

IV

(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES

COUNCIL

Council conclusions on effective leadership in education ⁽¹⁾

(2014/C 30/02)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

WHEREAS:

1. The Council conclusions of 26 November 2009 on the professional development of teachers and school leaders recognised that effective school leadership is a major factor in shaping the overall teaching and learning environment, in raising aspirations and providing support for pupils, parents and staff, and thus in fostering higher achievement levels, and that as a result it is of key importance to ensure that school leaders have, or are able to develop, the capacities and qualities needed to assume the increasing number of tasks with which they are confronted.
2. The European Council conclusions of 13-14 December 2012 called upon the Council, the Member States and the Commission to ensure rapid follow-up to the 'Rethinking Education' initiative, and the subsequent Council conclusions of 15 February 2013 on 'Investing in education and training — a response to Rethinking Education' invited the Member States to revise and strengthen the professional profile of the teaching professions, including school leaders, and to fully exploit the potential for cooperation and peer learning under the Open Method of Coordination.
3. The Europe 2020 strategy, and in particular the 2013 Annual Growth Survey, calls upon Member States to preserve growth potential by giving priority to, and where possible, strengthening investments in education and training while ensuring the effectiveness of such expenditure.

AND IN THE LIGHT OF:

— The Lithuanian Presidency conference on 'Leadership in Education' held in Vilnius on 9-10 September 2013,

which provided a platform for representatives from EU Member States, candidate countries and EFTA states, together with the European Commission, to contribute to the policy debate on this important topic;

— The Comenius conference on 'Developing your school with EU programme support, a conference for school leaders', held in Vilnius on 11-12 October 2013.

NOTES WITH INTEREST:

The Commission communication on 'Opening up Education' ⁽²⁾, which invites the Member States to promote and develop innovative teaching and learning for all by making appropriate use of new technologies and Open Educational Resources.

STRESSES THAT:

1. As key drivers of growth, competitiveness and social cohesion in a knowledge society, Europe's education and training systems require strong and effective leadership at all levels. Today's educational leaders face a variety of challenging tasks, bearing responsibility not only for improving the quality of teaching and raising levels of attainment, but also for managing human and financial resources.
2. Educational leadership calls for a range of highly developed competences underpinned by core values. It requires professional commitment, an ability to motivate and inspire, and sound managerial, pedagogical and communication skills. Good educational leaders develop a strategic vision for their institutions, act as role models for both learners and teachers and are key to creating an effective and attractive environment which is conducive to learning. They are also major players in forging effective links between different

⁽¹⁾ For the purposes of this text, the term 'leadership' is used solely in the context of schools, VET and adult learning institutions.

⁽²⁾ 14116/13.

levels of education and training, families, the world of work and the local community, with a common aim of raising learner attainment.

3. The selection, recruitment, preparation and retention of the most competent staff for leadership positions in education institutions, and the provision of favourable conditions for their professional development, are accordingly of crucial importance and require careful attention by decision makers.

4. Educational leadership can be effective when:

- educational leaders are in a position to focus primarily on improving the quality of teaching and learning within their institutions while ensuring equity;
- leadership is based on clearly defined roles;
- it adopts a collaborative and inclusive approach;
- it is able to recognise the strengths and competences of staff members and assign leadership roles to them;
- it is in a position to allocate resources and to explore innovative teaching approaches; and
- it remains fully accountable to, and has the support of not only national, but also local and regional authorities and the community at large, particularly when endeavouring to introduce changes.

ACCORDINGLY AGREES THAT:

1. Innovative approaches to leadership can contribute to attracting and retaining candidates of the highest calibre and enabling learning environments to cope with — and fully exploit the potential of — the continuous innovations emerging at fast pace in education.
2. It is also necessary to professionalise, strengthen and support the role of educational leaders, by first identifying the competences they require, by developing more structured career paths and by assessing the specific professional development needs of those taking up leadership positions and providing relevant training opportunities.
3. Sufficient flexibility, autonomy and accountability are required to enable educational leaders to develop innovative

approaches to leadership, as well as create the conditions in which other staff members are encouraged to assume leadership responsibilities.

4. Staff occupying leadership positions need to possess or acquire, as well as regularly update, the necessary competences for such positions, including those that enable them to make effective use of new technologies and management techniques for the promotion of innovative learning and efficient management of their institution.

REAFFIRMS THAT:

While the responsibility for the organisation and content of the different education and training systems rests exclusively with individual Member States, cooperation and the exchange of best practices in the field of educational leadership at European level via the Open Method of Coordination, underpinned by the efficient use of EU programmes, in particular Erasmus+, can make a useful contribution by supporting and complementing measures taken at national, regional and local level.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO:

A. Support, in accordance with national circumstances and with due respect for the principle of equity, new ways of enhancing the effective and accountable autonomy of education institutions and educational leaders, particularly by:

1. promoting the autonomy of education institutions and educational leaders with regard to pedagogical matters and the internal allocation of resources, while ensuring that they have the necessary means and support to adapt and respond effectively to specific and changing local conditions;
2. clearly defining roles and responsibilities, and making provision for the competences required by educational leaders to be supported and strengthened through different modes of professional development, including networking between such leaders;
3. facilitating informed decision-making and increased accountability, for instance through the use of smart data, making provision for quality assurance mechanisms and developing specific measures for education institutions in disadvantaged areas;
4. gathering evidence on effective and successful educational leadership approaches in different national contexts, particularly in order to seek an optimal balance between flexibility, autonomy, and accountability, as well as to gauge the impact of innovative approaches on the quality of teaching and learning outcomes.

B. Make educational leadership more attractive, particularly by:

1. ensuring greater professionalisation as a means of attracting the most able candidates;
2. enabling educational leaders to focus on the improvement of teaching and learning within their institutions, including by seeking a better balance between purely administrative tasks and the core tasks relating to teaching and learning;
3. exploring and developing attractive forms of introductory training, early career support and continuous professional development for educational leaders, including through cross-sector cooperation with other stakeholders such as the business world and the social partners;
4. promoting teamwork and flexible leadership environments, for example by enabling the creation within education institutions of ad-hoc teams aimed at tackling specific challenges and of networks outside schools aimed at the exchange of experience and cooperation;
5. promoting specific measures, mutual learning and the exchange of best practices, with a view to encouraging gender balance in educational leadership.

C. Promote, where appropriate, innovative approaches to effective educational leadership, particularly by:

1. taking account of the specific needs of education institutions and applying appropriate quality assurance criteria when selecting future leaders;
2. recognising and promoting the leadership potential of staff within institutions, particularly through 'distributed leadership', by providing them with opportunities to work with colleagues in other institutions and by providing them with encouragement and opportunities to develop their potential in this respect;
3. stimulating the creation of innovative teaching and learning environments, including by making appropriate use of ICTs and Open Educational Resources both as pedagogical aids and as management tools;

4. establishing and maintaining networks aimed at initiating and developing effective approaches to leadership in education and stimulating and promoting peer learning between educational leaders.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

1. Make full use of the Open Method of Coordination, to promote best practice and support the development of professional leadership in the fields of school, adult education and vocational education and training, and provide regular feedback at political level as appropriate.
2. Promote cooperation and partnerships for effective innovation in leadership and for the professional development of educational leaders — including through cross-sectoral cooperation between schools, higher education and vocational training institutions and the business sector — with the support of European funding, including via the Erasmus+ programme and the European Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund.
3. Promote the exchange of good practice and development of innovative approaches to effective educational leadership, for instance through the Strategic Partnership actions of the Erasmus+ programme, including by encouraging educational leaders to cooperate with various stakeholders such as companies, civil society associations and different levels of educational institutions, both internationally and within the local community.
4. Further explore the possibilities offered by platforms such as eTwinning to support cross-sectoral exchanges on innovative leadership, by providing virtual spaces through which educational leaders can collaborate and disseminate effective and innovative practices.
5. Promote further research into effective educational leadership and ensure the dissemination of its results.
6. Strengthen support for national and regional networks of stakeholders dealing with educational leadership, and help to ensure appropriate dissemination and follow-up of their work at European level, including through the European Policy Network on School Leadership and by making full use of evidence gathered through international cooperation.