SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Building a sustainable network is one of the key objectives of the European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders consortium. The network has been planned to become self-sustainable after the project will have ended from the beginning with all partners joining the network committing themselves to continue the work when the funding period ends. At the same time, partners are convinced that the work this network is doing is of value for policy makers at various levels, including the European Commission and thus plans for sustainability assume the availability of public funding in different forms. The current plan was built on preliminary work done by the whole consortium before the network became operational, especially experiences with the European Policy Network on School Leadership and the work done by the network partners with pan-European coverage of teachers and school leaders: ESHA, ETUCE and EFEE.

When planning sustainability efforts, the consortium was considering available resources, limitations and long-term commitment on partners' side to support policy making on European, national and regional-local level by research evidence solidly built on the experiences of practitioners. The aim is to maintain and further exploit the benefits of the network's collaboration experience: partners coming from different countries and backgrounds with different general priorities but having worked together in the true European spirit: openly and respectfully.

The plan is based on various ways and scenarios that would enable the consortium to maintain its activities after the funding period, partly creating a basis for covering the costs of managing the network as well as continuing its research-based work after the funding period.

The most important preliminary decision towards sustainability was to involve more partners as task leaders for various deliverables and, at the same time, to involve all partners more in feeding into these deliverables accompanied by more funding during the project period enabling them to invest more time. Apart from this, all partners have been assigned time and funding for building their own audiences through dissemination efforts towards various level policy makers, having sustainability as a guiding principle. Building the network towards a partnership of equality is a strong basis for sustaining a large cooperation.

At the creation of the EEPN network, leading partners were aiming for activities comparable to starting a movement. The responsibility for a good start is with the network partners – starting with leading partners and widening this base further - and partly with the EC. For sustainability it is inevitable to have a minimum number of partners (should be between 40 to 50 by the end of the EEPN funding period according to the original project application) covering most of Europe, a spirit of cooperation, equal partnership and common goals.

The network should be strong enough to survive some storms. Some partners may leave because they do not fit into the network, there may be budget related issues and other challenges. The EEPN network, in many ways is already comparable to a movement, and will thrive if we succeed in common goals outweighing individual differences and aims.

In order to achieve this cooperation, the network needs the expected 4-year term to build and mature this highly corporative movement, to grow the network and to demonstrate its value through its deliverables.

The current report, drafted during Year 2 of this 4-year project, will serve as guidance for planning the work in Year 3 and Year 4. Thus, no single sustainability scenario has been chosen yet. However, there is a strong wish on the side of a large number of partners to aim for a networked solution rather than anything formal. The consortium will make the final decision in Year 3 to also establish management structures and funding for the chosen scenario if need be.

BACKGROUND AND GOAL

The European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders is a Europe-wide network of relevant organisations (policymakers, practitioners, researchers and stakeholders) to promote co-operation, policy development and implementation at different governance levels, and to support the European Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders. This network is building on existing activities developed at European level, especially initiatives and projects supported through European Union programmes in the field of education. The coordinator of the 4-year project that started in January 2019 is the European School Heads Association and the network currently includes 30 partners from 19 countries, 17 EU Member States among them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POLICY ENVIRONMENT

European education policy recommendations are to be implemented in the framework of the EU2020 headline targets that are assessed in each EU Member State within the European Semester Process. Two of the headline targets are directly related to education: reducing early school leaving and increasing participation at tertiary education. At the same time, some others are indirectly related to education, but of crucial importance: reducing poverty and social exclusion as well as increasing employment.

In 2016 the European Union[1] clearly identified inclusion in education as an important means of social inclusion and defined inclusive learning provisions as a policy priority. This has been followed up in the most recent Council Recommendations[2] adopted after the Gothenburg Summit on the proposed European Pillar of Social Rights[3], inclusive, quality education being part of it. The accompanying Staff Working Document[4] gives a strong evidence base for policy making in this direction. This approach is in line with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[5] by the United Nations, to be achieved by 2030, SDG 4 being about inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning in order to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

The Communication on Achieving the European Education Area 2025 reviews the 2020-2025 targets as follows:

- The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%.
- The share of low-achieving eight-graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%.
- At least 98% of children between the age of three and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education.
- The share of people aged 20-24 with at least an upper secondary qualification should be 90%.
- The share of 30-34 years old with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 50%.
- Also, the EC main policy targets mentioned within the EEA and Skills Agenda for the next 5 years is green and digital transition of education.

Various EU policy initiatives have been highlighting and promoting the role of teachers and school leader, and the work of EEPN is complementary to that policy making effort, providing a joint, practice based research basis for national advocacy by and through EEPN members. As education is national competence in the EU, the European Commission has little influence on national policy making. Through the open method of coordination and financial incentive, they have worked together with national governments on the implementation of EU policies in the field. This network can amplify these efforts in areas that its members from various fields of policy, practice and research have also validated.

SUSTAINABILITY MATRIX

The matrix presented in the table below identifies the sustainability factors and sustainability objectives that the network is targeting in order to build the potential for sustainability.

Sustainability factors and objectives

Sustainability Factor	Sustainability Objective	Sustainability Actions
The network **documents its success and disseminates the evidence among stakeholders with the support of its increasing**	Evaluate network effectiveness	Design and implement a comprehensive evaluation plan to assess the impact of the network

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[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2016:941:FIN
[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0607%2801%29
[3] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en
[4] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0607%2801%29
[5] https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

membership. The dissemination of the network's effectiveness not only to its stakeholders but also to the general public serves as a meaningful predictor of the sustainability of the network and aiming for enhancing community support.	Disseminate results to community	Hold regular dissemination meetings with the stakeholder community and professional conferences to disseminate the results of the network and build recognition for success.

Network Flexibility

Sustainability Factor	Sustainability Objective	Sustainability Actions
The network partners develop flexible strategies which will be altered in accordance with changing circumstances and new policies.	Maintain network flexibility to adjust to network challenges and barriers	The network solicitates regular feedback from key stakeholders about progress and strategies

The network may develop a list of alternative strategies and plan to implement them if chosen strategies do not work out. |

Financial Resources and Financing Strategies

Sustainability Factor	Sustainability Objective	Sustainability Actions
The network partners develop various financing strategies for the period after the end of the project	Attain multiple sources of funding

Recruit and engage organisations and experts on a volunteer basis | The network works closely with community partners and other organizations to develop alternative financing strategies at an early stage. |

Network Evaluation

Sustainability Factor	Sustainability Objective	Sustainability Actions
Ongoing evaluation is a valuable tool to promote sustainability. In addition to achieving alignment of the network's characteristics with the needs of its stake	Develop and conduct a comprehensive evaluation	Design and implement a comprehensive evaluation plan to capture the effectiveness of the network.

holders, evaluation can help in the development of strategies for sustainability, to follow up their implementation, and to evaluate their effectiveness. Similarly, evaluation can be useful in identifying problems in the network and in facilitating flexibility.

Internal effectiveness factor related to the work flow: do the policy recommendations reflect the research findings?	To establish and maintain a workflow according to plan	Rigorous process and quality procedures implemented and maintained
External effectiveness: are the recommendations used by national and EC policy makers and how can this be documented?	To establish a methodology for creating recommendation that increases external effectiveness	Constant interaction and feedback from policy makers to authors of recommendations before and after publication

Broader Community: Community support for the network

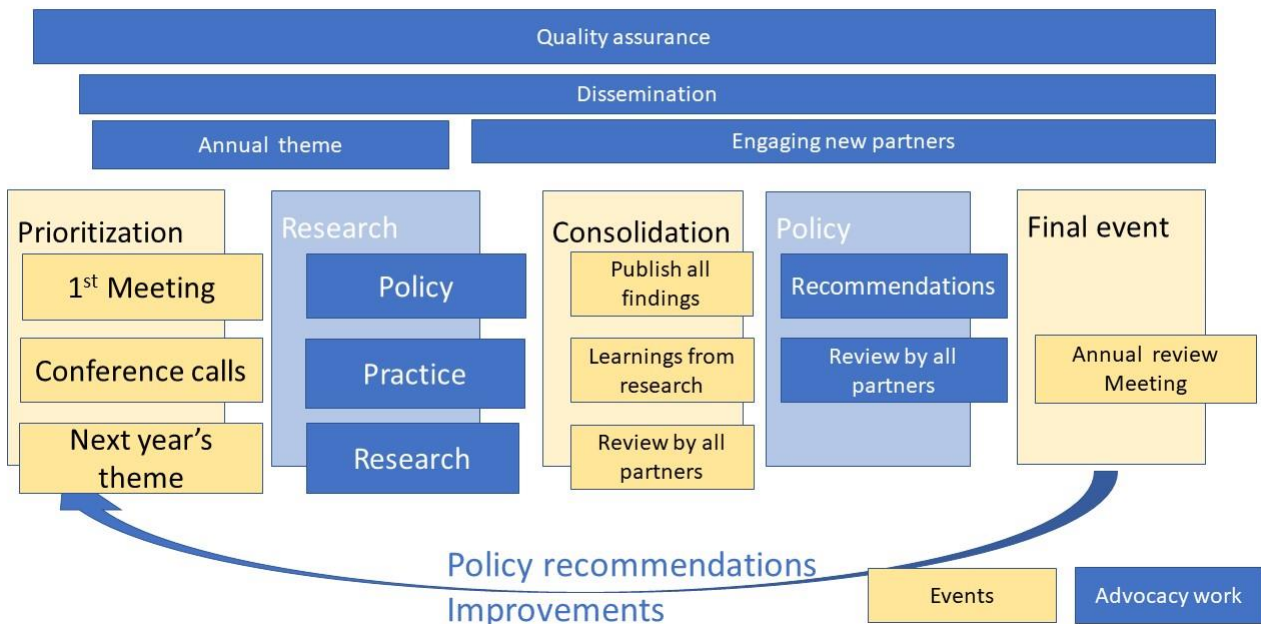| Sustainability Factor	Sustainability Objective	Sustainability Actions
Community support for the network, as manifested in the cooperation of community bodies (e.g., schools, community organizations, government agencies, etc.) with the network implementers is a major predictor of its sustainability. The network partners are highlighting the importance of strengthening the sense of ownership among those who benefit from the network to increase their motivation to sustain it.	Develop community support and ownership for the network in the targeted communities.	Seek the cooperation of community bodies (e.g., schools, community organizations, government agencies, etc.) and engage them in the network implementation. The members of the network will enhance cooperation at local and regional level for community support (e.g., with schools, community organizations, government agencies, etc.) as a major element of its sustainability. The network partners will be encouraged to strengthen the sense of ownership among those additional community partners who benefit from the work of the network to

		increase their motivation to sustain it.

INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE NATURE OF EEPN PROCEDURES

The EEPN has established a working method that can be transferred to dealing with any topic the network's expertise is suitable for. It is built on early commitment by policy makers and other education stakeholders by offering analysis of their inspiring practices, deeply rooted in state-of-art research and creates research reports and policy recommendations as evidence-based advocacy tools adopted by a wide range of stakeholder representative organisations that can leverage work at any national, regional or local policy making context as well as for EU-level and above. The procedure has brought together stakeholder representation, academia, policy making and social partners in a unique work process.

The following flow chart encompasses all details of the process that can then be utilised by other policy makers and also the EC in other education contexts, building on the personal expertise of EEPN contributors after the funding period. It is a relatively low-cost and fully cost-effective process.

This is the foreseen role of the European Educational Policy Network: an advanced network that can facilitate systemic transformation process, acting as an innovation-boosting platform for policy makers, school leaders, education employers, teachers, parents, researchers, non-formal education providers and an ever-enriched pool of learning content and learning service providers, working as a spiral – a virtuous cycle – of ever-increasing added value, sustained by its growing use.

The research-based and research-oriented nature of the network, including an active contribution by members to research and the research methodology it results in is, in itself, of high value for those members that do policy advocacy work as part of their primary focus.

Sustainability through deliverables – the example of Year 1

The activities of EEPN in the first year have already achieved to create a significant potential for impact. The Network has provided contributions to the development of policy at the European level in the field of Education with a focus on teachers and school leaders, and in particular in connection to the theme of careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders.

The process for the development of evidence-based recommendations (cf. Deliverable 4.2, available in the Policy Recommendations section of the website, at https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/policy-recommendations/), built on desk research and enhanced through the interaction with stakeholders during the Annual Conference, has indeed produced added-value and potential for positive impact on educational policy making at the local, regional, national and European levels.

Policy recommendations

In the first year EEPN developed six policy recommendations that were addressed to EU institutions, national governments of EU Member States, national, regional, and local decision-makers, as well as aligned with the focus of the first year on supporting careers and professional development of teachers and school leaders. The Network provides opportunities for policy makers and stakeholders to align these recommendations to different national, regional and institutional circumstances, emphasizing that their implementation requires enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders and consultation within own constituencies in order to ensure a real impact. In this way, EEPN helps the European Union define new policy strategies for the next decade on education and training. In particular, through its recommendations the Network acknowledges and wishes to contribute to the implementation of the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights adopted by the EU leaders, which defines that "everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market."

Research reports

An important element that adds to the value of these recommendations is the fact they are evidence-based and discussed with the community of stakeholders. In the Annex to Deliverable 4.2, the Network offers detailed justification and examples linked to the six recommendations, drawing on the desk research reports that constituted the evidence base for the development of the recommendations, their thorough discussions within the EEPN network, as well as on the discussions with stakeholders that took place during the Annual Conference. More precisely, the project developed the following reports:

- Desk research report on good practices from practitioner and parent perspective (Deliverable 2.1)
- Desk research report on good practices on policy advice and implementation (Deliverable 2.2)
- Desk research report on research on teacher recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe (Deliverable 2.3)
- Desk research report on research on school leader recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe (Deliverable 2.3a)
- Desk research report on ten most relevant European Commission funded projects for teachers' and school leaders' more attractive career paths (Deliverable 2.4).

While the recommendations were constructed within EEPN taking the views and standpoints of various interest groups into consideration, the key policy messages had a more neutral perspective. The draft recommendations and the outcomes of the desk research reports were presented at the Annual Conference in Jyväskylä, Finland, on 18th November 2019. In a specially tailored workshop-based process of interaction with the 150 conference participants, the recommendations were discussed intensively, and discussions and their outputs were documented in a digital platform called HowSpace. Subsequently, speakers in the conference representing the European Commission, the Finnish Ministry of Education, EFEE, ETUCE, ESHA and University of Jyväskylä discussed the workshop feedback and the implementation of the recommendations in a panel. It is particularly noted that the representative of the Finnish Ministry of Education warmly welcomed the project outcomes, thus showing how the network can achieve its main aim of policy learning and transfer between European and national level as well as between EU Member States. The EEPN leadership team subsequently had two meetings to discuss these outcomes of the Annual Conference, thus eventually delivering the final recommendations.

Summary and highlight reports

While the emphasis in the above discussion of the impact of the work of EEPN in the first year focuses mainly on the policy recommendations as the final outcome, it is important to note that the Network has also produced a number of important reports (cf. especially the above listed desk research reports as well as Deliverable 3.1 "Highlights Report" and Deliverable 4.1 "State of Affairs Report with Key Policy Messages – 2019"), all of which have been continually disseminated in a clearly organized manner through the project website (https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/) as well as through the three EEPN newsletters which have been widely circulated in Europe by all partners (cf. https://mailchi.mp/f2ce3914a87d/eepn-newsletter-12019, https://mailchi.mp/fa1496e5bd76/eepn-newsletter-22019?e=04811de5d5, and https://mailchi.mp/787cffa09e50/eepn-newsletter-3?e=04811de5d5). Partners have continued their own dissemination efforts at various fora and forms tailored to their own audiences, advocacy target groups and needs of their own partners.

MEMBERSHIP GROUPS AND CATEGORIES

The table below summarises the groups of various stakeholders in formal education, all of whom have a stake in teacher and school leader related topics, research and policy. Within each stakeholder group it is envisioned to have full and associate members with those organisations that are active on national or European level on behalf of the stakeholder group becoming full members.

Stakeholder group	Current lead partner	Possible members	Note
Teachers	**ETUCE**	National, regional, European professional association of teachers	Group membership includes teachers' professional organisations and education trade unions of teachers, school leaders, other education personnel, academics and researchers by ETUCE membership in the stakeholder group

School leaders	**ESHA**	National school leaders' associations	Currently a few members of ESHA are partners, more might be interested to join
Parents	**IPA**	National, regional, European association of parents	Currently a few members of IPA are partners, a few might be interested to join
Academic/research institutions	**EERA transferred to UoP**	Universities and research institutes with education in focus	Already a sufficient number of partners
Employers/policy institutions, MoEs	**EFEE**	National teacher Agencies and other national institutions that directly influence policy on teachers and school leaders,	Ministries of Education might have a possibility to be associate partners, but they cannot become a lead partner
Policy Advocacy organizations	**NEPC**	National, regional, European International, Advocacy and education policy watch dog organizations	INGO's might have a possibility to be associate partners and they cannot become a lead partner
Students		National, regional, European association of school students	OBESSU did not show interest and also has limited representation (secondary school only), need to explore how we could engage students and their organisations even if not through direct membership in EEPN (facilitation of child participation)
Teacher and school leader education and training institutions/providers		Teacher colleges and universities, National teacher Agencies other providers of CPD for teachers and school leaders	TBC – might be interesting to have them on board as many of our recommendations are directed to them

SUSTAINABILITY SCENARIOS

Exploring different options to ensure the continuation of EEPN the authors and came up with various scenarios that are to be discussed in the coming year. Having established the current report, the discussion will continue among leading partners and involving other network members exploring sustainability scenarios with the objective of achieving consensus. Decisions are to be made before the last year of the project starts, but in an ideal case- agiven that in-depth face-to-face discussions are made possible by Covid-related restrictions – the decision is to be made by the end the Year 3 of the EEPN project.

The following 3 main scenarios have been highlighted by leading partners as relevant options having sustainability in focus:

1. **Network with lead facilitator**. EEPN continues as a network of diverse stakeholders focusing on teachers and school leaders (social partners, organisations of main school stakeholders, universities, researchers, research organizations, and interested individuals) and a member volunteers and is trusted to apply for funding as a chief or sole applicant for European Union or any other funding available. Membership in the EEPN network is open to all national and European organizations having a stake in formal education, as well as individuals specified above. All stakeholder groups appoint or elect a representative who becomes member of the decision-making body that accepts new members, decides on work programme and application for funding. Facilitation of their work happens through a secretariat provided by a willing partner. The facilitator is not making decisions. This needs a high level of trust in the organization taking the lead. One option is to rotate the secretariat of the network among a number of willing, able and trusted members. A number of partners already have experience in working together in other consortia, so the necessary collaboration experience is present. This option may offer a limited possibility to sustaining the network's EU-wide nature. While it provides for the continued openness and flexibility of the network, and allows for a focus on research which brings a specific added value to some members, it raises the question of which organization takes this role, provides the necessary resources and would be accepted by network members. This needs to be discussed with and agreed on with the involvement of the whole network.

2. **Voluntary consortium**. EEPN continues to be a consortium facilitated by a committee of volunteers or elected by members, or holds a rotating Secretariat, that receives funding in-kind from its members (namely funding for meetings) in order to convene periodically. The main activities would be restricted to organising an annual meeting and disseminating EEPN outcomes through members. The consortium would primarily only maintain a website that would also serve as a resource center for the members, allowing them to disseminate the work of EEPN to their networks. Finally, in case the EEPN network would be implementing another project funded by the Commission, the Secretariat holder will be requested to disseminate an EEPN Newsletter focused on the developments in the new project. This arrangement is light on bureaucracy but limited in that funding cannot be applied for directly and it may be difficult to sustain long-term. It may also offer very limited scope for further research and advocacy work driven by the whole network.

3. **Legal entity**. EEPN could become a legal entity, with the participation of all or most former network members, with the option to accept new members. This would need a commitment from those deciding to establish it in the form of some initial funding and participation in the supervision of the new legal entity. Once legal status is achieved, the network can apply for public

and/or private funding and continue the work started during the policy network's EC funded period. This scenario, although considered, was decided not to be the relevant option at this time as for some members, including social partners, it would be impossible to join a legal entity.

	Network with lead facilitator	Voluntary consortium
Leadership	An elected/chosen representative of each stakeholder group forms a decision-making body that makes joint decisions on membership and work programme. One leading partner/rotating lead voluntarily takes on the responsibility for facilitation as well as for and is trusted to apply for funding as a leading or sole applicant. The facilitator is not to make decisions, but to facilitate discussion and decision making.	A group of volunteers or rotating secretariat at members having resources for maintaining it.
Membership	Organisations having a stake in formal education on national or European level, and teachers and school leaders within it would become full members with the right to have a direct impact on decision-making, appointing their groups' representative and growing the network, other interested parties would become associate members.	Organisations having a stake in formal education on national or European level, and teachers and school leaders within it, and interested other parties.
Focus/main activities	Continuing the work of EEPN, details depend on funding available	Primarily disseminating EEPN outcomes and organising regular meeting of network members. Maintaining a website of resources for members would be the primary activity.
Funding opportunities	Facilitator to apply for EU, national and private funding as a leading or sole applicant	Ad hoc at various network members. In-kind contribution of members hosting the website and events.
Bureaucracy level	Medium	Low

Sustainability	Depends on the availability of and trust in a facilitating organisation and funds	Largely depends on the interest of members and availability of resources / willingness to contribute.
Risks	Likely to cease existing if the facilitator or funds are not available	No resources (human and financial) available. Has not worked for EPNoSL
Feasibility	Depends on having a volunteer facilitator organisation	Easiest to initiate, but the added value for members to participate is difficult to define.

DECISIONS FOR THE MEMBERSHIP

It is to be decided by the leading partners and other network members towards the end of Year 3 which long-term framework option is preferred and who is ready to take the lead in a way that also ensures the network members remain involved.

EEPN members also need to decide on the membership group they wish to participate at and establish representation of their groups.