic world, and it is not always accessible or applicable to policymakers, practitioners, and educational communities.

To address this challenge, ELNE has developed a knowledge mediation process that translates theoretical frameworks and conceptual models into practical applications. This process involves several key stages, including the selection and simplification of knowledge, contextualisation through showcases and research summaries, and dissemination through webinars and online journals.

The knowledge mediation carried out within ELNE is, therefore, a crucial means of strengthening the links between research, policy, and practice, through processes for disseminating knowledge to as many people as possible. To this end, the knowledge mediation carried out by ELNE has enabled scientific knowledge to be translated, adapted, and disseminated to be interpreted by a wider European audience. ELNE acted as an interface between researchers/experts and potential users of the results of European and international research (policymakers, practitioners, educators).

Knowledge mediation is an interactive process that has given rise to ongoing dialogue within ELNE to ensure that the knowledge meets the real needs and expectations of stakeholders. It has enabled scientific knowledge to be better appropriated by the various actors involved, as well as being promoted and put to practical use in various seminars and workshops organised by the network. In this way, knowledge mediation has proved essential to maximising the impact of research on professional learning communities and leadership practices.

The use of knowledge, for its part, refers to the application of this knowledge in practical contexts to solve concrete problems, inform public policy, or guide strategic decisions. Through the showcases, often in a partnership and collaborative framework, the project leaders have shown that knowledge and scientific findings on school and educational leadership can be adapted to local needs and also generate bottom-up projects that can then be extended, transferred, and disseminated.



## ELNE's strengths and challenges

In addition to knowledge mediation and use, ELNE has also focused on peer learning, capacity building, and knowledge transfer. **Peer learning** has been a key component of ELNE's success, as it has fostered collaboration and mutual support among ELNE members. This approach has promoted a culture of continuous learning and adaptability, where Network members can learn from each other through workshops, seminars, and regular meetings that structure their collaborative practices.

**Capacity building** has focused on developing the Network's collective capacity and expertise to achieve its objectives. In the context of the European project, ELNE has relied on resources and tools, notably digital, to enable participants to contribute effectively by exchanging and sharing research results and best practices. The institutional framework has ensured that all participants, whatever their initial level of expertise, could become fully involved in the network, making the most of their knowledge and know-how.

**Knowledge transfer** has involved sharing information, expertise, and knowledge from one part of the Network to another, under the supervision of the Research Committee. This process has been decisive in ensuring the dissemination of innovations and best practices identified and collected in the case studies. Presentations, publications, and exchanges between peers have helped to make certain contexts and innovations understandable, maximising the impact of the European project.

The implementation of ELNE's work has been informed by a range of lessons learned from presentations and research summaries. These lessons have highlighted the importance of collaborative practices, engagement of the whole educational community, and sustainable development strategies. They have also emphasised the need to evaluate progress and measure impact,

to provide lasting support for innovations and to use research findings to inform practice.

The practice showcases and research summaries have provided insightful information on what works in leadership and professional learning community practices. Examples of successful projects show the importance of collaborative practices, engagement of the whole educational community, and sustainable development strategies. The case studies clearly show that projects with strong leadership, well-defined objectives, and collaborative approaches tend to be more successful. They also highlight the importance of setting realistic deadlines and allocating resources to maintain a dynamic and achieve objectives.

The research summaries offer a more analytical perspective, highlighting the need to evaluate progress and measure impact. They show how important it is to provide lasting support for innovations and to use research findings to inform practice. They do, however, make certain research results accessible, enabling policymakers to quickly grasp the implications of the evidence. They also identify gaps and challenges, which helps to guide future research and adjust policies.

Both the practice showcases and the research summaries demonstrated the value of documenting and sharing knowledge informed by research and evidence. By collecting this data, ELNE members can build up a repository of best practices and common barriers, which can be used to guide future projects. In addition, the process has shown the importance of feedback from stakeholders within the network, which can provide new perspectives and stimulate innovation.

Practice showcases and research summaries are essential tools for bridging the gap between research, practice and policymaking. They provide concrete evidence of successful strategies and interventions, giving policymakers a clear under-



anding of the real impact of different approaches to leadership and professional learning communities. This evidence can inform policy decisions, ensuring that policies are informed- based.

Despite the progress made, ELNE faces several challenges in scaling up, networking, and sustainability. Sustainability is a critical issue, as ELNE involves multiple stakeholders with different priorities and operational contexts. Coordinating efforts, ensuring coherent communication, and aligning objectives among the different ELNE members is an important sustainability issue.

Adaptation and flexibility are also essential, as ELNE must be able to adapt and be flexible as it capitalises on research results and good practices, taking into account the European context and its changes, as well as the contextual and cultural differences of education systems. A holistic approach is necessary to identify the many levers for action for policymakers, practitioners and researchers while taking into account the specific characteristics of education systems.

Scaling up is another challenge, as it is essential to ensure that the network's knowledge and skills can be transferred to other policymakers, practitioners, researchers and stakeholders as part of a controlled medium-term strategy and planning. Similarly, to strengthen its capacities, the network could benefit from external expertise, which would enhance its attractiveness and dissemination capacities, as well as its sustainable development.

In conclusion, ELNE has made significant progress in its first year and has established itself as a key player in the field of educational leadership at the European level. The Network's focus on knowledge mediation, capacity building, and knowledge transfer has helped to bridge the gap between research and practice and has ensured that knowledge is used to inform decision-making and improve outcomes.

Despite the challenges facing the Network, ELNE is committed to continuing its work, and to making a positive impact on educational leadership in Europe. The Network's approach has promoted a culture of continuous learning and adaptability, where community members can learn from each other through workshops, seminars, and regular meetings.

# Policy Recommendations

## on collaborative school and educational leadership from the perspective of learning communities and evidence-informed policymaking and practice

The ELNE Network brings together stakeholders and social partners in education to focus on enhancing collaborative school and educational leadership which is essential in light of the needs of schools and education systems.

The overall objective of the project is to develop and support a broad and sustainable Europe-wide network of relevant and reputable European-level and national organisations and local institutions that represent policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and stakeholders. The aim of the network is to collect and showcase existing research and good practices which are educative and can be inspiring examples for other organisations and institutions to achieve the goals of the European Education Area. The network promotes co-operation, the development and implementation of EU policy at different governance levels, and it supports the Commission's policy work in the context of the European Education Area. Therefore, the project creates and continuously develops a broad, sustainable and inclusive network to facilitate dialogue and co-operation among experts from policy, research and practice. The network intends to identify, share and promote effective policy practice and stimulate innovation and strategic development in policy, implementation and provision at different governance levels.

Following our first-year activities, which focused on collaborative school and education leadership from the perspective of learning communities and evidence-informed policy-making and practice, and within this umbrella, the ELNE network dealt with many topics such as green and digital transitions, inclusiveness, skills and competences, and teacher shortage. The ELNE Network identifies the following recommendations for EU, national, regional, local, and institutional policymakers for all education sectors<sup>1</sup>:

1. Enhance democratic structures within schools and education systems by well-defining, establishing and strengthening collaborative leadership culture with the involvement of stakeholders and education social partners by mutual respect, trust building, and fair allocation of time and resources to meaningful regular cooperation. In this regard, students' and parents' representative structures must also be considered as key stakeholders for educational leadership.

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<sup>1</sup>From this perspective the policy recommendation uses “students” as a broad term meaning pupils, students, and learners; it uses “teachers” as a broad term meaning educators, pedagogues, trainers, and professors in different sectors; and it uses “school heads” meaning principals, school leaders, and deputy school heads.

2. Further develop collaborative school culture by strengthening education on democratic citizenship which is the basis of effective collaborative school and education leadership and by establishing and improving collaborative learning and work attitude, practices and mechanisms among students, teachers, school heads, and parents, in their level and among them in the schools.
3. Broaden knowledge of collaborative school and educational leadership among school actors, including students and parents, in order for collaborative school and educational leadership methods and practices to be better integrated into the school's daily life and work. For this, improve initial and continuous professional development of school staff and school leaders, and support parents' access to adult learning on school/education leadership.
4. Develop education policy supported by existing research and practice on the field and by providing a platform where research on education (including pedagogy and school/educational leadership), practice (learning, teaching and school management), and policymaking have an effective and equal level of long-term and regular cooperation.
5. Encourage researchers dealing with education to present their research outcomes to schools, particularly those collaborating in data collection and offering distilled examples of practice, and to allocate time to discuss with them how the research outcomes can potentially benefit the particular schools.
6. Increase the capacity of schools by allocation of resources, especially working time of teachers and school leaders to regularly collaborate with researchers and other practitioners, to analyse existing research and conduct research, including policy experimentation, for improving the quality of their work and practices within schools. The latter will enable better integration between theory and practice in educational leadership research.

To succeed in the recommendations, the ELNE Network members are invited to make efforts to meet these recommendations in their capacity and their own environment. We believe that improving the world can and must start with ourselves. ELNE will continue making further efforts to achieve its goals aligned with the abovementioned recommendations by:

- Continuing to focus on improving collaborative school and educational leadership in European schools and education systems by gathering inspiring and innovative examples and research and by providing a supportive environment for the members and interested parties to collaborate and exchange information;

- Linking the planned actions with the original project objectives and regularly reminding the network's members to contribute to the ELNE work by offering contributions by meeting these objectives<sup>2</sup>;
- Respecting national competence in education and local differences, and diversity of membership of the network and continuing to support the network's development by practising collaborative project leadership as good examples to meet the project's objectives of collaborative school and educational leadership;
- Broadening the network by continuing to invite other relevant stakeholders and their organisations/institutions to collaborate within the ELNE Network and to contribute to its work;
- Supporting the work of the Research Committee and inviting more researchers and universities to participate in the work of the ELNE;
- Improving the visibility of the network as a brand among European, national, and local policymakers, researchers, and school actors (students, parents, staff, school leaders, etc)
- Strengthening continuous communication and information exchange with the European Commission's Working Groups which are responsible for contributing to the implementation of the European Education Area, and with other groups. Invite them to webinars and the conference and disseminate the ELNE Journal among them with the support of the European Commission.

You can read the policy recommendations in multiple languages on the [ELNE website](#).

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<sup>2</sup> The ELNE Network would like to focus on enhancing collaborative school leadership which is essential in light with new needs schools face. [...] The project will be oriented to collect relevant research to support the achievement of the European Education Area by 2025 objectives:

- Improving quality and equity in education and training by ensuring that all EU citizens have the right to high-quality inclusive education and training, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights and UN SDGs;
- Supporting teachers, trainers and school leaders, in their respective professions by adjusting to changing needs and the future of education, and providing them with high-quality initial education and professional development opportunities;
- Promoting the development of high-performing digital education and enhancing digital skills and competences of EU citizens by quality teaching and school leadership with the support of students and parents;
- "Green" education: encouraging the education and training sector to take action to contribute to the green transition and to strengthen the sustainability competences of all the learners, parents, teachers, and school leaders.

## Vision to Action: Enacting policy

The first set of ELNE policy recommendations focus on collaborative school and educational leadership from the perspective of learning communities and evidence-informed policymaking and practice.

The chosen concepts carry a lot of weight. We think that the collaboration of all the various actors in day-care centres, schools, higher education institutions and the education system is needed for sustainable school and educational leadership. We recognise that to reach the objectives set for education, we, all partners, need to learn together from each other, because grounding the education system on learning communities comprised of various stakeholders, is vital. During the first year of ELNE, we had an intensive discourse on the role of research. While acknowledging its value, we also recognise the importance of the scopes, voices and ownership of all actors in the education system. Hence, we rather talk about research/evidence-informed than research-based decision-making.

The ELNE policy recommendations invite all Network members to make efforts to meet the determined recommendations in their capacity and own environment. In the continuum of EPNoSL, EEPN and ELNE, we have recognised that in addition to allowing time for changes and involving everyone in them, we must act as active change agents throughout the policy process. Particularly, we must take a more active role in the enactment of the policy recommendations. This is stated very explicitly in our policy recommendation paper. We believe that improving the world can and must start with ourselves.

Hence, we must continue with the work we started during our first year. We must connect consistent process analysis with the work to ensure that our actions serve the original objectives and adjust the process if necessary. We must continue to develop ourselves as a learning community to ensure the sustainable integration of various scopes of practice,

research and policy and enable the various roads different contexts require. To be able to be authentic change agents throughout the EU, we must broaden our community by inviting more members to join it and both involve them and support them in the development processes. We also recognise the need to improve our visibility and collaboration, particularly with the European Commission and its Working Groups. Internally, we must extend the consistency and frequency of getting together the Research Committee to the whole Network and find the needed structures, processes, practices and pedagogy. For this, we must encourage experimentation and strengthen the role of pedagogical leadership in all our operations.

## Looking ahead to ELNE's 2nd year

### Dimension of collaborative leadership to be explored in ELNE 2024-2025

For its second year of work, ELNE selected a new overarching theme to guide the activities. This is 'Dimensions of collaborative leadership – exploring together'. The fact that the overarching theme refers to these different dimensions implies a call to action for ELNE to identify these and investigate collaborative leadership more closely. On the other hand, the theme also includes the notion of exploring together. This conveys the message of us recognising the need to experiment with various collaborative leadership arrangements, both in the Network, and the avenues to successful collaborative leadership throughout the European Union. In this section, we aim to offer a solid base and understanding of collaborative leadership for the research and experimentation that will take place in the Network's 2024-2025 year.

EPNoSL already identified in its work the importance of leading together and investigated and advanced this under the concept of distributed leadership, which was regarded as crucial for education to reach its objectives. The EEPN process repeatedly recognised the whole school approach as fundamental both for the preparation and enactment of its policy recommendations. Now, ELNE is developing this scope further under the concept of collaborative leadership.

When moving from single-actor leadership to several-actor one, we have an abundance of how to do it. For instance, we can share ownership, power and responsibility in different ways, for example, by inviting or delegating, formally or informally. We can also have various kinds of structures to share them. What is crucial is why we want the change.

Collaborative leadership in schools is an approach to leadership that aims to shape the education system and its organisations so that they function as a systemic and holistic whole. In this approach, all stakeholders at all levels are authentically involved in action and decision-making within a safe environment that proactively supports open and transparent dialogue among all members of the school community. However, the successful enactment of collaborative leadership in schools requires certain conditions and frameworks.

A central aspect of collaborative leadership is the need for **democratic structures within schools**. Democratic structures mean that decision-making processes are not carried out exclusively by a single leader or a small group, but that all relevant stakeholders –including teachers, students, parents and administrative staff– are involved in these processes. This requires a deep understanding and active promotion of participation and co-determination within the school community. The school thus becomes a place where all voices are heard, and everyone has the opportunity to influence the development and decisions of the organisation. Such a democratic environment not only strengthens the sense of belonging and ownership but also contributes to the emergence of innovative solutions and a shared vision for the school.

To enable collaborative leadership in schools, a **collaborative school culture** is also needed. This culture must be based on values such as trust, openness, respect and cooperation. Trust plays a crucial role as it is the foundation for any form of collaboration. In a trusting environment, stakeholders are more likely to express their opinions openly and actively participate in discussi-

ions without fear of negative consequences. A culture of openness and transparency is also necessary to ensure that information flows freely and misunderstandings are avoided. Respect is equally important, ensuring that the opinions and contributions of all participants are valued. Finally, a culture of collaboration fosters team spirit and a sense of collective responsibility for the school's common goals.

In addition to cultural prerequisites, **material and organisational resources** are needed to enact collaborative leadership in schools. For instance, time is one of the most important resources, as effective collaboration and building trust takes much of it. Sufficient time must be allocated for regular meetings, joint planning and the exchange of ideas. Another important resource is space. Schools need physical and virtual spaces that encourage collaboration, whether through well-equipped meeting rooms or digital platforms that facilitate the exchange of information and ideas. Financial resources are also needed, for example, to provide support and training to strengthen leadership skills or promote teamwork. These investments in professional development and team building are essential to enhance the skills and commitment of all stakeholders.

Finally, schools need to have the necessary **external support** to practice collaborative leadership. This can take the form of consultancy, networking with other schools or support from the education authorities. External support can help to change the school culture, integrate new ideas and practices, and facilitate the implementation of collaborative processes.

In summary, collaborative leadership in schools requires a **holistic approach that combines democratic structures, a supportive school culture and the provision of the necessary resources**. It is only through the interaction of these factors that a school can function as a systemic entity in which all stakeholders are authentically and effectively

involved in decision-making and development.

Of this, the ELNE policy recommendations state the following. We want to have collaborative leadership to extend the authentic involvement to include all actors in education. For this, we must have democratic structures and a collaborative leadership culture. We believe that we do not have these yet and that we do not know how to make them and act on them. This is why we must strengthen the capacity for collaborative leadership of all actors in education with pedagogical leadership. We must apply pedagogical leadership also so that policy, research and practice can together come up with development that will enable us to reach the objectives set for education. For this, we will also need the necessary resources: working time.

### Issues identified to be explored within the dimensions of collaborative leadership in ELNE during 2024-2025

As we mentioned at the beginning of this report, the Research Committee of ELNE has become a learning community in itself. A year's worth of continuous analysis and ongoing dialogue among its members has resulted in the following research issues that, we suggest, need to be further explored under the framework of ELNE's second year, 'Dimensions of collaborative leadership – Exploring together'.

Schools and all educational organisations face multiple challenges to comply with the changing and diverse needs of societies as well as the proliferation of educational technologies and disruptive environments arising as a result of the pandemic, war and inequality. On top of that, they need to keep abreast with the complexity of educational matters based on the interconnectedness of several decision-making entities. To achieve these objectives, we have identi-

fied the following claims to be explored during the second year of ELNE:

- Educational policies need to be designed in a way that serves all involved. This should increasingly include the bottom-up systemic and holistic approach.
- Educational leadership has minimum effect on learning outcomes if focusing only on results while neglecting the well-being and agency of students and teachers.
- Localised impacts can be larger when taking advantage of available infrastructure and support from communities, in which schools are situated and connected. This also provides local actors with ownership and agency.
- Inclusive approaches in decision-making are more impactful when they take into consideration the needs, capacities and visions of all actors involved.
- Collaborative approaches of leadership tend to favour more democratic approaches in creating a vision for education that maximises impact for learning and well-being in more authentic conditions.
- Teachers need to be provided with the conditions to work with students and parents in trust and safety, as well as professional autonomy, favouring the development of learning environments.
- Policymaking in education needs to be practice-based and evidence from case studies can be used to show roadmaps for sustainable development across the EU. However, it is essential to note that case studies should not be generalised, hence, always leaving space for contextual translation, interpretation and re-contextualisation.
- A transformative education system needs to include policymaking that builds on teacher professional development and cultivates positive attitudes to learning for all actors involved.
- Educational researchers need to work hand-in-hand with educational leaders and teachers to maximise the impact of sustainable practices and initiatives that advance learning and development.
- The development of a learning community manifested into safe, resourceful, and pedagogically designed learning environments, physical and blended ones, needs to become a core element in the function of schools.
- Policymaking is a prerequisite for the development of safe and impactful learning environments and can ensure the provision of much-needed resources, including highly qualified personnel and time.



## Upcoming events and activities: ELNE's second year

Curious about what's next for the Educational Leadership Network Europe? Take a look at the upcoming events and activities scheduled for the next few months to see what's on the horizon. From the opening of the calls to the Education Month, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved and stay informed.



Don't forget to sign up to the new [ELNE website](#) to stay update and engage with other members of the community. Find a step-by-step guide [here](#).



In early October, ELNE will launch the Call for Inspiring Showcases seeking good practices and innovative research from across Europe to be featured in the ELNE Journals. The call for webinar proposals will also be launched in preparation for the Education Month.



Don't miss out on the informative session that we will host in October to discuss the enactment of policy recommendations and the application to the ELNE calls. Come talk to us and fire away your questions.

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