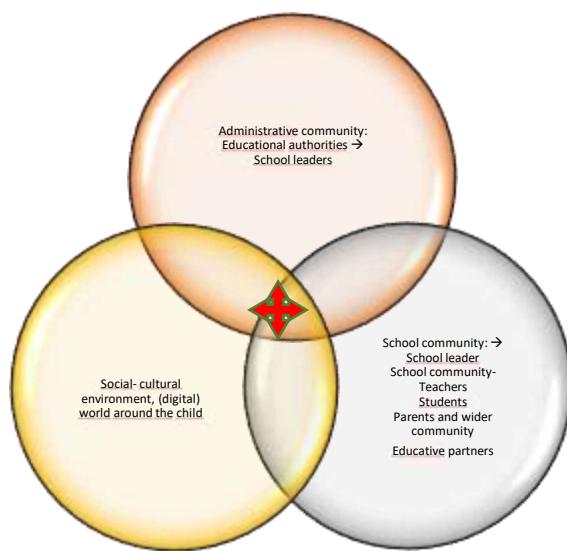


To European policymakers in education.

School leaders, the change agents for shaping the future of society through education.

The European School Heads Association (ESHA) is a member of organisation of union and professional school leaders associations across many European countries with a total membership of roughly 120.000. Whilst there are different perspectives and challenges for school leaders, we also recognise that many of the challenges are similar throughout European countries impacting severely on the work of school leaders and more importantly on the quality of provision offered to students. We see differences and commonalities in how the profession is established and valued. We also recognise that basically the leading of a school and a school team is similar throughout Europe and requires leadership skills and competences. Also research shows that school leaders are the change agents to realise innovations and they are the crucial factor to have high quality schools. We therefore think it important that policymakers give attention to the roles and needs of school leaders. School leaders are the linchpin that binds, policy, school and society together.



We found inspiration in UNESCO's perspectives on future development quote: " ***Knowledge and learning are humanity's greatest renewable resources for responding to challenges and inventing alternatives. Yet, education does more than respond to a changing world. Education transforms the world.*** "¹

There is a common agenda on an European level but education is a national matter. Although there are also some differences in the development between the respective countries when it comes to education all countries want the best for their young citizens.

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/initiative>

The level and quality of education greatly determines the future of a country and of Europe as a whole. The role and mission of school leaders is to some extent different in each country. Together we recognise that there is a strong focus on high-quality activity in terms of learning and knowledge of students and how to prepare them for the volatile and challenging future. We also recognise the need for learning and the acquiring and sharing of knowledge of 'employees' to the benefit of their professional standards, well-being and job satisfaction. Central to this are school leaders themselves, who are more or less 'employers' in their schools, but also are employees in education.

The school leaders' organizations across Europe all testify to a strong will from politicians to increase the level of ambition in the field of education. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a growing discrepancy between politicians' increasing ambitions and the unrealistic expectations placed on school leaders to live up to the increased demands and for appropriate resources to deliver. Not in the least the shortage of staff leads to an increasing problem in realising quality education.

The school leader's organisations are united behind the requirements that the school leaders' working conditions and resources must be sufficiently attractive to retain and attract skilled leaders. Wages and other working conditions must be able to compete with what can be obtained in other sectors of the labour market. The working conditions of school leaders need to be attractive enough to recruit high quality school leaders and to reflect the high expectations, responsibilities and increasing workload. Continuous professional development of school leaders must be supported and facilitated.

Some action points agreed upon to raise in a national and European context.

- We seek specific support for strategies that enable sustainable leadership in areas of wellbeing, advice, support, stress and health issues for school leaders themselves, to prevent burnout in order that the role of school leader is something people will continue to aspire to and feel able to sustain and develop in the role over time.
- We want policymakers to engage actively and constructively with school leaders in the formulation of education policy.
- We want to ensure that the school leaders have opportunities to develop, systematically their competences and knowledge through national and international school leader programs that focus on leadership qualities. We seek support for building sustainable networks for school leaders, specifically.
- We want national governments to engage in a meaningful way to address the key challenges of school leaders and teacher shortages, recruitment and retention of

school leaders, unsustainable workload and the increasing amount of administration in school leadership.

- We believe it is crucial to create opportunities for professional collaboration across Europe specifically for school leaders, sharing resources and research to support the competencies of school leaders.

School leaders across Europe share a desire to collaborate and engage with politicians to deliver an education system that is ambitious in its aspirations for young citizens and able to attract and retain motivated and skilled leaders and teachers. We believe that we can make the difference in creating quality and meaningful education and innovative, sustainable schools for the future.

We hope that European and national policymakers take notice of the importance to connect and collaborate with school leaders and engage in active dialogue to strengthen school leadership.

On behalf of the member organisations of the European School Heads Association:

Names and/or logo's of all members that support this letter.

*** *** *** *** etc..

- ➔ This letter is meant to be send out by ESHA to the European Commission and other policymakers at European level.
- ➔ This letter is meant to be send out as an attachment to the letter that members organizations will send to their governments.