



EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP NETWORK EUROPE
(ELNE)

European Education Leadership Week, Online

16th February 2024, 16:15 – 17:30 Online

[How empowering of schoolboards can contribute more collegial leadership and the transformation of schools into learning communities](#)

Organiser: European Parents' Association

The Empowering of Schoolboards and management project was set up to foster democratic involvement of parents and students in the management process of education. As parents are the key players in creating the environment for the child's development, it is necessary to create better social conditions for a new generation of parents to better understand and live their role in society.

In order to participate in developing the school environment, parents must take responsibility by participating in decision-making processes. Parents as decision makers must be educated and competent. Society needs national and international education programs for parents, the keywords of which are communication skills (management of development and conflicts, building up and holding relationships) and cooperation (collegial management).

Estonian Parents' Association (EstPA) has been actively and systematically trained school boards since 2006 and practically all Estonian schools have been visited and altogether about 10 000 school community members have been trained. In this process they met with many school boards who were ready to take on more responsibility, as well as heads of schools and members of the local governments who would be willing to grant more rights to school boards if they only knew how to do it correctly in terms of the law and sustainability.

The project originally involved five schools from Saaremaa municipality. These schools are attended by 60,1% of all island's students (1955 in total). All together more than a thousand families. Working together with the heads of schools and the local government, a systemic approach was developed together with an international group of scientists and experts. This approach was to increase the role of the school board in terms of governing the school, which in turn would engage the school more with the local community. Ideally,





the school was to become the heart of a community where several generations learn together and practice democracy.

The project intended to have an impact on at least five levels - citizen, family, educational institution, local government and state level:

1. To give the active parents and students an entirely new potential to be involved in the management of an educational institution and systematically improve their competence;
2. To involve more than a thousand families and create the prerequisites for the rapid growth of their communication skills and ability to cooperate which would benefit the improvement of relations between two or even three generations;
3. To enable the inclusion of a larger number of competent people in the school life cycle through collegial leadership; cooperation instead of power struggle;
4. For the school board to become a trusted partner for local government; entrepreneurial parents making financial contributions of significant amounts to their children's learning environment, without there being any obligations for the local government;
5. To create the necessary prerequisites at the national level for the formation of new generation of politicians who have contributed voluntarily to the community for many years and who understand local and educational life and are therefore able to establish and maintain productive relationships in a community-based way.

A sixth level - the transnational one - was targeted through the outreach to international partners. The project provided proper practical testing in Estonia which can now be extended across Europe and elsewhere. Collegiate leadership in companies often makes them reach the top of the Leadership Innovation Awards. That's the reason why the idea of empowering the school boards is a very timely and powerful tool for triggering change of management culture at grassroots level. The consortium also sees it as a very powerful and at the same time peaceful way from a learning organization to a learning community leading to a learning society.

The project was scientifically accompanied by the Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL) at University of Jyväskylä.

The webinar will present the project results, explain the strengths and challenges encountered and invite the panel to debate possible modifications as well as necessary adaptations to different contexts and the opportunities that they see in this model.





Agenda

16:15 **Opening, welcome and introduction of the aim of the webinar** - moderator

16.18 Opening mentimeter poll 1: When you hear the expression “collegial leadership” what comes to your mind first? Create a word cloud with the responses and share it with the audience (50 sec)

16:20 Part 1: **Presentation of the Empowering of Schoolboards project by a representative of the coordinator**

16: 30 Part 2: **Discussion on the outcomes of the project by different members of the consortium** – a parent trained as multiplier, a principal/headteacher, a member of the external community

16:55 Part 3: **Sharing of the research findings** – Mika Risku, University of Jyväskylä

17: 05 Opening mentimeter poll 2: What do you think would be the challenges of implementing such a program in your country? Create a word cloud with the responses and share it with the audience (50sec)

17: 07 Part 4: **Facing the challenges** – panel discussion with a representative of the commission (DG EAC, DG CONNECT tbc), ESHA, ATEE, EPA and a researcher

17: 28 **Conclusions and Farewell**

