

ECER 2026, Tampere – Minutes of the Network Meeting
NW26, Educational Leadership

ECER 2026, Tampere, Finland

Network Meeting: Thursday, 20 August 2026, 12:15–13:15

Link Convenor: Antonios Kafa – Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Management, Open University of Cyprus

Network Meeting

- During the annual Network Meeting in Tampere, the Link Convenor welcomed network members and highlighted the continued growth and activity of NW26 within EERA.
- Key figures from ECER 2026 were presented. ECER/ERC received around 4,400 submissions, representing a substantial increase compared with previous years. The conference was also the largest ECER/ERC to date, with approximately 3,840 participants from 84 countries. The significant increase in submissions created additional challenges for reviewing, scheduling and room availability.
- NW26 received 170 initial submissions, of which 149 were accepted for presentation, representing a rejection rate of approximately 12.4%. The accepted programme included:
 - 130 papers
 - 5 posters
 - 1 panel discussion
 - 1 research workshop
 - 12 symposiums.
- The Link Convenor thanked all colleagues who contributed to the reviewing process and particularly acknowledged the work of the NW26 reviewers. The quality and functioning of the network were noted as dependent on the collective contribution of its members and reviewers.

Thematic and Research Areas

- An overview of the main research areas represented in this year's NW26 submissions was presented. The thematic strands included:
 - Leadership in Crisis / Polycrisis
 - Leadership Preparation and Development
 - Inclusion / Diversity / Social Justice
 - Teacher Leadership and Distributed Leadership
 - Governance / Policy / Accountability
 - AI / Digital Leadership / Datafication
 - Wellbeing / Retention / Workload
 - Organizational Learning / School Improvement
 - Ethical Leadership / Trust / Climate
 - Curriculum / Instructional Leadership
 - System / Boundary-Spanning Leadership
 - Leadership Theory / Critical Perspectives.
- These areas were presented through four broader clusters:
 1. Leadership for Learning and School Improvement
 2. Leadership, Equity and Human Wellbeing
 3. Leadership, Policy and Systems
 4. Leadership in a Changing and Digital World.
- It was noted that the first and third clusters represent some of the more established areas of research within educational leadership, while the second and fourth clusters reflect important emerging directions in the field.

Collaborations and Networking

- Information was shared about NW26's collaboration with the Emerging Researchers' Group. As part of ECER 2026, NW26 contributed a workshop on **"Understanding Crises in School Organizations and the Use of AI to Support Crisis Incidents: A workshop in Educational Leadership."**

- A further collaboration was developed between **NW26 Educational Leadership and NW22 Research in Higher Education**. The collaboration resulted in a joint special call on “**Academic Leadership in Higher Education for Building a Fairer World and Fostering Trust in Polarised Times.**” The call received 13 submissions from NW26 and 12 submissions from NW22.
- Participants were encouraged to propose ideas for future collaborations, joint sessions, workshops and other activities involving NW26 and other EERA networks.

Network Development

- Information was shared regarding the development of the NW26 convenor team. The network currently has 23 convenors and welcomed five new colleagues, bringing the total to 28. The expansion was undertaken in response to the increasing number of submissions and with the aim of supporting the reviewing process and strengthening the geographical representation of the network.

Proposal Submissions and European Dimension

- Practical information was provided concerning future proposals submitted to NW26.
- Participants were reminded that proposals with fewer than 600 words, excluding references, should be rejected, while proposals of up to 1,700 words are permitted.
- Proposals should follow the standard structure, including:
 - General description, research questions, objectives and theoretical framework – up to 600 words
 - Methods/methodology – up to 400 words
 - Expected outcomes/results – up to 300 words
 - References – up to 400 words.
- The importance of including a European or global dimension was emphasised. Participants were reminded that research should, where appropriate, go

beyond a single-country perspective and demonstrate comparative relevance, broader implications or applicability across European or global contexts.

Joining NW26 and Network Information

- Participants were reminded that NW26 maintains a mailing list for researchers interested in educational leadership. New members were encouraged to join the mailing list.
- Information was also provided about the NW26 network homepage and the various EERA funding opportunities available to researchers, including network funding, seasonal schools and workshops, and ECER conference bursaries.
- Participants were also informed about the EERA Blog as an opportunity to communicate educational research to a wider audience. Members interested in contributing were encouraged to submit a short pitch proposal to EERA before preparing a blog post.

Future ECER Conferences

- The upcoming ECER conferences were presented:
 - **ECER 2027 – Debrecen, Hungary**, 31 August–3 September 2027, under the theme *“Learning Communities in Education: Individual Paths and Shared Futures in a Changing World.”*
 - **ECER 2028 – Salamanca, Spain.**

NW26 Outstanding Contribution Award

- The Network Meeting also marked the introduction of the **NW26 Outstanding Contribution Award**, established to recognise convenors for sustained service and long-term commitment to the network.
- The award recognises sustained service to NW26, with a minimum of five years of service, and may also highlight extended service of ten years or more. Recipients are nominated annually from among the network convenors, with the final selection decided through a vote among the convenors. The criteria

include consistent delivery of high-quality and constructive reviews and active participation in ECER, including roles as presenters, chairs and discussants.

- The first recipients of the NW26 Outstanding Contribution Award were announced during the Network Meeting:
 - **Prof. Pierre Tulowitzki**
 - **Prof. Stefan Brauckmann-Sajkiewicz**
 - **Prof. Petros Pashiardis**
 - **Prof. Helene Ärlestig.**

Closing Discussion and Networking

- The meeting concluded with an opportunity for questions, discussion and networking among NW26 members.
- Participants were encouraged to continue exchanging ideas, developing collaborations and contributing to the future activities of Network 26.

End of Minutes of the Network Meeting