



**INSCHOOL**

Inclusive Schools II

Advocacy for changes on a systemic level

# Policy Recommendations



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# ● SUMMARY OF ●

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The INSCOOL II partnership recommends the EU institutions to work with Member States in the following areas:

### Professional development for teachers and school leaders

- Develop learning opportunities for teachers, teacher trainees and school leaders in line with their contexts and needs without creating additional burdens or repetition.
- The training offer available should include formal and non-formal learning providers, be easily accessible and be properly funded.
- Promote training opportunities on collaborative school leadership and how to engage in the policy making process.

### Systemic cooperation and the whole-school approach

- Develop and implement policies that assist teachers and school leaders to bring actors and stakeholders together.
- Provide teachers and school leaders with support, including financial, to promote actions for curriculum development as a participatory process.
- Provide guidance and resources that allow policymakers and stakeholders to bridge policy and practice in both directions.
- Promote the valuing of non-formal education as an essential part of inclusive education and the development of systematic cooperation across the formal, non-formal, and informal education sectors to ensure their voices permeate the decision making processes around policies, curriculum, funding and teaching and learning methodologies.
- Promote schools as learning ecosystems, forming strong networks that can help solve the problems facing them through cooperation with civil society.
- Provide guidance on how to implement the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success, especially on including well-being as a main objective of the learning systems.
- Promote the implementation of the whole-school approach framework, making the linkages clear with the Education for Sustainable Development approach, as sustainability and inclusion are mutually dependent.
- Call for the effective implementation of existing competence frameworks such as Key Competences, LifeComp, DigComp and EntreComp as well as GreenComp.
- Support in strengthening mutual learning activities among Member States, within countries and among regions and cities.
- Encourage the creation of cooperation structures locally and regionally as there are policies and actions taking place at these levels. The Committee of the Regions and DG REGIO could play a central role in fostering and supporting these structures.

## Teacher and schools leaders shortages: A case of downgrading wellbeing

- Develop and implement measures on how to attract and retain quality candidates, focusing on diminishing the administrative burden, simplifying access to the teaching career, and providing adequate pay.
- Support the integration of people from other professions into the teaching profession while maintaining quality benchmarks.
- Encourage the implementation of reforms to allow for more flexibility and provide teachers and school leaders with autonomy to implement inclusion measures.
- Guidance on how to connect formal, informal and non-formal learning environments and how the teaching staff can be supported by civil society partners.
- Guidance for the introduction of digital tools accompanied by adequate support for teacher trainees, teachers and school leaders to boost inclusion.
- Call to respect collective agreements, and promote social dialogue and collective bargaining to ensure inclusive education and better working conditions for staff.
- Guidance to ensure public investment in education systems also ensures teachers' and school leaders' wellbeing.

## Public funding for education and training

- Enshrine adequate public funding as the key element of inclusion in education in all policy documents directed both to hard and soft infrastructure changes.
- Provide guidance so that public funding incentivises long-term and cross-sectoral initiatives and discourages short-term, unsustainable ones.
- Promote the smart allocation of resources to support school leaders and teachers in implementing policies and programmes to close inclusion gaps at local level.
- Develop mechanisms to ensure project results are not lost and can inform decision-making at different levels to make investment in inclusion more efficient and tailored to the needs on the ground.
- Stakeholder cooperation structures should also have a say in the assessment and monitoring of the real costs and needs of schools and education systems.
- Encourage more funding for support staff to help with inclusion in schools as well as for more and better training offers for teaching and non-teaching staff. These training opportunities are key in cases where national-level policies are not fully aligned with a more holistic view of inclusion in education.
- Counteract privatisation and stagnation in public funding for education to ensure adequate public funding is given to ancillary services, to ensure all learners have a level playing field when accessing education and training; including housing, school meals, transportation, etc.

## POLICY CONTEXT

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) adopted in 1989 enshrined the right to quality, inclusive education and demanded free primary education while providing a framework for education that aimed at ensuring each individual child reached their full potential<sup>1</sup>.

Then in 2012, the European Union subscribed to deliver on the right to education within the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights<sup>2</sup>. However, as with many social policy areas, it does not create a binding obligation since education remains a national competence<sup>3</sup>. The launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) constituted an important push towards ensuring learners can exercise their right to inclusive and equitable education and training<sup>4</sup>.

In 2015, UNESCO published *Rethinking Education*<sup>5</sup>, which laid out the importance of re-defining education as a responsibility shared by all founded on holistic approach<sup>6</sup> through collaboration between formal, non-formal and informal education providers, applying a whole-school approach. UNESCO underlines how crucial it is to explore new education ecosystems and learning space networks to be able to cater for diverse needs and educational goals by

establishing open and flexible lifelong learning systems.

UNESCO underlines how crucial it is to explore new education ecosystems and learning space networks to be able to cater for diverse needs and educational goals by establishing open and flexible lifelong learning systems.

A whole-school approach, by its very nature, reflects democratic and human-rights principles. The importance of this has also been recognised by the ET2020 Working Group on Schools<sup>7</sup> noting multidimensionality of schools characterised as open learning hubs that are in a constant relationship of mutual support with their communities<sup>8</sup>. UNESCO and the Council of Europe have also acknowledged this approach as a key factor for building inclusive education systems and developing competences for a democratic culture by addressing not only the needs of learners but also the whole staff and the wider community.

The EU has made attempts to permeate the SDGs into its policy making and monitoring processes. Within the Commission's priorities, SDG 4 was considered under the priorities of "An economy that works for people", "Europe fit for the digital

1 PHERECLOS project (2020). [Policy and School Structure Inventory](#).

2 European Commission. [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#).

3 PHERECLOS project (2020). [Policy and School Structure Inventory](#).

4 United Nations. [Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all](#).

5 UNESCO (2015). [Rethinking Education – Towards a Global Common Good](#).

6 PHERECLOS project (2020). [Policy and School Structure Inventory](#).

7 European Commission (2015). [Education & Training 2020. Schools policy: A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving](#).

8 EEPN (2022). [A whole school support and networking to ensure school success for all](#).

age” and the “European way of life”<sup>9</sup>. Due to a limitation of competences, the EU institutions are only able to put forth non-binding policy documents around education and training topics as well as implement the Open Method of Coordination and working groups for mutual learning among Member States. Before 2020 inclusion had already been identified as a policy priority, with the main targets aimed at schools being reducing early school leaving, early childhood education and care, and underachievement in reading, mathematics and science.

An important step for inclusive education was the launch of the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>10</sup> in 2017 and the Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in 2018<sup>11</sup>. The EPSR, in line with SDG 4, enshrines the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning; to harness the full potential of education as a driver for social fairness; and to experience European identity in all its diversity.

The Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning states the importance of developing these competences for personal fulfilment and social inclusion<sup>12</sup>

and also makes clear links to SDG 4. Moreover, it underlines the importance of giving all learners adequate support, ensuring inclusive learning settings to address their needs and fulfil their educational potential.

In 2018, the Council Recommendation on Promoting Common Values, Inclusive Education, and the European Dimension of Teaching<sup>13</sup> was published; prompted by threats of radicalisation across the Union. Member States are called to support educational staff to enable them to deliver inclusive education, which can be provided through measures to empower staff, promote initial and continued education, peer learning and peer counselling activities as well as guidance and mentoring. Member States are requested to use existing and/or develop new structures that promote the active participation of teachers, parents, students and the wider community in schools.

More recently, in 2020, the Communication on Achieving the European Education Area (EEA) by 2025 was launched<sup>14</sup> with key dimensions dedicated to inclusion in education and training and another dimension related to sustainability to which inclusion is connected.

9 European Commission. [EU whole-of-government' approach.](#)

10 European Commission. [European Pillar of Social Rights.](#)

11 [Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning.](#)

12 With special emphasis on improving basic skills, investing in language learning, improving digital and entrepreneurial competences, among other competences.

13 [Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching.](#)

14 [COMMUNICATION on achieving the European Education Area by 2025.](#)

SDG 4 and the work of UNESCO around education for sustainable development (ESD) show that ESD is a valuable approach to promote inclusive education and strengthen linkages between the work around inclusion and sustainability<sup>15</sup>. The Communication reviews previous targets and sets updated benchmarks around low-achievement in reading, mathematics and science, low-achievement in computer and information literacy, early school leaving and early childhood education<sup>16</sup>.

The EU monitors education quality through the Education and Training Monitor and works on structural indicators to support Member States<sup>17</sup>. The most focused Council Recommendation on inclusion in schools is Pathways for School Success<sup>18</sup>. The Council Recommendation has the aim of ensuring better educational outcomes for all learners, by lifting performance in basic skills and reducing early leaving from education and training through a holistic view of school success - looking at both attainment and well-being.

Another important area of work has been the attempts to provide guidance in relation to the use of digital technologies and inclusion in

schools. The Council Recommendation on Blended Learning Approaches for High-quality and Inclusive Primary and Secondary education (2021)<sup>19</sup> recommends supporting the monitoring and self-evaluation of schools' inclusion strategies and practices involving blended learning approaches so that necessary measures can be taken in order to remedy shortcomings. In addition, DigCompEdu<sup>20</sup> (digital competence framework for educators) foresees the development of a set of competences that would allow teachers to promote effective, inclusive and innovative learning strategies, using digital tools. The focus is not mainly on technical skills but also aims to detail how digital technologies can be used to enhance and innovate education and training. Other relevant frameworks include LifeComp and EntreComp.

Despite having limited opportunities to deliver on education policies; governance and co-creation structures were established for cooperation. Funding programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon foster the exchange of experiences, experimentation with policy innovation and implementation of education research. Boosting inclusion was set as one of the main priorities of the 2021 - 2027 programming period of Erasmus+<sup>21</sup>.

15 EEPN (2022). [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.](#)

16 European Commission. [European Education Area.](#)

17 PHERECLOS project (2020). [Policy and School Structure Inventory.](#)

18 [Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving](#)

19 [Council Recommendation of 29 November 2021 on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education.](#)

20 European Commission. [Digital Competence Framework for Educators \(DigCompEdu\).](#)

21 Ibid.

The EU also implements the Open Method of Coordination and working groups to foster mutual learning among Member States. Currently, there are two working groups focused on schools: Pathways to School Success and Learning for Sustainability; and a more global one, Equality and Values in Education and Training. In these groups, government representatives from Member States, EU institutions, national policy

experts but also civil society organisations and academics among other actors come together to address various topics around inclusion. The topics discussed include but are not limited to citizenship education, gender equality in learning, well-being and assessment in learning, inclusion from the perspective of the war in Ukraine and inclusion for learners with disabilities.

## THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS PROJECTS

The work started in 2019 with the Inclusive Schools (InScool) project<sup>22</sup> which involved partners from five EU countries at the time: Greece, the United Kingdom, Poland, Belgium and Spain. This first project aimed to embed inclusive education principles in school management in Europe by favouring the emergence of a community of leaders standing for inclusion (school leaders, teachers and students).

The vision was to gradually reshape school culture through long-term inclusion strategies around Europe and engaging school communities in concrete action plans to promote equality and value diversity. The main deliverables included pedagogical tools as well as training sessions at the local and international levels<sup>23</sup>.

Transforming school cultures is a long term process, which prompted project partners to consider a continuation of the work with a focus on teachers, teacher trainees and school leaders. The INSCOOL II project then had the aim of significantly increasing the knowledge and skills of school leaders, teachers and teacher trainees to work inclusively: to promote change in school culture to enable people to live, work and learn together equitably and peacefully; to deepen educators' knowledge and understanding of inclusive education policy, practice and culture; to influence policy change at different levels; and to promote a sense of belonging and common values.

To achieve these objectives, the activities implemented included:

<sup>22</sup> [InScool project resources.](#)

<sup>23</sup> [InScool project resources.](#)



- **A needs analysis report<sup>24</sup>:** to get to know more in depth the needs of school leaders, teachers and teacher trainees, covering all participating countries (Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom) and a comparative needs analysis.
- **A collection of inspiring practices:** building upon the knowledge and practical experience from previous projects and initiatives; the same report covers 30 inspiring practices shown with guidance to help readers to better navigate the best practices and make the best use of them.
- **Face to face training:** The trainings were developed, piloted and made available for anybody who wants to deliver an inclusion training with separate training materials developed for teachers and school leaders. The main topics include understanding inclusion and the need to change, managing change, classroom practice, whole school approaches and models for conflict resolution.
- **Massive Open Online Course<sup>25</sup>:** Over 400 participants from across Europe have already engaged with it. It covers the theoretical basis, core concepts, understanding the context, inclusive approaches, basic tools and resources, whole-school approach and open schooling; as well as exercises on self-reflection and connections with the group, re-enactments, successes, and successful failures.

## How did the partnership work around advocacy?

The INSCOOL II project involved partners working in Hungary, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom. The project used a bottom-up approach, in which the results, the good practices and the exchanges from the national advocacy groups in each of the partners' countries, plus the exchanges during the final conference, were brought together to form policy recommendations that could feed into policy reforms at different levels.

The rationale behind the creation of the advocacy groups was to develop the competences of teacher trainees, teachers and school leaders to upscale inclusive education practices in schools and advocate for inclusion in policy making processes at local and national levels, as well as EU level through the project consortium's activities and networks.

The work on advocacy also had the aim of upscaling the outcomes of the previous InScool

24 INSCOOL II project (2022). [Inclusive education needs assessment and collection of inspiring practices.](#)

25 [INSCOOL II project MOOC.](#)

project<sup>26</sup> by engaging more beneficiaries, education and training stakeholders and beyond as well as disseminating the results to a wider audience.

## Activities at the national level

- **Formation of the advocacy groups:** each project partner brought together a diverse group of actors, including participants in the face-to-face training sessions throughout 2022 and 2023 as well as parents, project managers working on inclusion, non-teaching staff (i.e. psychologists), teaching training institutions and foster homes. The advocacy groups also included representatives from public bodies and private entities.
- **Meetings of the advocacy groups:** They focused on the existing knowledge of project participants around policy making as well as networking with other education stakeholders who joined the advocacy groups meetings. They also discussed the further use of the tools and training after the project ends and how the project results could support them in their own local advocacy for inclusive schools.
- **Recommendations of the advocacy groups<sup>27</sup>:** the results from the meetings were collected in a report that covered the challenges faced at the policy and practical levels in each of their contexts as well as their recommendations for improvement.

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<sup>26</sup> [InScool project](#).

<sup>27</sup> INSCOOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from the advocacy groups](#).

## Activities at the EU level

The main activity at EU level was the final conference in May 2023<sup>28</sup>. It was an opportunity for exchange among project partners, participants in the project (ie. teachers, teacher trainees and school leaders), civil society organisations and representatives from EU institutions and Member States. The concept of invisible diversity was discussed, which project partners have also tried to capture through the courses and MOOC. Inclusion in schools (and in our communities) was recognised as a precondition for a thriving society.

The need for defined but flexible strategies for the implementation of inclusion measures was underlined, as was the need for additional funding and its efficient use. These strategies must be co-developed at different levels with the diversity of learners, educators, parents and the wider community. These processes can also support the development of common definitions of inclusion in education. Three workshops took place to discuss policies supporting inclusion and training opportunities (online and face to face) for teachers, teacher trainees and school leaders.

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28 LLLP (2023). [Final conference – Inclusion in action: a holistic approach to inclusion.](#)

## WHAT DO WE RECOMMEND?

### Professional development for teachers and school leaders

The initial and continuous professional development of teachers and school leaders is a key factor in achieving inclusive schools. The effectiveness of training stems from the openness to share learning experiences and the opportunities for co-creation and re-creation<sup>29</sup>. There is also a trend to expand the training offer through digital means to reach out to more teachers while maintaining effectiveness.

Regardless of format, the basis of any continuous professional development programme is evidence-based policies and connections with real-life cases to be explored<sup>30</sup>. In addition, training related to the effective use of technology to support inclusive practices in schools needs to go beyond improving test scores towards social and psychological effects<sup>31</sup>. It has been found that blending learning can help teachers personalise the learning of their students according to their individual needs but teachers need to receive proper training so they can offer a variety of learning paths<sup>32</sup>.

A key aspect of the INSCOOL II project is the focus on school leaders and their training

sessions in topics such as management, pedagogical leadership, assessment of teachers and engagement of parents, students and local communities in school activities and governance<sup>33</sup>. Another important area of professional development found in previous research is mobility which reflects the needs of teachers and is properly supported by public institutions<sup>34</sup>. Findings from the advocacy groups suggest, however, that exchanges do not always need to be abroad; they can also happen within their communities.

Teachers and school leaders can benefit from training on collaborative leadership<sup>35</sup>. This concept is defined as leadership which aims at inclusive participation and holistic learning by turning it into a distributed process. It requires a commitment to foster collaboration by building a school environment that encourages mutual respect, critical dialogue, independent thinking and a feeling of belonging. The EEPN report from 2020<sup>36</sup> provides a number of good collaborative practices that can provide a wealth of evidence for future policy reforms.

For teacher trainees the most relevant training

29 EEPN (2022). [A whole school support and networking to ensure school success for all.](#)

30 Ibid.

31 EEPN (2020). [Digital technical tools, skills and competences supporting teaching and learning.](#)

32 EEPN (2022). [Teachers' and school leaders' competences and support for effective blended learning.](#)

33 EEPN (2019). [State of Affairs Report: key policy messages.](#)

34 EEPN (2018). [Desk research report on good practices from practitioner and parent perspective.](#)

35 EEPN (2020). [Collaborative learning and collaborative school leadership in the digital age.](#)

36 Ibid.

would be in schools where teachers who are already engaged in inclusion practices could act as trainers themselves<sup>37</sup>. As found in the advocacy groups, face to face training is preferable to online training sessions for teacher trainees as they have no anchor to tie such training online.

topics for this group include inclusive methods for special needs students, learners with disabilities and learners from different socio-economic backgrounds (Roma, refugees), in a very practical format. Self-reflection and self-discovery are essential to helping teachers fight their own prejudices.

In the INSCOOOL II project<sup>38</sup> it was found that the

### What are our recommendations?

- Encourage in Member States the development of learning opportunities for teachers, teacher trainees and school leaders that are innovative and in line with their contexts and needs to ensure that the training itself is not repetitive and does not become an additional burden on their time. The topics to be covered include, but are not limited to: the diversification of pedagogical methodologies, project-based learning, self-directed and collaborative learning, and the creation of inclusive and non-discriminatory environments. The training offer available should include formal and non-formal learning providers, be easily accessible and properly funded.
- Promote across Member States training opportunities on collaborative school leadership as key support to implement a whole-school approach, to empower teachers and school leaders who are not yet engaged with inclusive education and to foster the collaboration of teachers and school leaders with the non-teaching staff.
- Promote across Member States training opportunities, for teacher trainees, teachers and school leaders, on how to engage in policy making process, from design, development and implementation, including monitoring and evaluation. In this way they are empowered to exercise their rights to have a seat at the table.

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37 INSCOOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from advocacy groups](#).

38 Ibid.

## Systemic cooperation and the whole-school approach

The transformation of school cultures needs to have as starting points inclusion and sustainability which cannot happen without multi-stakeholder cooperation and participation in school (and education system) governance through a whole-school approach. This approach fosters innovative learning solutions and learning environments that ultimately generate effective and engaging learning and empower all learners<sup>39</sup>; by taking into account the inter-relationships in and around schools and acknowledging that each stakeholder has a part to play in each learner's experience<sup>40</sup>.

Practices analysed by the European Education Policy Network<sup>41</sup> show how the process of transforming a school culture through a whole-school and human-rights approach leads to developing a democratic, collaborative and inclusive atmosphere within the school. Policies are needed to support school leaders in bringing actors and stakeholders together to promote actions through a participatory process (with learners at the centre), introduce mechanisms for schools' self-assessment, facilitate global communities of learners beyond the local, and engage systematically non-formal education providers<sup>42</sup>.

Findings from the advocacy groups underlined,

however, that there are huge obstacles in some countries where inclusion is not high on the agenda and advocacy around the topic is discouraged, effectively blocking the implementation of participatory processes as a whole-school approach<sup>43</sup>.

The work around whole-school approach and systemic cooperation in schools (and education systems) is closely linked to education for sustainable development (ESD). Therefore, there is no need to double the work on inclusion and sustainability, as ESD itself works through a whole-school approach to promote and address inclusion in educational settings. Support to develop collaborative school leadership is another cornerstone of implementing a whole-school approach to achieve inclusive schools as developing this type of leadership allows for responsibility to be shared among the school leaders, teachers, administrators, parents and learners themselves<sup>44</sup>. This aspect is key to counteracting the feeling of not being heard by policymakers and the inability to participate in decision-making processes, as stated by participants in the advocacy groups<sup>45</sup>.

A whole-school approach is not complete without developing systemic long-term cooperation with non-formal education providers and with local communities as a whole. Evidence from EU funded

39 EEPN (2022). [Teachers and school leaders towards a sustainable whole school approach for quality and inclusive education. Highlights Report 2022.](#)

40 PHERECLOS project (2020). [Policy and School Structure Inventory.](#)

41 [European Education Policy Network \(EEPN\).](#)

42 EEPN (2022). [Teachers and school leaders towards a sustainable whole school approach for quality and inclusive education. Highlights Report 2022.](#)

43 INSCOOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from advocacy groups.](#)

44 EEPN (2020). [Collaborative learning and collaborative school leadership in the digital age.](#)

45 INSCOOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from the advocacy groups.](#)

projects shows the relevance of strengthening links taking advantage of their expertise and experience and incorporating it into schools. Making links to the real world offers ways to learn more meaningfully and leads to better motivation not only for learners, but also for teachers and school leaders whose workloads are decreased<sup>46</sup>. These links ensure the learning process continues outside of formal education, limiting early school leaving. To make these links, schools themselves need autonomy, including appropriate budgets, as inclusion is only possible if the school is able to adjust its teaching to local realities.

The Council Recommendation on Pathways for School Success<sup>47</sup> calls for integrated and comprehensive strategies that are based on structured cooperation between actors representing different policy areas, levels of governance and education and training levels.

The document notes that to promote educational success for all learners it is essential to intervene

on system-level features that can affect equity and inclusion in education and training in different ways and to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation.

The recommendations of the ET2020 working group on schools<sup>48</sup> also underline the importance of a cross-sectoral approach and stronger cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders to deal with issues that schools do not (and cannot) have the relevant expertise for; including civil society and the community at large. Working together around inclusion can even support the understanding of the concept itself.

Challenges found in the advocacy groups<sup>49</sup> indicated that in some countries there is still a high number of teachers or school leaders who are mostly focused on inclusion when it comes to physical disabilities for example. It is also important to explain and promote the idea of inclusive education in a comprehensible way and to teach it as distinct from integration.

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46 PHERECLOS project (2021). [Summary Analysis Report](#).

47 [Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving](#)

48 PHERECLOS project (2020). [Policy and School Structure Inventory](#).

49 INSCOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from the advocacy groups](#).



## What are our recommendations?

- Provide guidance to Member States on how to implement policies that support teachers and school leaders to bring actors and stakeholders together. Such mechanisms need to be embedded in the policies themselves, meaning from the very design stage so that more comprehensive policies and strategies can be developed that target all learners within the school community.
  - Guide Member States to provide teachers and school leaders with support, including financial, to promote actions for curriculum development as a participatory process as well as to facilitate the creation of open learning communities mainstreaming the understanding of inclusion as a holistic concept distinguishable from integration.
  - Support Member States in strengthening the mutual learning activities to which they have committed. This can be done at EU level among Member States, at national level, and among different regions and cities within or across borders.
  - Provide Member States with guidance on how to implement the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success, especially on including well-being as a main objective of the learning systems. If academic achievement is considered in terms of well-being and inclusion as well, the culture within education institutions can be readapted along the same lines.
  - Promote across Member States the implementation of the whole-school approach framework making the linkages clear with the ESD approach as sustainability and inclusion are mutually dependent. Both of these frameworks require fostering collaboration among all education stakeholders and decision makers.
  - Promote across Member States the valuing of non-formal education as an essential part of inclusive education and the development of systematic cooperation across the formal, non-formal and informal education sectors to ensure their voices permeate the decision making processes around policies, curriculum, funding and teaching and learning methodologies.
- The EU should incentivise Member States to redefine the responsibility for education as a collective one. The EU should push forward the development of open and flexible lifelong learning systems from cradle to grave that are built in multiple learning spaces with all types of learning acknowledged, valued and recognised.
- Encourage Member States to also create these structures locally and regionally as there are policies and actions that take place at these levels. Therefore, it is important to engage local and regional policymakers and make stakeholders understand they need to engage in these processes too. The Committee of the Regions and DG REGIO could play a central role in supporting Member States and subnational levels in this work.
  - Call Member States for the effective implementation of already existing competence frameworks such as Key Competences for Lifelong Learning including LifeComp, DigComp and EntreComp as well as GreenComp, as they provide support in order to develop competences aligned with the values of equity and inclusion.



- Provide Member States with guidance and resources that allow for better bridging between policy and practice in both directions. Ensuring the exchange channels across Member States remain active and are not mere receptors but work together in developing solutions.
- Promote the notion of schools as learning ecosystems forming strong networks that can help solve the problems facing the schools through cooperation with community actors such as civil society which allows schools not only to be reactive but also proactive in addressing learners' needs.

## Teacher and schools leaders shortages: A case of downgrading wellbeing

Teacher shortages have been identified across the EU as one of the main issues education systems in Europe are facing today<sup>50</sup>. There is evidence that the attractiveness of the teaching profession across the EU is facing serious challenges, including an ageing population and abandonment of the profession<sup>51</sup>.

The wellbeing of professionals has been identified as key to making this profession more attractive and also to teacher retention. Wellbeing for teaching and non-teaching staff is crucial for their own personal and professional development as well as the learners' social and emotional competencies and learning and development in general<sup>52</sup>.

An EEPN report highlighted that some of the reasons include the status of the profession, administrative burden, few opportunities for career development, and inadequate salary

levels and working conditions. Participants in the advocacy groups<sup>53</sup> underlined that in some cases, the path from pre-service teachers to full-service teachers has been made extremely difficult, which exacerbates the issue. In some countries, measures against shortages include integrating the use of technological tools as well as hiring teachers from other professions. EEPN also noted that there is not as much concrete data available on school leader shortages across Europe.

Another factor affecting the motivation of teachers is related to their autonomy. It has been found that motivation is higher when they are presented with the autonomy to choose not just materials but also teaching methods, curriculum, the organisation of the learning environments, and partnerships with external organisations within the community<sup>54</sup>. To be successful, autonomy needs to be accompanied by a high degree of continuous support (including financial) while maintaining

50 European Commission (2022). [European Education Area Progress Report](#).

51 EEPN (2019). [State of Affairs Report: key policy messages](#).

52 EEPN (2019). [Highlights report](#).

53 INSCOOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from the advocacy groups](#).

54 EEPN (2019). [State of Affairs Report: key policy messages](#).



## What are our recommendations?

- Provide guidance to Member States on how to implement measures on how to attract and retain quality candidates for the positions, diminish the administrative burden, simplify access to the teaching career, and support them in their role through relevant professional development opportunities and adequate pay.
- Support Member States in the integration of people from other professions into the teaching profession. Push for strong quality benchmarks as well as support for the newcomers to the profession.
- Encourage Member States to implement reforms in the education and training systems, to allow for more flexibility and provide teachers and school leaders with autonomy to implement inclusion measures in schools, as well as transparent accountability measures that are geared towards continuous improvement of the schools.
- Provide guidance to Member States on how to connect formal, informal and non-formal learning environments, seeing how the teaching staff can be supported by civil society partners in reducing workload and exploring methodologies and pedagogies for boosting inclusion.
- Provide guidance to Member States for the introduction of digital tools accompanied by adequate support for teacher trainees, teachers and school leaders. Digital resources are not immediate solutions, and guidance is needed to ensure that staff is empowered to use such tools, does not suffer from the additional stress and then proactively include digital tools to boost inclusion.
- Call for the EU institutions and Member States to respect collective agreements, and promote social dialogue and collective bargaining, in order to ensure inclusive education systems and better working conditions for teachers.
- Guide Member States to ensure public investment in education systems also ensures teachers' and school leaders' wellbeing. Solutions need to be put forth to diminish the administrative workload of teachers and school leaders; and to better interconnect their work with that of non-teaching staff such as psychologists.

## Public funding for education and training

Sustainable public funding is key to ensuring the basic right to quality, inclusive and free education. When private funding is part of the mix, it needs to be focused on inclusion and not profit, and it needs to be governed by rules that foster equity in education and training<sup>55</sup>.

In the advocacy groups discussions, it was noted that in some countries there has been increasing privatisation and cutbacks in the public education system which jeopardises the future of the quality education to which the institutions are aiming<sup>56</sup>.

Financial support is especially needed to guarantee that reforms do not create any extra financial burden for families<sup>57</sup>. Therefore, legislation needs to be in place that allows schools to have appropriate and flexible budgets to finance activities, including implementing inclusion measures.

This is also supported by findings from the advocacy groups, where it was found that often challenges at school level are caused by a lack of resources - most of the time financial resources<sup>58</sup>. Moreover, funds should be made available to engage external actors such as civil society organisations to work together with schools around inclusion practices.

Evidence from EU funded projects indicates that funding should also be made available to non-formal education providers themselves to strengthen engagement and linkages with the formal education sector to implement pilots together including sharing experiences among educators from different backgrounds<sup>59</sup>. It is important to incentivise at different levels initiatives built on systemic, long-term collaboration with non-formal education providers.

In addition, an aspect discussed in the advocacy groups was that in many cases, the poor implementation of policies is due to insufficient resources given not only to teachers and school leaders, but also to governmental staff that need to deploy the policies across Member States from the national to the local levels<sup>60</sup>.

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55 LLLP (2022). [Investment in Education & Training: A public good for all](#).

56 INSCOOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from the advocacy groups](#).

57 PHERECLOS project (2020). [Compilation of Briefing Papers](#).

58 INSCOOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from the advocacy groups](#).

59 PHERECLOS project (2022). [Open Schooling Policy Recommendation Brief](#).

60 INSCOOOL II project (2023). [Recommendations from the advocacy groups](#).

## What are our recommendations?

- EU institutions and Member States should include appropriate public funding as the key element of inclusion in education in all policy documents under the education domain. This funding must be directed both to hard and soft infrastructure changes such as curricula.
- Stakeholder cooperation structures should also have a say in the assessment and monitoring of the real costs and needs of schools and education systems.
- The EU must provide support so that public funding incentivises initiatives that are long-term and cross-sectoral, and discourages short-term, unsustainable ones. The funding can support organising fora for exchanging experiences from different stakeholders and co-creating joint multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral initiatives.
- Promote the smart allocation of resources to support school leaders and teachers in implementing policies and programmes aimed at closing inclusion gaps at the local level.
- Encourage Member States to provide more funding for support staff to help with inclusion in schools, as well as funding for more and better training opportunities for teaching and non-teaching staff. This approach will be key to supporting the offer of individualised learning paths so that every learner is included. These training opportunities are even more important in cases where national level policies are not fully aligned with a more holistic view of inclusion in education.
- Guide Member States to ensure adequate public funding is given to ancillary services, to ensure all learners have a level playing field when accessing education and training. The services include support for parents for housing related needs, school meals, transportation, etc. Support for these services cannot happen without counteracting cases of privatisation and stagnation in public funding for education.
- Mechanisms also need to be developed to ensure project results are not lost and can inform decision making at different levels to make investment in inclusion more efficient and tailored to the needs on the ground.



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