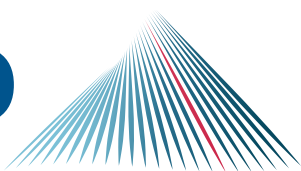


REYKJAVÍK / ICELAND

2025

ISTP



INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION

**24 - 26 March 2025 // Reykjavik, Iceland**

# **Quality Education: The Key to Prosperity and Well-being**

**Event report**



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## Preface by the Icelandic Government

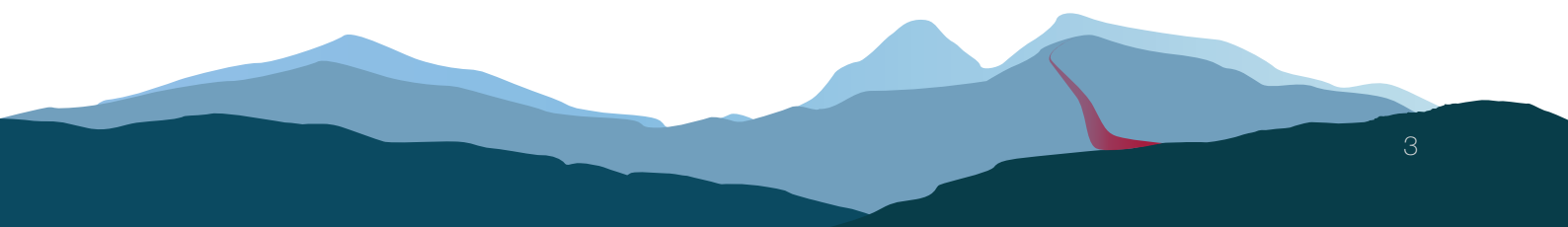


The Ministry of Education and Children of the Government of Iceland welcomed the opportunity to host the 15th International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP). Iceland profoundly believes that education flourishes only through collaboration and partnership. Central to that collaboration is a positive, proactive relationship between governments and teachers' union-the very relationship the ISTP exists to nurture.

The Government of Iceland is grateful to the OECD and Education International for their partnership in organising the Summit. ISTP 2025 took place in Reykjavik from the 24th-26th March 2025. Alongside two days of plenary sessions involving Ministers and Union leaders, the Summit also included an extensive pre-Summit programme. This included school visits and a pre-Summit seminar: Exploring the frontiers of AI in Education. Appendix A contains the ISTP 2025 programme.

The Summit's theme, Quality Education: The Key to Prosperity and Well-being was integral to the Summit's aim of identifying the best educational practices in high performing and rapidly improving education systems and learning from them.

This report is a record and analysis of the key themes and discussions emerging from ISTP 2025. It is intended to be a policy resource not only for those attending the Summit but more widely amongst those in the educational community. It is published by Iceland's Ministry of Education and Children and written by the Summit Rapporteur, Mr John Bangs.







## 1 | Introduction

The 2025 International Summit on the Teaching Profession was the 15th ISTP since the inception of the Summits in 2011. The Summits are founded on the conviction that high-quality education is essential to human development, a conviction which is underscored by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education.

Held annually, the ISTP is a unique forum where education ministers and teachers' union leaders meet on an equal basis to agree on concrete measures for improving education. Operating under the Chatham House Rule, the Summits provide an informal space for candid dialogue in which participants can explore how best to advance education in their own countries while learning from one another.

Since 2011, the Summit has been hosted by individual countries. Previous hosts have included Canada, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore, Spain and the United Kingdom. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic the OECD and Education International organised a short virtual Summit. The inaugural Summit, initiated by the United States, was held in New York in 2011; the United States has since hosted three further Summits, including the virtual meeting in 2021.

Iceland's hosting of ISTP 2025 ensured the continuity of this key event in the international education calendar and opened new avenues for policy development.

Although participants are drawn principally from countries identified by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as high-performing or rapidly improving, observer countries have been invited regularly since the series began, reflecting the widespread interest the Summits generate.

While teacher policy remains at the core of the ISTP, broader questions-such as how disadvantage affects learning and whether digitalisation or artificial intelligence enhances students' educational development-have also become centre stage in Summit discussions.

ISTP 2025 represented all that was positive about pluralism: respect for differing viewpoints, attentive listening, continual learning and creative engagement. Iceland's striking Summit logo vividly conveyed the dynamism not only of its society but its unique geography!

We hope that that this report provides a picture of that dynamism and pluralism.

### Box 1. ISTP 2025 Participants

#### *List of ISTP 2025 Participating Delegations*

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Australia               | 10. New Zealand   |
| 2. Czech Republic          | 11. Norway  |
| 3. Denmark                 | 12. Poland  |
| 4. Estonia                 | 13. Singapore   |
| 5. Finland                 | 14. Spain   |
| 6. Germany                 | 15. Sweden  |
| 7. Iceland ( <b>Host</b> ) | 16. Switzerland   |
| 8. Latvia                  | 17. United Kingdom and the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales |
| 9. Lithuania               |   |

#### *Special Observers*

- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 18. Faroe Islands     | 21. South Africa |
| 19. Hong Kong (China) | 22. Ukraine      |
| 20. Slovak Republic   |                  |

#### *Co-hosts*

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 23. Education International | 24. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
|-----------------------------|--|

*Appendix B contains the list of Heads of Delegations.*





## 2 | ISTP's Pre-Summit Programme — Monday 24 March

The ISTP 2025 was preceded by an extensive pre-Summit programme.

### Icelandic Education System and Policy

In preparation for school visits organised for delegates Moderator Katrín Jakobsdóttir introduced three speakers who outlined recent developments in the Icelandic education system.



**Erna Kristín Blöndal**, Iceland's Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Children, described Iceland's long-term plan for education. It rests on five pillars; equal opportunities for all; superior teaching, skills for the future, putting well-being first and placing quality at the forefront. Creativity informs the Icelandic National Curriculum.

Iceland has one of the best staff student ratios in the OECD. All children and young people are entitled to free public education. Ninety-six per cent of children attended preschool. Just under 30% of children in pre-and primary schools are from migrant backgrounds. The Ministry focuses on creating centralised, harmonised support for schools. Forty five percent of those under sixty-five have a university degree. Iceland's Action Plan includes an increased focus on vocational education and training (VET).

Iceland's aim is to tackle the current shortage of licensed teachers and ensure all were licensed. It recognises that its current decline in the OECD PISA performance needs to be addressed, particularly among boys and students from a migrant background.

The Ministry and the Icelandic Teachers' Union share a clear vision of the future of education.

**Magnús Þór Jónsson**, President of the Icelandic Teachers' Union- the Kennarasamband Íslands (KÍ) explained that the Union is organised in seven branches covering educators from early years to upper secondary education. There are a diverse range of schools in Iceland from rural to urban where the stages of education could be included in individual schools.



The Union is part of a social dialogue with education authorities and the government. The Union had just reached an important agreement with government on pay and conditions. Its media campaign included investing in a video on teachers. It sees the agreement as a foundation for the future.

Magnús explained that key issues remain including the implications of an aging workforce, the challenge of inclusion, a shortage of licensed teachers and the fact that just under a third of the workforce do not think they will stay in teaching for more than five years.

The final speaker in this session was **Þórdís Jóna Sigurðardóttir**, the Director of the Directorate of Education and School Services in Iceland. The Directorate is focussed on enabling evidence-based decisions on enhancing quality and well-being. She believes there is a major digital transformation opportunity through the development of a student data base. It represents a digital vision with goals and benefits. The data base includes assessments and teacher professional development opportunities.



The Directorate is developing an AI powered assistant. Teachers would be able to submit requests to the assistant. It would then identify expert advice to support individual students. Teachers would be able to evaluate the impact of every intervention. Þórdís emphasised the confidentiality of the data.

Delegates then took part in an extensive range of visits to schools which covered the range of school-based education in Iceland. The school visits were both inspiring and informative. We are very grateful to the schools for contributing to the reception of the guests at the ISTP. The following schools were hosts: Leikskóli Seltjarnarness, Álfaheiði, Rauðhóll, Seljaskóli, Fellaskóli, Dalskóli, Krikaskóli, Fjölbautarskólinn í Garðabæ og Tækniskólinn.



## Pre-Summit Seminar — Exploring the Frontiers of AI in Education



The Moderator, **Katrín Jakobsdóttir** opened the seminar. All those attending the Summit were able to attend and participate in the pre-Summit seminar. The background paper which informed the discussion was the OECD and Education International document, ‘Opportunities, guidelines and guardrails for effective and equitable use of AI in Education’ published in 2023. The seminar focused on examining the changes that had taken place in AI development in the two years since its publication. The questions attendees were asked to address were:

- How has your country followed this guidance?
- What are some of the challenges of implementing these guidelines and why?
- If we were to develop a new version of the guidelines and guardrails, what should we focus on?
- Where do countries see value in further work at the international level on AI in Education?

The OECD’s Director of Education and Skills, Andreas Schleicher and, representing EI, the AFT’s President Randi Weingarten opened the discussion. Andreas posed the central question: How can AI be used to facilitate education? He noted that AI already performs well at ‘level 3’ tasks and will soon reach level 4, operating across social-problem-solving, skills and knowledge. He showed how AI can enhance efficiency, innovation and teaching quality, and promote equity. At the same time, he underlined how AI can just as easily amplify inequality. Human agency therefore must weigh performance gains against equity risks. Andreas reminded participants that education will never work as a transactional business, but only as a human and relational enterprise. Whereas access to AI tools is now less of a barrier, the pressing issue is their ethical use. He added that it is no accident Ukraine has become a world leader in digital-device use.

Little progress has been made on supporting teachers in AI and digital use since the publication of the OECD/EI guidelines, particularly in professional development. Andreas concluded that teacher agency must determine when and how AI is used.

Randi Weingarten thanked Andreas for asking the key question; what AI should be for? As with children’s learning, teachers are expected to use technology as if they are learning from the beginning. One question was, how much techno stress are teachers and students experiencing?

She said that the United States is in the Wild West of technology use because of the lack of a regulatory framework. AI development has outpaced the ability to make sure the tools which are being used are safe and used equitably. It is vital for Unions and governments to work together on creating this framework.

It is now imperative that the guidelines are amended to include media literacy and critical thinking, and it would be dangerous not to. Randi said she had been encouraged by the European Union’s new AI legislation.

The role of teachers and their Unions in determining AI’s ethical use had now become even more important. Randi Weingarten made it clear that teachers need to be able to work with technology companies on design matters to be one step ahead on the issue of ethics. Her Union, the AFT, is working with Microsoft on these issues. Randi hoped the days of the Wild West approach would soon be over.

A number of themes emerged which described school and system approaches to AI.

Some countries reported being inspired by the AI guidelines. There should be more debate on what could be done rather than the risks. A number had masterplans for technology implementation. Some are working on guidelines with teacher unions. Others had not yet developed guidelines or an AI national infrastructure. Revised guidelines should make a clearer distinction between digital tools and AI. European Union guidelines are also considered helpful by some.



Several said that new country guidelines are being developed at school level in conjunction with the Ministry. Examples of these guidelines included checklists for teacher action and positive examples of AI literacy and use.

One of the most common themes was that many teachers, especially older ones, found AI use difficult. A number of delegates reported that there is a lack of training available to teachers. Learning about AI needed to be integrated into pre-

and in-service training including defining necessary competences which some countries are already initiating. Some believed that teacher leadership in schools would enable the development of incentives to train in AI.

Some said that there are difficulties in understanding the balance between AI use and the role of the teacher particularly when it is still difficult to understand what AI is. Should teachers adapt to AI or should AI adapt to teachers? Delegates emphasised that it was educators who design pedagogy and that AI tools need to be framed as tools for teachers. Delegates believed that teachers should be the starting point, not simply to be seen as support.

Some delegates reported that there are still access problems to relevant technology for both teachers and students, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They believe that AI is a social justice issue whereby the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students needs to be narrowed. In some countries inequities persist with schools struggling with large class sizes. Poor connectivity compounds these problems.

Some delegates reported funding problems with enabling a digital rollout. There is a strong belief that the public and private sector needs to work together on AI development.

Some said that the pandemic has accelerated digital technology use, but it has also emphasised the importance of human-to-human interaction. Student isolation in lockdown showed that teachers couldn't be replaced.

The need for a greater focus on student and teacher well-being was emphasised. Excessive screen time is believed to be leading to a decline in student mental health. Some delegates reported actions by jurisdictions which have enabled teachers to have the right to disconnect from digital use.

Some countries reported that where there is high digital use in classrooms there has been a decline in reading skills. A number of delegates reported that there are phone bans in schools even in countries with advanced digital use-which they found contradictory as well as necessary. Some delegates said that screen time are not allowed in preschools.

Children's safety is bound up with AI's ethical use. Some felt there needed to be a greater emphasis on data protection in AI development. The potential for cultural biases needs to be recognised. Parents as well as teachers need to be educated. Others felt that 'the horse had already bolted' with students already using AI in multiple and innovative ways.

Some delegates said they preferred the validity of pen and paper tests instead of AI programmes to assess students' actual knowledge. One experiment was reported as finding that there is little difference in marking by teachers and by AI.

The issue of prompts in learning came up. Is learning enhanced by prompts? Could teachers ask for first drafts in homework to be AI generated and then for those drafts to be interrogated by students?

Some felt that it was social media, not AI, which is changing young people's socialisation particularly in relation to cyberbullying which is triggering legislation on preventing digital harm.

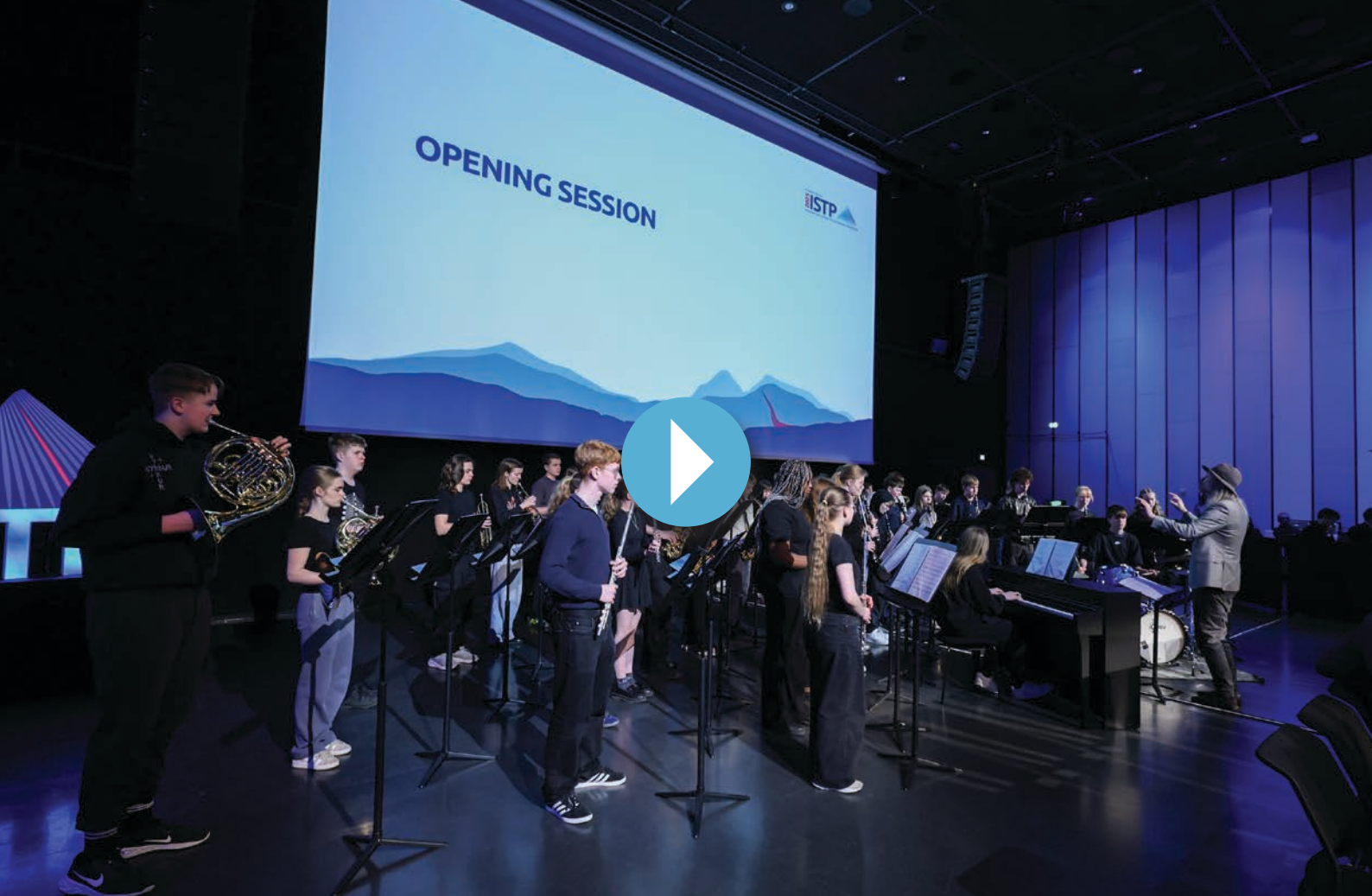


In some groups there were discussions about how well co-creation was going. Although there are good examples of co-creation, most developments are still driven by companies. AI lesson planners are seen as supportive, but teachers still feel like takers rather than partners.

Delegates emphasised the importance of commissioning research on the effective use of AI.

Katrín concluded by thanking everybody for the session. She believed that not enough was being done to enhance teacher agency. They are great differences in how students were equipped. We need to interrogate was it was to be human she emphasised. More practical solutions are needed. The discussions were very open and informal and set a great tone for the coming two days of informal and open dialogue.





### 3 | Summit Day 1 — Tuesday 25 March

## Summit opening and reflections on progress to date

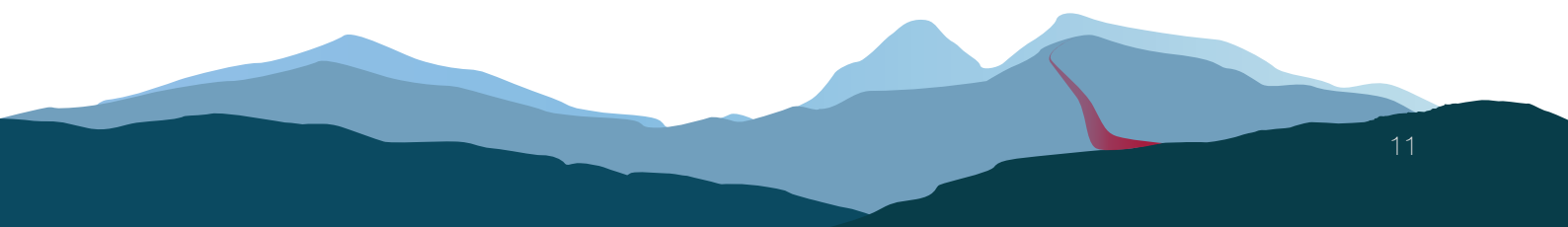
In introducing Day 1 the Summit Moderator **Katrín Jakobsdóttir** congratulated the **School Orchestra of Reykjavik Centre and West** for their fine performance which opened the Summit's first day. Being in an orchestra was one of the highest forms of collaboration.

In introducing herself she said she had a long connection to education. She had been honoured to be Iceland's Prime Minister from 2017-2024. Before that she had been Iceland's Education Minister and had attended the second ISTP in New York.

She highlighted the logo for the ISTP saying that Icelanders were used to the forces of nature. The logo's image of fire and ice symbolised the character of Iceland's people. Referring to the first plenary session she said that Iceland's approach to early childhood education is built on Nordic approaches to ECEC.

Iceland fully understands PISA's finding that two years of early childhood education underpins high achievement. She emphasised the importance of the second session with its focus on equity and well-being. In the third session she noted its focus on child centred education and on whether school systems are democratic.

Katrín welcomed the fact that the ISTPs are not about prewritten speeches but about making honest and reflective dialogue.





Katrín concluded by reminding the Summit that the global pandemic had transformed knowledge and identity. There were now teacher shortages around the world. Societies needed to value the public work of teachers. Teachers were transformational. Together, she said, in the Summit we could set our own goals.



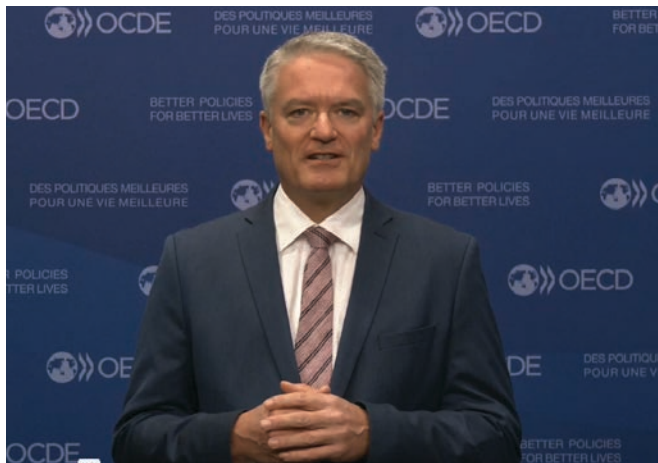
**Guðmundur Ingi Kristinsson**, Iceland's Minister of Education and Children welcomed delegates to Iceland. Guðmundur reminded the Summit that it needed to focus on preparing teachers for the future and on their role in preparing children for their future. The rules for preparing children are now transforming. The development of critical thinking is vital to these transforming roles.

Education needed to be inclusive, but this is not an easy task. A big part of this transformation rests on the experience of teachers. Ministers and teachers needed to work together to form practical education policies. Developing resilience is going to be essential in this transformation. He concluded by thanking country delegations for travelling a long way to be part of the Summit.

**Magnús Þór Jónsson**, the President of the Icelandic Teachers Union-the Kennarasamband Íslands (KÍ). He expressed his immense pride in his Union being the teacher host at the Summit. It was a chance to reflect on the current state of school systems in a fast-changing world.

We all seek quality in everyday life, although quality is a loaded word. Children need to gain wisdom, confidence and independence. Teachers have the responsibility of guiding them physically and mentally in their journey. Magnús said that academic knowledge needs to be built on but that achieving wellness should come from the close community around the education system.

The important dialogue among key stakeholders only began twenty years ago. Now more emphasis is being placed on responding to diversity. Collaboration is the cornerstone of the education system. Magnús stressed the importance of social dialogue. He asked whether social dialogue had improved quality? Unfortunately, some discussions focused on negative outcomes. Some sections of business are stressing competition over collaboration. It is right to have centralised decisions but thankfully there is partnership. Constructive social dialogue means not accepting a top-down approach. The debate is usually about money. The recent elections in Iceland had focussed on education but did it involve finger pointing? The ISTPs are valuable because they examine the relationship between proper funding and quality. Investing in education with proper funding means investing in the future. Quality education is the key to prosperity and well-being.



Magnús concluded by saying that Iceland's community is proud of what teachers had done and proud that Iceland had been chosen to advance this chapter of dialogue. He looked forward to ambitious discussions in the Summit.

OECD Secretary General, **Mathias Cormann** spoke via video link. Mathias thanked Iceland for organising the Summit. Education provided the basis for the best start in life. He welcomed the fact that early childhood education had continued to expand in OECD countries. Preschool education is now mandatory in some countries. The numbers of children in ECEC across the OECD have now expanded to 83%. Some countries have exceeded

a participation rate of more than 90%. This expansion has been driven by different policies. Some of the highest employment rates are now amongst women who are mothers. Low income is still a barrier to access to ECEC.

More needs to be done in ECEC. Quality in some early learning systems need to improve. Play-based learning needs to be strengthened in the curriculum. Securing affordability for access to ECEC should be a priority particularly since countries are now capping the costs of children's attendance.

He emphasised that the OECD would continue to provide evidence which supports the development of ECEC provision. There is an opportunity to invest in the ECEC workforce including in their professional development. ECEC staff have less background experience than other school staff. Pre-service training and professional development are vital as is workplace-based learning. A number of countries now require Bachelor degrees or equivalent with some requiring Masters Degrees for work in early years provision.

Mathias noted that preschool teachers tend to earn less, with some earning less than 60% than those in tertiary education. Fewer than 27% of ECEC educators have three years of experience or less indicating considerable staff turnover. Enhancing salaries, benefits and workload conditions with structured career and professional development pathways are essential.

There is now an opportunity to enhance digital literacy with the responsible use of AI powered tools. This could enable personalised teaching and better tracking of student progress. He highlighted the AI in Education Guidelines and Guardrails document. It provides principles for safe and beneficial education. The OECD has made recommendations for children's learning in the digital environment which would enable safe and secure learning.

Mathias concluded by drawing the Summit's attention to the publication of the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey this November which would include a report on staff training requirements classroom conditions and well-being in ECEC. He gave his best wishes for the Summit's success.

**Mugwena Maluleke**, President of Education International and General Secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union thanked the Icelandic Government and the Icelandic Teachers' Union (KÍ) for all their work in hosting and preparing the Summit. He also thanked the OECD and Andreas Schleicher for their ongoing commitment to working in partnership with Education International. He welcomed the fact that the host countries had forged a genuinely unique space for informed social dialogue.

Mugwena emphasised that he was speaking on behalf of EI whose core role was to bring the expertise, knowledge and commitment of teachers to policy discussions.



This year's Summit was taking place in a turbulent and uncertain world, yet education remains the bedrock on which we build our hopes for the future. However, it is more important than ever for all children to have inclusive and equitable quality education particularly since the out of school population had only reduced by 1%.

Under-investment in education must be tackled particularly in ECEC which remained inaccessible particularly for the most marginalised. In sub-Saharan Africa, Mugwena reminded the Summit, the participation rate in ECEC was below 10%. Yet as Nelson Mandela said, there is no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats children.

Underinvestment in early childhood education is felt keenly. The factors which are leading to ECEC colleagues leaving the profession include high workload levels including significant emotional labour, few professional development opportunities, and the recruitment of unqualified colleagues.

Quality education is a necessity for future of education. There is a threefold challenge. How could access expand during a time of shortage while at the same time increasing qualification requirements? How would it enable student agency?

We needed to strengthen the pedagogical project. Prioritising care and wellbeing for both students and teachers need to be at the centre of enhancing ECEC. The centre of the problem is teachers' moral stress- knowing the right thing to do but systems restrain them from doing it.

To empower students through fostering active citizenship agency and collaboration, teachers need to be genuinely empowered and able to influence teaching conditions and education policy.

Mugwena stressed the importance of democratic governance in schools which would enhance the values of curiosity, critical thinking and the free pursuit of knowledge. The only way we could address these challenges is by working together Mugwena concluded.



**Yehven Kudriavets**, First Deputy Minister of Education and Science in Ukraine, thanked the Icelandic Government, the OECD and EI for inviting Ukraine to attend the Summit. Ukraine was deeply grateful for the support it is receiving. He explained that Ukraine's education system faces critical circumstances caused by the war. Ukraine deeply believes in education driving prosperity. As a country it has learnt how to continue teaching in the context of the full-scale war launched by Russia and its allies. However, Ukraine's story is not only a story of hardship, but one of resilience and progress.

Yehven told the story of one individual student who had experienced over 800 air raid alarms all of which posed a genuine threat to life. One in seven schools had been destroyed. The war is a real threat to students' focus and well-being.

Ukraine's education system is seeking to create flexible solutions for the continuation of learning. It is guaranteeing access to education for all students. Ukraine has created a full range of underground schools. This is the only way to guarantee basic rights. Ukraine has created opportunities for learning despite the war.

The country believed that its system must be flexible. It is instituting large scale reforms in education. Its education legislation is following European requirements.

Over 200 training workshops have been established to teach skills for a rapidly changing world. This is an example of how to move forward in a time of crisis. It is investing in VET with a focus on science with the support of partners and governments.

This experience of flexibility is radical. Flexibility is helping Ukraine prepare for the opportunities AI presents and that teachers must be prepared for the introduction of AI.

Ukraine is deeply grateful for the support it has received but it is not waiting for stability to go forward. **Yehven** asked whether we are ready for what comes next? AI enabled the knowledge and ability to navigate an uncertain world. We must ensure that these solutions are practical.

## Reflections on the Progress on the ISTP 2024 Country Delegation Commitments

**Katrín Jakobsdóttir** highlighted the reports Iceland had received from countries on the progress they had made on their commitments given at the ISTP 2024. Appendix C contains a summary of those reports.



## Presentations of the OECD and EI Background Report

The final morning session of the first day focussed on the OECD's and EI's Briefings for the Summit.

**Andreas Schleicher** explored the key issues in the OECD Briefing; 'Quality early childhood education: the key to prosperity and well-being'.

Andreas complimented Iceland for placing early childhood education front and centre with an integrated whole government approach. Countries differ widely in their resourcing of ECEC with underinvestment in many.

Children are the best promoters of ECEC, yet their favourite activity, playing with toys and friends, is being squeezed out.

Children in ECEC who enjoy learning progress the most in their outcomes. They make the highest progress in literacy and numeracy and experience the greatest benefits in adult outcomes. However, there is a massive difference in children's development between those from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have much poorer access to ECEC, with advantaged children on average 20 months ahead in their learning. Children of wealthy parents are much more likely to be enrolled in ECEC. However, when parents are involved in their children's learning, disadvantaged children do as well in emergent literacy and numeracy as those who are from advantaged backgrounds. A strong home learning environment is essential for children's development.

The evidence is that ECEC participation depends on household spending. Affordability is a direct barrier with indirect barriers including poor access to information and red tape. Some parents have a low level of trust in ECEC which could be tackled by making families part of the solution.

He emphasised that public policy on ECEC with public investment, including tax breaks, has a really important role to play. A whole of government approach to ECEC is essential.

Andreas identified key issues from the second session's theme; supporting educators to foster equity and well-being. In addressing the issue of student anxiety, he said it is not high expectations which stress students but the feeling of not being supported. Overall, one third of students do not feel teachers support them. There is a 40% gap in countries between those with the least and greatest levels of student support.

Andreas emphasised that education is a relational, not a transactional process. Opportunities have to be created to foster social relationships for learning. The evidence is that students learn best from the teachers they love.

The question he asked, was how do we support teachers? The extrinsic motivation of money only gets you so far. We need to do a lot more about fixing the conditions in which teachers work. Whether teachers feel supported by society varies widely between countries. For example, teachers feel most supported by society in Singapore and the least supported in Slovakia.

Teachers' social capital is an important predictor of job satisfaction. Structures for support need to be put in place. Teachers need the time and opportunity to get to know students well. Engagement with families should be to be access not crisis driven.

There are many factors which influence teacher professional growth and well-being. Job satisfaction is linked to the



ability to collaborate, including in professional learning. Teaching is a tough, real-time job, but it is paperwork and bureaucracy which stresses teachers the most, not more time in the classroom.

Andreas concluded by addressing the third Summit theme on empowering young people. Social media is exacerbating the growing misalignment between what students want to do and the real world of jobs. There is also the issue of the relationship of student agency to academic achievement.

He illustrated this by comparing Japan and Paraguay. The evidence is that Japanese students show limited agency and low levels of happiness but are performing well academically. The reverse typifies Paraguay with students showing good emotional resilience. Denmark has achieved both.

A sense of agency starts early and is an early predictor of success. Yet children like what is familiar to them and that includes career aspirations. There are also gender differences in these aspirations. For example, boys are ten times more likely to choose information technology than girls. Girls are more likely to choose teaching as a career than boys, with boys more likely to want to become police officers. Effective careers education, he said is vital.



**Haldis Holst**, Deputy General Secretary of Education International, explored EI's ISTP Briefing, 'Quality Education: The Key to Prosperity and Well-being.' She described being the last speaker as the greatest challenge. It was like being the last ski jumper!

She referred to a UNCSW side event hosted by Iceland she had recently attended in New York. "50 years on the Icelandic quest for equality". Back then, ECEC was developed as part of policies on the family. In 1975, state childcare was about enabling women to work. We have moved from discussing daycare to discussing Early Childhood Education. Now the

challenge is how ECEC could achieve a higher status. Yet ECEC is still highly feminised and has a relatively low level of salaries. For example, 74% of those working in ECEC in France and Belgium believe it is relatively low status work. This belief is leading to a shortage of ECEC qualified teachers. She did not believe low salaries are a good retention strategy.

The welcome expansion of ECEC, Haldis noted, has developed growing pains which include exceeding the available finance. Yet the value of ECEC has paralleled the increasing number of women entering the workforce. She believed that increased income from ECEC enabling a larger workforce should be reinvested in early years education. She reminded the Summit that ECEC in the majority of countries is still a service where parents still paid fees.

Growing pains are leading to fragmented ECEC sectors, not just among providers but in systems themselves. How could we remedy these growing pains? How could ECEC become a single service in a country? Iceland, she said, knows how to achieve this.

Referring to the second session. Haldis highlighted the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on the Teaching Profession's Report which recommends that teachers should receive the same level of salaries and benefits as equivalent professions.

She also emphasised that there could be no student well-being without teacher well-being. Indeed, well-being is the prerequisite for quality education. It is the teacher's working environment which defines well-being. It needs to be a safe place to work, which includes such factors as the quality of light and air as well as stress. The World Health Organisation has identified stress as the greatest threat to teachers. There are four dimensions to well-being: mental and physical, subjective, social and cognitive.

Well-being is about being appreciated. Being given space, having the freedom to feel safe, having valued resources and tools, and being protected, when necessary, is what well-being was all about. Similarly, it is about being listened to and

heard which is why social dialogue is important for well-being.

Haldis concluded by noting that in Iceland the youngest children are trained to act democratically. Teachers need the trust and space to be agents of discussion in a polarised world. Democracy needs to be made and remade. A participatory environment for learning is vital. Teachers need supporting in a world where there are different opinions.

In answer to Katrín's question about children empowerment in ECEC, Andreas said that young people now have so much less space for discretion. The schedules for small children are incredible. Young children need more empowerment and autonomy.

Answering Katrín's question about professional autonomy, Haldis said that politicians often focus on limiting content and challenging professional ethics. This trend needs challenging.

Estonia praised the inspiring contributions. It asked whether there was a link between taking away rights of decision making from teachers and feeling less valued? Haldis agreed there is. Andreas said that teachers in France and Belgium have high autonomy and low status. What is needed is the understanding that teachers do what they know is right in the name of the profession.



## The Summit's Plenary Sessions – an introduction

At the heart of the International Summits on the Teaching Profession are its plenary sessions where Education Ministers and Union Leaders discuss the themes agreed by the host country and the ISTPs' permanent partners, the OECD and Education International.

The operation of the Chatham House Rule in the plenaries enables country delegates to discuss frankly how they are tackling the challenges and opportunities they face and to exchange information and ideas with other country delegations. For this reason, the names of country delegates are not identified in this section of the report.

The plenaries also provide a fertile policy background for the discussions delegations have in the final Summit session on their joint commitments and objectives for the coming year.

In introducing the plenaries, the Summit Moderator, **Katrín Jakobsdóttir**, emphasised that she wanted iterative conversations to take place in the plenaries which enabled maximum retention of information. For this reason, a strict time limit of three minutes for each contribution with the possibility of additional contributions was necessary. Several delegates welcomed this approach in their contributions.

Two countries in each session were asked to take the role of discussion starters for each sub-theme in each plenary. To help guide the discussions delegations' attention was drawn to discussion questions which had been agreed by Iceland, the OECD and EI.

This written report is a summary of the rich dialogue which took place in all three plenary sessions. It has attempted to capture the essence of delegates' contributions.



## Plenary Session 1

### Sub-theme 1: Building a Foundation for Equitable and Inclusive Education — The role of high-quality early childhood education and care

#### Discussion Questions

1. How can governments, teacher unions, and educational institutions work collaboratively to attract, retain and develop the ECEC professionals needed to advance the sector from access to quality and inclusion, and from care to education?
2. How can government and teacher unions provide ECEC leaders with better opportunities to focus on pedagogical leadership, enabling them to support educators and others in delivering high-quality childhood experience for all children?
3. How can ECEC settings better support and empower children from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure equitable access to quality early childhood education, fostering inclusion from an early age?

#### Key themes from Plenary 1.

- Country delegations were unanimous about the essential underpinning early childhood education and care (ECEC) gives to societies. They emphasised that equitable and inclusive ECEC provision is an essential investment for stable, successful societies. Although ECEC has been a focus in previous Summits, ISTP 2025 was the first Summit to take such an unambiguous position.
- A number of delegations pointed to a clear correlation between comprehensive high quality ECEC provision and an improvement in their countries' Gross Domestic Product.
- It was pointed out that ECEC provision frees parents, particularly women, to rejoin the workforce.
- It was also pointed out that ECEC has a positive impact on equity of opportunity and well-being in later life.
- A number of delegations believed that society more widely has yet to understand the importance of ECEC. There was consensus that ECEC needs both a whole government and a whole society approach.
- Most delegations believed there is still a need to improve investment in ECEC provision.
- Even if they had yet to achieve equality of access for all children to ECEC, countries have made that a target.
- Although some countries are offering free ECEC provision, others have recognised that affordability and lack of information to parents are still challenges in their systems.
- Countries are now focussing on developing the educational offer in ECEC.
- The impact of background disadvantage for children was recognised and some countries are taking specific actions to tackle this. These include such initiatives as breakfast clubs and parental education programmes.
- Some countries are providing specific extra support to respond to the specific needs of children including those from diverse backgrounds, mobile populations and those with special needs.
- A number of countries face teacher shortages in ECEC provision.
- Countries recognised the issue of pay inequity for ECEC educators. A number have agreed to match ECEC pay with the pay of those in other levels of schooling.
- Administrative demands, lack of planning time and excessive group sizes were identified as barriers to implementing a play-based curriculum.
- Specific professional development programmes are being developed for ECEC educators.
- The curriculum for ECEC is being developed in a number of countries. It includes self-regulation and social skills alongside cognitive skills.

- There is an ongoing debate about the mix of qualified teachers and non-teaching staff in ECEC settings. The Summit also recognised the importance of supporting effective leadership in ECEC. Some delegations emphasised that ECEC leaders must have qualified teacher status.

### Box 2. Key takeaways from sub-theme 1

- Equitable and inclusive ECEC is an essential investment for stable, successful societies and needs a whole government and society approach.
- Data shows that ECEC has a positive impact on equity and well-being in later life.
- ECEC allows parents, particularly women, to rejoin the workforce, and has a positive impact on gender equality.
- Special focus should be on fulfilling the need for teachers and other qualified staff in ECEC.
- Sufficient investment in ECEC needs constant attention.

### Plenary 1. The discussion.

**Estonia** opened the conversation as the first discussion starter. Estonia is constantly being asked about why it is a top PISA performer? One reason is that its education system is based on the basic values of inclusion and making provision available for all children in their early years. 97% of children between the ages of one and a half and seven attend early childhood education, meaning that compulsory education starts relatively late. The cornerstones of early years provision focus on fostering play, self-regulation and creativity in every child.

A union leader emphasised that highly dedicated preschool teachers teach in its early years provision which focuses on education not childcare. Estonia's ECEC workforce is the least affected by staff shortages. Their average salary must be 90% of the average schoolteacher's salary.

The second discussion starter, **the Czech Republic**, opened by explaining that ECEC provision faces several issues including a highly mobile population. As result of schools not being able to accommodate all children, 15% were unable to attend preschool and 20% went to preschool later than expected. Temporary preschool groups for children have been set up with a focus on pedagogical diagnostics. Country wide ECEC programmes are being developed.

A union leader believed there are growing inequalities in the Czech Republic and that students would do far better if they had received pre-school education. Her view was that ECEC still faces difficulties. She believed that the infrastructure of preschool education is inadequate. Forty thousand children are still out of the preschool system. Solely focussing on the curriculum is not enough. Social psychological learning is needed.

**Australia** agreed that ECEC is vital for all children's future learning. A number Australian States have introduced a second year of preschool education for three-year olds. A previous Prime Minister had introduced a partnership with long day ECEC providers although there are still hurdles to get across in relation to private providers.



A union leader said there had been positive changes in ECEC in Australia's provision. There are now free preschool programmes in some states. There has been a refocus on education away from a solely social family approach. Workforce issues still need addressing including a shortage of educators and significant problems with workload. Addressing these significant workforce problems need consultation.

A delegate from **Sweden** said Sweden had always understood the importance of ECEC. It is about ensuring the best start in life for children. However, there are problems. In eight out of ten preschool groups teachers are working in overcrowded rooms where pupil numbers exceed national guidelines. She believed that preschool teachers must be given adequate time to prepare. Planning time, she believed is non-negotiable. The alarming shortage of qualified teachers in ECEC is a crisis which demanded immediate action including on salaries and working conditions. Collaboration between partners is essential. Sweden emphasised that it had initiated a State Enquiry into ECEC provision.



**Finland** said that ECEC has a positive impact on equity and wellbeing for children. It is focusing on improving participation rates. It has introduced a special group focus on the children of immigrant families. There isn't an overall lack of teachers in Finland but there is a shortage of ECEC teachers. There is a need to increase the intake of undergraduate teachers being trained in teaching ECEC children.

A union leader said that bureaucracy had become an issue for leaders within ECEC provision. An age-appropriate pedagogy for preschool children needs further development. Legislation had reformed day care to early childhood education. However, there is still a need for stronger understanding from employers and politicians.

**Latvia** responded to Estonia's approach to ECEC provision by saying it was inspirational. Recent developments in its own system included the gathering of comprehensive information on children's progress in their early years. Experts from Universities are creating tools for supporting children's early development, risk assessment and support. Latvia is adjusting ECEC educators' salaries in line with the lowest salaries in schools. A union leader reminded the Summit that a children's first experience of education needs to be the best. What is needed is a floor of pupil numbers per teacher with additional support staff.

**Iceland** said that what educators do now shapes all lives. The participation of the families of migrant children in their education is an issue. Educators of early years children needed the same pay as their colleagues in schools. What was fundamental in children's education are human rights, democracy and creativity. The goal is that all children should develop the necessary skills. There was a belief that the National Curriculum underemphasises creativity. Quality education for all should be the key to early years education.

**Norway** emphasised that it was necessary to invest in teachers. There are complex reasons for the decline in teacher numbers. Employers have agreed to collaborate in teacher recruitment. The positive features of teacher education are being promoted and showcased. Although there is no quick fix, Norway emphasised there is unity around a common plan for ensuring sufficient staff. Eighty two percent of children attend ECEC education. Fees are being reduced and the third child in every family attends for free. Norway concluded by saying that it in secure communities children are able to learn.

**Poland** said that although it had a high achieving education system according to PISA, children's sense of belonging is at the bottom of PISA rankings. When children enter school at the age of six they believe they are talented in mathematics but when they get to the fourth grade, 70% of young people said they could never learn in mathematics.

Poland believed therefore that education should start in the early years. There is a causality to learning. When children progressed, they like to continue to learn. Poland is working hand in hand with its teacher unions on thinking about how it can enable children to develop not only their cognitive skills but their social skills and self-regulation. The key word describing reform should be agency, both for students and teachers, which is why teacher policies are so important.



Poland concluded by pointing to independent studies which calculated that children's enrolment in ECEC would lead to a 10- 20% improvement in its PISA scores which, in turn, would lead to a 0.2 % bonus in its GDP. While it believes this was important evidence of ECEC's impact on the economy, it also believes these calculations were an underestimate.

**United Kingdom-Northern Ireland** said that the key priority to transforming education is ECEC. It has made progress in stabilising providers. Northern Ireland has set up a subsidy scheme for childhood costs. It is looking at developments in ECEC in a number of countries. It has a blueprint for transforming education which includes evidence-based reforms, an improved knowledge-based curriculum, investing in teaching resources, focusing on leadership and investing in educator's professional development in ECEC. Key to its success will be empowering teachers.

A union leader emphasised that it was important to listen to the voice of practitioners. There is a need in ECEC for qualified teachers. Neither principals nor teachers receive planning time in early years provision.



A union leader from **Germany** said that responsibility for early years provision rested with its states (Länder). ECEC is inclusive but not equitable. A holistic education for all early years children is needed. The reason for these challenges is a major shortage of early years educators. All states have agreed to focus on this problem. Questions are being asked about whether other, unqualified personnel could be recruited and, if so, what would be the effect on quality? Germany is supporting measures by employers to tackle workload and recruit well-qualified staff. Germany is introducing measures to support children with special educational needs in ECEC. These emphasise that ECEC is about much more than language development.

**Spain** explained that ECEC is a priority and part of its educational estate. It believes that the early detection of educational need is vital. Ninety per cent of children between the ages of 3-6 and 50% between the ages of 2-3 are in education. All ECEC places are free. Spain believes that increased education is needed for children from poor backgrounds. There is a key role for research in developing ECEC. It is developing ECEC with teacher unions.

A union leader said that there is a need to have advanced free schooling. Teachers' competences need improving. There is also a need for improved investment. Pedagogically inclusive practices are needed to foster diversity.



**Andreas Schleicher** said that there are a group of countries which had reduced educational inequity. While education couldn't compensate for non-environmental inadequacies it could compensate for inadequacies in the environment. The OECD has good data on teachers' professional development needs, including on special educational needs. Collaborative autonomy amongst educators leads to high job satisfaction.

**New Zealand** explained that it was strengthening its ECEC programme. It believes that investing in ECEC, including salaries and educators' professional development, is about valuing early childhood education. Children are not privatised commodities. Responding to identity, language and culture is important. New Zealand said that its government has taken crucial decisions because it knew that its future is in the hands of its education ministry and teacher unions.

While all agreed that ECEC provision is vital, **Singapore** observed, there was a need to raise public understanding of ECEC. Singapore has increased ECEC educators' salaries by about 50% and improved their working conditions. It recognises that pre-service as well as in-service training is vital, and it has therefore raised the quality of both. Improving well-being among staff is a priority. Six development days have been set aside for ECEC staff. It believes building and maintaining trust and professionalism in staff needs a continuing effort.

**Lithuania** pointed out that its collective agreement with educators' unions is updated every year. It is equalising the salaries of ECEC and general education staff. Ninety-six per cent of children are in ECEC provision with equality of access applying to all settings. A union leader said that teachers' salaries would increase by 5% more than the average wage until 2028 and agreed that that ECEC staff salaries were aligned with those in general education.

**Katrín Jakobsdóttir** indicated that the plenary session was also open to observer countries to intervene. She noted country reports of teacher shortages, and the link identified between GDP growth and ECEC provision. The same issues were being raised, which include the need for gender equity, the need to prioritise ECEC investment and the need for all children to attend preschool.



A union leader from **South Africa** said that the country was more than convinced about the importance of ECEC but is only embarking on fulfilling this understanding now.

South Africa said it recognised the need for investment in ECEC. There is a strategic orientation towards early years in the basic education department for which it is now responsible. South Africa is aiming to ensure ECEC for all children by 2030. Currently there are 1.3 million children in ECEC. It is identifying which children need ECEC the most. South Africa reminded the Summit that it is the only African country which takes part in international education studies.

**Hong Kong (China)** said that it is convinced about the importance of ECEC. Since 2017-2018 it has provided affordable quality early childhood provision that meets diverse needs. Around 90% of its part time ECEC provision is free. Fees are low for those attending full time. Both preschools and parents are highly appreciative of this improvement. Educators' professional development has been strengthened.

The pupil educator ratio has been improved from one to fifteen children to one to eleven. All children receive necessary support. At least one teacher per setting assists students with special educational needs and at least one teacher per setting supports non-Chinese children. There is a specific grant for this support. Multi-disciplinary teams are available to support the rehabilitation of children.

Hong Kong (China) also said that parental education for supporting their children is supported. There is a curriculum for parental education which is accompanied by a one-off grant.

**The Faroe Islands** said that they believed ECEC provides the strongest foundation for life. However, there is a need to recognise and increase respect for ECEC professionals. Children need stable role models. A union leader from the Faroe Islands said that there is a lack of ECEC educators. There has been an increase in ECEC educators' salaries, and they are waiting to see a positive impact. A key strength is that ECEC is free to all. Ninety-five per cent educators are women. There is a need for more male educators in ECEC. He asked how more people could be attracted to ECEC to teachers and confessed he didn't have the answer.



**Switzerland** addressed the issue of special education in relation to ECEC in this session. It had a long-term goal of 95% qualified teachers-within schools. It said special educational needs (SEN) needs addressing. Learners with SEN need to be integrated. The legal basis for this had been established. An inter cantonal concordat enabling national co-ordination has been established. The same quality procedures are applied to all schools. A standardised procedure which enables innovation has been established. The number of special schools has fallen by 40% and the number of separate classes has also fallen.

Challenges remain in improving inclusion. There is a lack of specialised teachers. There is also a need to learn from other countries.

**Haldis Holst** welcomed the broad-based support for play based ECEC. She also welcomed the support for equal pay for ECEC educators with mainstream teachers. Progress needs to be recognised. However, there are still questions. How could highly qualified teachers be attracted to the sector? Did ECEC teachers know they are doing a good and valuable job? What is the right staff child ratio for safety? How could the service be delivered more effectively? Where could the people be found who wanted to work in the sector? She concluded that there was no high bar to improving ECEC educators' pay. She also reminded the Summit that ECEC freed up women to join the workforce.

**The United Kingdom (England)** said it totally agreed with goal of ECEC for all children. A record proportion of children were starting in ECEC settings. The government is funding children's entitlement to ECEC. It is introducing a sustained professional development. A recruitment campaign is underway.

A union leader said that there had been over a decade of deregulation in ECEC. This had reduced the quality of ECEC provision. The initiative Sure Start in ECEC provision which had been the Gold Standard, had been abandoned. There had been a lot of focus on childcare, but the focus now needed to turn to education. He welcomed the new government's focus on ECEC and the three thousand new ECEC classes. He reminded the Summit that children picked up learning like sponges. He concluded that overall, a forty thousand increase in the workforce in schools is needed.



**The Czech Republic** said it faced a set of issues around ECEC which are inspiring a range of measures. Its collective effort could be summarised in a single sentence: 'no child left behind' -from Barack Obama's book, 'A Promised Land'.

**Andreas Schleicher** asked whether all those who worked in early years need a Masters Degree? More creativity is needed in ECEC staffing. The right mix of staff is needed rather than the bar being set too high.

A union leader from **Singapore** said that the actual working conditions in ECEC needed to be explored. ECEC couldn't be isolated from the rest of education. More porosity is needed. Primary teachers need to understand what was happening in early years. He asked, how inclusive are we?

**UNESCO** said that children from the poorest backgrounds often benefit the least from ECEC. Children's household environments hadn't been mentioned in the Summit. He said that we needed to look beyond ECEC to policies on lifelong learning including adult literacy.

**Lithuania** reminded the Summit that since 2021 equality of salaries applies to all pedagogical staff.

A union leader from **Iceland** said that a continuing commitment to ECEC is needed from Ministers. Its provision needs to be watered with funding. ECEC was more than being just about schools. While schools were the cradles of youth, Iceland's Prosperity Act was bringing all systems of support together.

**Haldis Holst** said that further discussion was needed on the composition of staff. Forty-six per cent of staff are not qualified teachers. They cover everything from being health specialists to school chefs. The leadership of ECEC settings needs to be professionalised with qualified teachers leading ECEC settings.



**Andreas Schleicher** concluded by saying that ECEC needs stronger, more robust systems. Young children do not have a lobby. There needs to be more creativity about who moves into the sector including those moving into a second career. A culture of continuous learning should be created. ECEC needs both a whole of government and a whole of society approach.

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### Sub-theme 2: Supporting Educators to Foster Equity and Wellbeing — How well-established services enable educators to promote inclusive, supportive learning environments

#### Discussion Questions

1. How can policy makers and school leaders ensure the well-being of education staff as a prerequisite to creating the learning environments needed to promote quality, equity and well-being?
2. In what ways can genuine empowerment of teachers be achieved and collaboration and peer support among educators be strengthened to foster more effective and inclusive and equitable learning environments for students?
3. What types of resources are most effective in helping educators create inclusive, supportive learning environments? In this context what are the opportunities and challenges presented by AI and digital technologies for both students and staff?

#### Key themes from Plenary 2

- All countries attending the Summit agreed the core values underpinning their education systems are equity, inclusion, human rights and achieving high levels of well-being among students and teachers. Countries argued that breaking the link between student background and future success is crucial. A number also pointed out that high expectations for student achievement should underpin these values.
- Some countries emphasised that adopting the values of equity, inclusion and wellbeing are not enough in themselves unless achievement for all students is enhanced through a knowledge rich curriculum accompanied by support for teachers.
- Teacher retention and shortages are deemed to be a key challenge for education systems although a minority of jurisdictions said they do not face these problems.
- There was an ongoing debate about what were the key barriers to well-being. Some delegates argued that improving school funding and teachers' conditions of service and pay are key to enhancing educator well-being. Some thought that improving the time available to teachers should be the top priority. Others identified the need for psychological support for teachers as the top priority. All agreed that high quality professional development is empowering.
- There is a consensus that teacher and student well-being are integrally linked. However, there is caution about any outsourcing of policies for achieving well-being.
- Several delegations highlighted the importance of supporting the well-being of school principals including the prevention of isolation by external mentoring. Leadership during the pandemic had been vital for teachers and school communities. The importance of the link between principals' well-being and teachers' well-being should be understood.
- There was a strong current of discussion about how protect school communities against violence, harassment and abuse both from students and parents. There is an understanding that schools cannot exist outside their communities and that the effects of violence could run through schools. Examples given at the Summit of how to tackle violence included: engagement charters backed by Ministries, providing the space and time enable teachers to learn from each other about successful strategies for diffusing conflict, and providing psychological support.

- The importance of engaging and challenging parents was highlighted by delegations. There is consensus that increased engagement is vital given the multiplicity of pressures on communities including the consequences of unregulated social media.
- A feature of ISTP 2024 was the discussion about the use of Artificial Intelligence and digital technology in education. This discussion continued at the Summit. Several delegations expressed their strong concerns about the damaging impact excessive screen time is having on students' health well-being and ability to read, write and engage with texts. They extrapolated that AI's effects on public debate is a potential danger for democracy.
- Some saw potential in AI for reducing teacher workload by streamlining the use of the curriculum and its assessment while others warned against seeing AI as a quick fix. All believe that ethical frameworks should inform the use of AI and technology in education with several countries creating guidelines on AI in partnership with stakeholders.

### Box 3. Key takeaways from sub-theme 2

- Equity, inclusion, human rights and well-being should go together with strong emphasis on student achievement.
- The well-being of principals, teachers and students are integrally linked. Support and high-quality professional development are empowering for educators.
- Ethical frameworks should inform the use of AI and technology in education. Attention should also be paid to reducing excessive screen time in order protect student well-being.
- Teacher recruitment and retention remain key challenges for most countries.
- Schools are an integral part of every community. It is not enough to expect schools should not be expected to tackle violence, harassment and abuse on their own- the community, especially parents, also needs to take responsibility for these issues.

## Plenary 2. The discussion

The United Kingdom and Singapore opened the discussion. **The United Kingdom** said it is acting to break the link between students' background and their future success. The government is working hard to create inclusive environments in schools for all young people including those with special educational needs and disabilities. The aim is to restore parents' trust in the education system. This could not take place without teachers. The government's recruitment and retention strategy include increasing teacher numbers by six thousand and developing more flexible working approaches. It has introduced a strategy for working together with unions and partners, a national survey of the education workforce and a programme of curriculum reform.

A union leader from the UK said high levels of teacher well-being have a positive impact on pupils. While schools have high levels of autonomy, they have also experienced rigid accountability procedures. There has been a reduction in professional autonomy and agency which is not growing with teachers' experience. Most other professionals benefit from hybrid working but this could not be an option for education professionals. UK England is experiencing the largest recruitment and retention crisis in a generation. In addition, one in five young people have a probable mental disorder and one in seven young people are not in education employment and training. The delegate welcomed the government's recognition of these issues.



**Singapore** described well-supported teachers as being at the heart of education. It has refreshed its home school guidelines. It is turning challenges into opportunities and exploring the fundamentals of teaching and learning. Artificial Intelligence exemplifies the need to balance priorities by enabling streamlining in curriculum areas.

Singapore has created an Academy of Singapore which focusses on teachers' professional development. Flexibility in professional development is valued. Schools have the ability to work with partners who, in turn are expected to agree to invest in services. Looking at how to meet students' needs and using technology, especially when resources were finite, has informed the size of classes.

A union leader from Singapore described teachers as thermostats who controlled the learning environment. The delegate cited the UN's Higher Level Teaching Panel recommendation 38 on teachers' working conditions. Singapore's Engagement Charter protects teachers from harassment and abuse which the Singapore Teacher Union has sent to every teacher. The message is that the Ministry has teachers' backs by saying they would take action on abuse. The question is, can teachers carry on if they experience high stress levels? Teachers need agency and professional growth in their careers.

A delegate from **Sweden** said that teachers' well-being was the foundation of their education system. They are experiencing high workload levels and stress and need fair opportunities to teach. Sweden has invested in a new national professional development programme for teachers which is starting in Autumn 2025. While the programme points in the right direction it has recognised that teachers still lack professional recognition.

A union leader from **Poland** said that the country still lacked teachers. The bar for entry into the profession had been set very high. It is like looking for a twenty-four-year-old employee who has had fifty years teaching experience. The biggest problem is the lack of preschool teachers. Young people make up 3% of the teaching workforce and they do not stay long. The list of competencies expected of teachers is getting longer. One issue is inclusion. Classrooms need 'long liners', who are second teachers, to support inclusion. She reminded the Summit that students could see cooks and librarians as heroes as well. They are all educators.

A union leader from **Denmark** focussed on the relationship of artificial intelligence to teaching. The opportunities for AI use were described as vast but teachers need specific tools. AI is focussed on the general market not teaching. Teachers are being told to find its potential.

He said that Denmark is experiencing the slow dismantlement of the reading and writing culture. Ministers have said that children are spending too much time in front of screens. Voices needed to be raised supporting this position. Unless these issues are acted on, a mockery would be made of the democratic system. Technological literacy is being implemented in Danish schools to understand the effects of new technologies on public discourse.



**Finland** described the cornerstones of its education system as being equity, inclusion, and well-being. Teachers are the most important partners in education reform. It is acting to clarify procedures across the education. The aim is that teachers receive the support they need for learning. Denmark's emphasis is on multi professional co-operation.



It is focussing on enhancing teachers' well-being. High class sizes remain an issue as is a lack of psychologists. The government has provided 100m euros to reform the system of educational support.

A union leader from Finland said that investment in mentoring young teachers is important. Teachers need to be consulted. It is concerning that Principals are experiencing excessive workload. Pedagogical leadership needs to be supported. It is essential, that municipalities distributed education funding to schools.

**Spain** emphasised that inclusion was an ethical and moral obligation. Teachers play a key role in creating an inclusive environment. Well-being support is an issue for a broad coalition of professionals. Spain warned that AI could create inequalities and attacks on privacy. Embracing technology should not leave any child behind. Spain is providing advice on ensuring AI works for all students.

A union leader from Spain said that teachers are experiencing great stress. Well-being needs to be guaranteed. Teaching should be dignified by funding. AI guidelines are needed and should be produced in partnership with teachers.

A union leader from **Estonia** said that principals should be the best leaders and lead learners. They also require mentors from the outside world. They should never feel alone. Principals need to have the autonomy to see what was going on at grass roots level. He acknowledged that throwing money at problems might not solve them. Time is the most important resource. Ten-year programmes which start every year must take into account what is on the table. It should be understood that every educational method cannot convert into an AI training model.

Estonia said that it has a devolved education system in which there is a minimum standard for well-being. While autonomy is important it could also be a challenge. It is in the first phase of negotiation of a national agreement where minimum standards such as a class size limit would be set.

**The Czech Republic** said that it was initiating far reaching reforms. It was creating a teacher competency profile. Its priority was a reduction in administrative burdens. Regional centres would provide support to schools. It knew that its well-being programmes were appreciated. New technology was being implemented in schools, and it sought to reduce teachers' workload burden by introducing AI. In employing highly qualified teachers it was exploring new strategies such as sabbaticals for teachers, additional support and a principle of rotation.

**The UK Scotland** said it was unique in including well-being, modern studies and inclusive learning in its curriculum. Teachers teach about the democratic process. Scotland is on guard against issues being weaponised in schools and has sought to educate against gender-based violence and toxic based masculinity. It is co-creating an online approach to combat these threats. Including understanding about LGBTQ issues is embedded in schools. The Scottish Executive has invested 10 million pounds in promoting equity which has gone straight to headteachers.

A delegate from Scotland affirmed a strong commitment to equity in Scotland's system. The power of the curriculum is that it has enabled teaching about human rights.

A union leader from **Iceland** asked how the fact that there will always be conflict in schools could be tackled? How are we preparing new teachers about conflicts and difficult communications with children? There is a need to engage in discussion before conflicts happened in order to make these incidents fewer. There is also a need to deal with difficult communications with parents. Although these cases mostly ended well, building up knowledge about difficult matters shouldn't be missed.



**New Zealand** said that there had been a long conversation in the system about equity, inclusion and wellbeing but nothing had changed. It is initiating large scale reform which is focussed on creating a knowledge rich curriculum which describes what teachers have to do – such as phonics checks. It is providing more support for teachers and giving teachers their time back. New Zealand stressed that its reforms are about enhancing achievement. Teacher well-being is not possible if children are failing.

A union leader from New Zealand said that teachers' working conditions are linked to students' learning conditions. The delegate was worried about assertions that money wasn't important. Everything that enhances working conditions costs money.



**Norway** described its education system as truly inclusive which gave equal opportunities for all children. Teachers have the most important role although it is shared with others. Teachers and their teams have different competencies which together provide the best starting point. However, Norway said, the role of teachers must not be narrowed down to reduce the room for teachers to engage with their students. It affirmed that through social dialogue common goals could be reached.



**Lithuania** said that inclusion was a fundamental principle with every child having the right to be in school. Its system encourages collaboration. Its special educational needs support networks have been expanded. Lithuania is focusing on raising teachers' professional status, recruiting teachers through a central model and providing professional development for educators.

A union leader from Lithuania said that the biggest challenge for teachers was their psychological state. Every teacher has experienced psychological violence. It is an issue which is more important than salaries. Although this issue could not be solved in a day or a month, the teacher union is working with the Ministry on this issue.

A union leader from **Australia** described the common themes impacting the workforce in its states. These had been identified by independent research which teacher union had commissioned. The themes included excessive workload and administration, lack of respect, poor salaries and a lack of respect.

Positive industrial agreements had been reached. They focus on securing for teachers dedicated planning time, the right to disconnect, class size reductions, the streamlining of reporting to parents, and a zero tolerance of violence, particularly gender violence including in social media.

Positive action is being taken which includes dedicated mentoring and psychological support for teachers, teacher training scholarships, dedicated mentoring and psychological support, paid practicums, and targeted support for school leaders.

A union leader from **the Czech Republic** explained that it was experiencing teacher shortages with thirty per cent of primary teachers wanting to leave the profession. Those teachers with more years of service have little career progression. There are several factors involved in retaining teachers. Starting salaries are important as is professional development.

She urged the Summit not to forget the need to support Principals. Leadership was important during Covid. There is a strong link between Principal and teacher well-being.

A union leader from **South Africa** described the collaboration between the teacher union and the Ministry on teacher development programmes. There had been a lack of psychological support during the pandemic.

South Africa said that collaboration between the Education Department and the Union had been able to get to teachers quicker than the Department – which hopefully, is making a dent.

A union leader from **Denmark** highlighted its new secondary level programme Education 2030. As the first line of defence, the system needs to address conflict. The delegate urged the Summit to be wary about students being in front of screens. AI should not be teaching students about empathy.

A union leader from the **UK Scotland** said that salaries mattered and must improve. The secondary sector is facing teacher shortages. Teacher and student working conditions are linked. AI does not represent a quick fix. There is a need to listen to the voices of children.

She emphasised that contracts for teachers and support staff needed to be changed from temporary to permanent. The levels of accountability driven bureaucracy are too high. Teachers are working eleven hours a week more than they should do. Excessive workload should be materially addressed.

**Sweden** said that schools tended to be blamed for problems for which they were not responsible. There is a need to think much more about parental responsibility. Teenagers are spending on average, 6.5 hours a day in front of screens. Children do not read or move enough. There was a need to be brave and tell parents about this situation, as it was basically a matter for them.

A delegate from **Hong Kong (China)** said its professional development programme focussed on appreciating various countries' languages and traditions. There are special time slots in teachers' timetables for developing the Chinese curriculum.

Teachers need to be refreshed and recharged with young teachers needing to be treasured. Educational development is empowered through networks across schools, creating collaborative spaces and peer learning. There are time slots for teacher learning circles and organising school days out of China. There is a focus on supporting Principals' leadership.



A union leader from **the Faroe Islands** said there is an initiative which asks the public to encourage people to be teachers. Peer to peer teaching is a complex job which the delegate encouraged the Ministry to fund.

A union leader from **Iceland** pointed to a sense of pride about teaching. It shouldn't be about getting richer. There are four challenges: inclusion, class size and its composition, professional development and study materials. As part of the social dialogue, there is a need to talk about the financial side and the achievement side. Discussions should be turned into decisions.

A union leader from **Latvia** said there wasn't enough support staff to support student well-being with only two hundred staff available for two hundred thousand students. A reduction in violence needs the co-operation of parents. Latvia is looking for solutions especially at local level.

**Ukraine** described the situation it faces. Teachers lack good working conditions in Ukraine. While teachers love their country, some are leaving. There is a need to fight as the existence of the country is at stake. If teachers do not stay the next generation would not stay either. Ukraine said it is focusing on motivating teachers and giving them proper working conditions.



**South Africa** reflected that schools couldn't exist outside their communities. The effects of violence and high unemployment in communities could run through schools. Teachers are the bulwark against these effects.

**Denmark** said using AI to turn teachers into social and democratic pedagogues was not the point. Reading and writing development and the ability read long texts is in danger of being lost. The danger is that students are being cheated out of discovering these texts. The question is, how do we maintain reading and writing development while integrating AI meaningfully?

**The United Kingdom** asserted that there was no distinction between achieving and thriving which while complex was achievable. A union leader from the UK said that it is hard to achieve and thrive if you were in poverty. He urged the UK to join the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey. He asked how could technology companies be stopped from gamifying education?

A union leader from **Singapore** emphasised that policy decisions must include professional views. The reality is that there is always something new to adapt to. There was a need to provide a service to teachers at the highest level and reduce their workload.

**Haldis Holst** concluded by observing that well-being was not a goal in itself. The blocks to well-being need to be removed. Learning is blocked by being scared and hungry. Unlike the pandemic when everyone was alone, we had now returned to a collective environment. The focus is now on developing resilient education systems. Resilience can tackle stress such as techno stress. Social dialogue will moderate how to achieve decision making.



In concluding, **Andreas Schleicher** asked what made students happy? School is second only to parents in achieving happiness. The ingredients of well-being include a sense of purpose and agency alongside the social value of teaching. Job satisfaction is actually very high among teachers. One question is how new teachers could be allocated? Novice teachers are often placed in disadvantaged schools where teacher shortage is often much greater.

He noted that often teachers experiencing the highest demands had high levels of agency and consequently well-being. He advised that well-being shouldn't be outsourced to outside professionals. On the issue of school funding, he said that the development of funding formulae still has a long way to go.

He finished by observing that intensity of technological use was not strongly related to outcomes. It is the unstructured use of social media which is related to well-being. More than half of students are addicted to their devices. Teachers' connection with parents needs strengthening. They are unable to do their job without talking to parents.



## 4 | Summit Day 2 — Wednesday 26 March

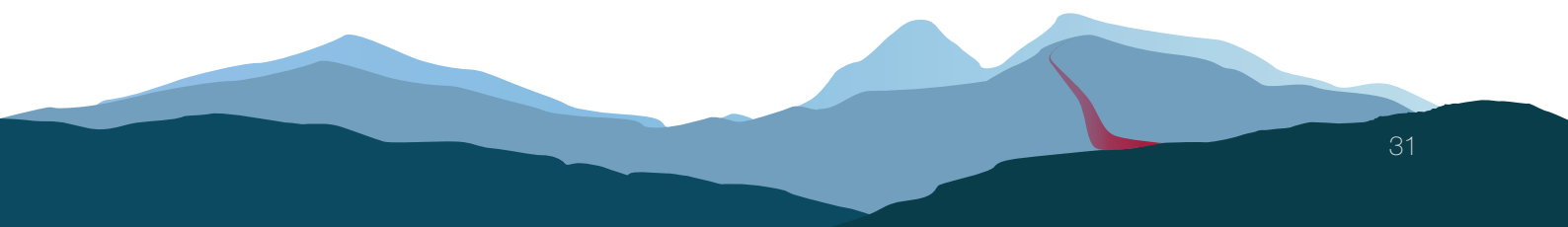
Sub-theme 3: The Educator's Role in Child-Centred Education Systems — Educators empowering children and young people to actively participate in shaping their own future

### Discussion Questions.

1. How can educators encourage children and young people to voice and express their own opinions and what systems or participation models need to be in place?
2. What enables education systems to empower children and young people to actively effect their own education and the education system on a local and national level?
3. How can governments, unions, educators, schools, youth, and leisure work ensure that children and young people have equal opportunities and options in participating in a wide range of studies (non-formal education)?

### Key themes from Plenary 3.

- One theme in this session was a discussion about the meaning of child centred education. A spectrum of views emerged. They ranged from identifying the key conditions that should be in place to foster children's and young people's sense of agency to the view that child centred education was a child's right and valuable in itself. All agreed that the principle of equity should serve to maximise all children's and young people's achievement.



- Another theme focussed on the conditions for children's learning. Many delegates stressed the importance of listening to children's voices. Students need to feel empowered in taking ownership of their learning. These contributions emphasised that children needed to have a sense of belonging and to feel seen, respected and valued. They also emphasised the importance of creating strong classroom communities with schools focusing on finding the voices of children.
- Some delegates asserted that there were barriers to child centred learning. Those include teacher shortages and excessive workload.
- The relationship between teachers and students was the subject of intense discussion. Some are concerned that there is an overemphasis on children's rights at the expense of teachers' ability to direct and guide learning. They did not believe that a child centred curriculum meant that children were in charge and emphasised that children didn't know what they didn't know.
- There was a consensus that teachers were the most important in leading learning. Several delegates said teachers needed to be further empowered.
- Narrowing the agency gap between what students had learnt and their lack of optimism about being able to influence positive change was considered essential for learning.
- Several delegations emphasised the importance of an internationally benchmarked curriculum accompanied by world leading assessments. They emphasised that achievement in the curriculum would underpin students' sense of agency.
- There was a rich discussion about the content of the curriculum. A number of delegations emphasised the importance of a curriculum which focussed on the basic skills of reading and numeracy. Some said that the curriculum should also include civics, social and emotional skills, communication skills, and media literacy. Others highlighted the importance of a rich creative curriculum.
- There was a range of views on the relationship of requirements on teachers to teach and assess the curriculum. For example, one contribution emphasised that common curriculum and assessment arrangements were a framework which would inform teaching. Another stressed that a strict curriculum with testing militated against the development of teachers' critical thinking.
- The discussion linked the importance of student learning, agency and knowledge with the defence of democracy. Delegates emphasised that a well-informed population was the most important defence against anti-democratic forces. Some said that the teaching of basic skills from an early age should be prioritised since low levels of literacy undermined democratic resilience.
- Delegates highlighted the importance of skills which are needed to navigate a complex world which included the impact of social media and fake news. They believed that ethics and the difference between right and wrong must be taught.
- Some were concerned that trust in democratic institutions was being eroded. Many delegates pointed to the importance of structures for the practical transmission of democracy. Delegations gave examples of student councils and parliaments. Union leaders said that their organisations are some of the most democratic in society. They enable their members to acquire skills sets in democratic practice.
- A key intervention came from Ukraine. A union leader said that Russia's war against Ukraine had been the most important challenge to democracy. There is a brain drain of young people. She emphasised that it is vital to support the encouragement of young people to be teachers.



### Box 4. Key takeaways from sub-theme 3

- The principle of equity should serve to maximise the achievement of all children and young people and should be reflected in school curricula.
- Students need to feel empowered in taking ownership of their learning. Optimistic agency is key to increase students' well-being and support them in finding their way in a complex world.
- There is a consensus that teachers are fundamental to the leadership of learning and should feel empowered to do so.
- A sharp focus on student learning, agency and knowledge can be crucial in the defence of democracy. A well-informed population is the most important defence against anti-democratic forces.

### Plenary 3. The discussion.

New Zealand and Sweden opened the session as Discussion Starters. **New Zealand** explained that her country's education system is child centred. It is a system based on equity which seeks to raise achievement for all. New Zealand described the government's reform package. It includes an internationally benchmarked, knowledge rich curriculum, full government resourcing, multi-year professional development for all educators with accredited providers, world leading assessment tools which were supplemented by new AI tools, and, for the first time, writing all pedagogical material and information in Māori at the same time as it is written in English. The system is informed by high aspirations for children and by placing them at the centre of the education system.

A union leader said there is a tension in the system. Young people didn't know what they don't know. There are limits to a child centred system because it is teachers who set out what should be learnt. Examples include learning about sexuality, relationships, and a comprehensive history of New Zealand. Other potential barriers include streaming, gender, class, disability and ethnicity. Culture is not left at the school gates. Māori children should be educationally successful as Amoriri. Barriers to achievement could also include a lack of support in the classroom.

Making a child centred curriculum didn't mean that children are in charge of the curriculum. Children wanted respect, a sense of belonging, to be seen and to be valued. The question, she asked, is how can we achieve this in a meaningful way?

**Sweden** said that empowering children began in preschools. Adopting a truly student-centred approach could only take place in democratic societies. Young people need to be able to navigate a complex world including AI and fake news. Children acquiring reading skills is essential. In Sweden, there is a reading crisis with one in four children being unable to read properly. Early interventions combined with better learning conditions are essential. It is not necessary to focus too much on student centred approaches. It could be counterproductive if students managed their learning too much.

Teachers are the most important leaders in learning environments. Everything begins with teachers. Sweden has enshrined teachers' responsibility to lead teaching in schools in legislation. Teacher training is being reformed. Its focus is on training in reading, writing and counting. Sweden wants to see children walking around with books not iPads, and with far less screen time for younger pupils.

A union leader said that everything begins with teachers. She agreed that teachers must be the most important leaders in learning environments. All begins with teachers, she believed. Teachers try to reach every child. However, they face an overwhelming workload. Only when they have the right conditions to work in, could children be put at the centre of learning. Teachers need dedicated planning time, opportunities for professional development and resources for support staff. Teachers must first be empowered, if they are to teach and guide students.

**United Kingdom Wales** described learners as being at the centre of shaping their learning with their voices being heard in policy making. In fact, children's rights are legally enshrined in law. This participation model also extends to enshrining its social partnership approach in law. It also aligns with Wales' approach to well-being which is about fostering a real sense of belonging.

A delegate from Wales described the advantages of living in a small nation. It enables people to face challenges together. Wales' education system is self-improving and is continuing to extend its offer. Schools face political challenges about their role in society. Now is the time to work together.



**Latvia** said that there were growing political tensions in the world which required teachers to adapt and strengthen their skills. The national curriculum should include social and emotional competences and media literacy. Faced with the machinery of hybrid attacks the reasonable response is education which involves the practical transmission of democracy. In Latvia youth engagement is a reality. There is a national student council which discusses the political situation which involves the elections of 16-17- year-olds.

A union leader from **Germany** said institutions needed to be able to create democratic structures. It is important to foster a sense of student agency with their voices heard. Student councils have been established. Hearing the voices of parents and the community is also important, and teacher agency needs strengthening. Educators should be able to tackle fake news. Teachers working with civil society organisations is a positive concept. However, teachers need to be able to foster democracy and not be martyrs. They should be able to have more time to take up these issues, however this is being made problematic by the massive teacher shortage Germany is facing.

**Estonia** described trust in democratic institutions as eroding. Yet schools continued to uphold democratic decision making. Estonia emphasised that civic education goes beyond textbooks. Teachers in autonomous schools have the capacity to take this on. Several countries had referred to disinformation and fake news. Democratic participation is therefore becoming a challenge. Teaching ethics is about understanding fairness and the difference between right and wrong. A union leader identified three piers which described the conditions teachers needed: knowledge, support and motivation.

**Finland** said that legislation had established student councils. However, student councils need guidance by teachers as the quieter and shyer students were not necessarily heard. Participation needs to be taught. There is a need to support participation in schools, youth and society. Students should be able to experience inclusion rather than isolation. Hobbies in the home and youth services are also important.

**Poland** described similar challenges as other countries. Students often feel over controlled and rejected by the older generation. Misinformation and troubles now dominated geo-politically. Students therefore need the most powerful tools. Two new subjects are being introduced: civic education and health education. Students need the skills and capacity to counter misinformation and populism. A more active younger generation is needed.

A union leader said that a democratic platform for students must be practical. Teachers should be prepared for organising such a community including ways in which to question and learn.



A union leader from **Iceland** said that students needed to start early. Questions needed to be asked in schools about how we were doing with democracy? The policy of schools in Reykjavik is to bring in the voices of children. Schools need to learn how to find different voices. One technique is to draw from the hat to find different voices. Some children are not yet ready to speak.

Democracy is about giving away power, in this case to children. Students need to learn how to guide discussion and to be able to deal with power. The voices of students need to be stronger in order to balance the voices of parents.



**The Czech Republic** said that in the past the country had not recognised that school was a joint venture for children. It had now established school parliaments. The Czech Republic has a curriculum orientated project on democratic values. The voices of children are now not just heard in schools but in nationwide politics. Students are being surveyed. A pedagogical institute is helping equality of access of children to non-formal education including summer camps.

A union leader emphasised that school parliaments brought added value and are popular. The idea is that if you want to change things, you should be part of the process. Parliaments could be a mere decoration unless value is given to the people in them.

**Australia** said there was an issue with teachers dropping electives in democracy and civics teaching. There is now a policy to reverse this development. Civics need to be made a cross curricular priority. More professional development is needed in teaching civics. There is a value in student parliaments. Just as newspapers ask lawmakers why they aren't taking certain actions so should students. He acknowledged that this is difficult but necessary.

**Spain** and a union leader said that how the school curriculum was applied is essential. It needs to reach every child. Schools councils and civics programmes are very important. The voice of every child needs to be heard.

**Andreas Schleicher** made the point that knowledge and power complement each other. There needs to be the right mix between student orientated and teacher orientated approaches. Estonia had achieved this by balancing academic achievement, a growth mindset and democratic engagement.

Many young people, he said, grew up with only one view of the world. Over half believed there is only one answer. Science could not be taught like religion. Science should always be about questioning. There should be an openness to different versions of the truth. The best predictor of the quality of this openness is the quality of support from teachers. Teaching is a relational process. Young people believe that looking after the environment is important to them.

However, there is real evidence of an agency gap. Less than 20% of young people are optimistic that they can make a difference in changing the environment for the better, but Andreas Schleicher emphasised, it was knowledge that drove a sense of agency.

**David Edwards**, General Secretary of Education International, reminded the Summit about Greta Thunberg who organised global action on climate change. She illustrated that student agency can lead to governments and education systems responding.

**Becky Pringle**, President of the National Education Association speaking for Education International, gave her views on the situation in the United States. As the United States moves away from the democratic process, educators are agreeing with comments about centring students in learning about democracy. Education International believes two pillars should inform views on student participation. Students needed to be empowered. Students should take ownership of their learning. Teachers needed be able to listen to their students, and students needed safe, inclusive spaces so that they feel welcomed. Students therefore should be on school boards. She gave an example of action taken by the United Teachers of Los Angeles which had won money for programmes supporting black students' achievement.



**Norway** said that education systems had a crucial role in strengthening democratic values. Changes to legislation had been specific about strengthening democracy in schools. Schools are legally required to encourage student agency. The key word is balance. A well-informed population is the most important defence against anti-democratic forces. It is knowledge that makes countries resilient. In Norway there is an age limit of fifteen, below which they cannot use social media.



A delegate from **Switzerland** emphasised that democracy could not be taken for granted. Social media and AI are playing an increasing role. Neither promotes democracy. In establishing a school culture, participation means creating its own learning culture. Teachers need training in how to teach respect. Schools should have autonomy to create autonomous cultures.

**Lithuania** said that young people need not just to be heard but to be involved. Student participation means focussing on communication and emotional skills. Students should be active partners who contributed to active policy making. The targets for achieving participation in mainstream schools of students with special educational needs are being exceeded. The average age of teachers in Lithuania is over 50. It is therefore not easy for teachers to adapt to change. Professional development is the best form of support. It is important to trust teachers and support them.

A union leader explained that more than three hundred union members are taking part in training on improving teacher competence which is being led by colleagues from Singapore.

A union leader from **Singapore** emphasised the importance of strong classroom communities. If they are not strong, relationship building is not going to happen. What happens outside the classroom is very important. Parents themselves teach their children. Empowered school leaders should empower teachers who should then be able to empower students. There are dangers but without empowerment, relationship building is not going to happen.

**Singapore** said it is important to encourage students to express well informed views based on knowledge. Students should be encouraged to express views which are well-reasoned, responsible and sensitive. Learning how to acquire social skills, respect opinion and understand different perspectives is very important for Singapore.

A union leader from **Denmark** highlighted the importance of democratic systems in schools. It is very important that teachers should be able to contribute to the development of human democratic education. And it is a professional ideal of Danish teachers that they should contribute to students' social development. There are questions which should be asked. How are you as a teacher? How is teachers' well-being? Are teachers enthusiastic? Are teachers capable of talking to students? Do teachers have the time and space to teach? Do teachers listen carefully to students? There needs to be more focus on the teachers' abilities to act democratically he concluded.

In praising the quality of the discussion, **Katrín Jakobsdóttir**, asked what was better, good autocratic leaders or bad democratic leaders? Her choice is the latter since they could be removed.

The **United Kingdom England** emphasised the importance of ensuring that every child in every community developed their own creativity. Progress needs to be underpinned by a range of digital and listening skills. England is focussing on developing a rich curriculum. Students getting involved in a range of creative subjects is empowering. Those subjects need unlocking. A National Centre for the Arts and Music Education is being established. The government is working with a panel of experts to enrich the curriculum. A union leader welcomed



the fact that England now had a government which cared for education. It is difficult to bring about a change of culture. She believed a social partnership model would bring this about.

A union leader from **Germany** said that while children needed to be able to choose the way they learnt, teachers are key and they need the time, backing and support of society.



A union leader from **Australia** supported the idea of democratic structures in schools. To have genuine inclusive education, students need to be able to talk about the community in which they live. However, Australia had seen the introduction of a prescriptive curriculum and testing. How could the engagement of teachers in developing critical thinking develop if teachers are being told what to teach and say?

It was important for teachers to be able to respond to needs rather than feeling restricted. She understood there needed to be frameworks. She cited examples of what she believed teachers were not being allowed to teach. They included climate change, conflicts and gender issues. An active engagement is needed in a broader context within inclusive school systems.

A delegate from **Hong Kong (China)** asked, how do we empower children? Hong Kong (China) has a three-tiered model for using technology in education. Its government is looking to the high school sector to introduce technology and roll out the AI curriculum. Universities are picking up this role by training the trainers. Its aim is for teachers to empower their peers. It is looking at new ways of personalising learning. Teachers are working with the government to empower education workers in the use of technology.

**The Faroe Islands** said that it placed an emphasis on listening to children's voices. It believes in fostering democratic values in schools through the idea of active citizenship. Its education system seeks to create an environment where children are partners in their own learning. The focus is on strengthening student councils. They can help the creation of the next generation of forward-thinking citizens. A union leader did not believe that schools were democratic yet. Teachers need to be empowered. Democratic society starts in the classroom. There is a need to empower teachers. As part of learning about democracy students need to learn about trade unions.

A union leader from **Iceland** reminded the Summit that engagement in democratic processes meant that decisions could not be dictated. He wasn't sure that all students would say yes to the idea of democracy. We do not need the democratic process to be about box ticking. It was important to listen to children's voices. Democracy means discussion.

**Norway** was concerned about attacks on democracy. They come from social media, big technology, fake news and conspiracy theories. Students should be given systematic training about how to take part in debate. Educators should ask, what can we do actively together to counter attacks on democracy?

A union leader from **Ukraine** emphasised that she believed that the Russian war against Ukraine is the greatest challenge to democracy. She reminded the Summit that many young people had been deported to Russia. They are being brainwashed. The threat is that Ukraine is disappearing, and Russia is expanding. It is vital that this challenge is met. It is very important to keep young people within Ukraine. There is a brain drain. The conditions need to be created for the realisation of young people's potential including young people to be teachers.



The union has a sectoral agreement with the Ministry. With the support of Education International its trade union centre is being reconstructed. It will help create opportunities for the professional development of teachers and opportunities for the nation.

A union leader from **Latvia** said that the curriculum had been discussed with social partners and included topics such as the conditions for social dialogue. The trade union confederation is offering a competition for students in upper secondary and vocational education on the best examples of civic engagement. This is in order that students are able to be informed, active, able to participate and know their rights. The union had also created a council for young teachers.

**Katrín Jakobsdóttir** then returned to the discussion starters for their final reflections.

**New Zealand** said that knowledge must underpin student agency. The OECD's view that the key issue was the quality of the teacher in front of the child should be supported. The knowledge curriculum should not be about prescription; it is a framework which teachers can work within. New Zealand believes that trust must be accompanied by accountability. It is vital to know how much progress in learning children have made. Formative assessment is vital. The country had been flying blind for the last thirty years on this issue.

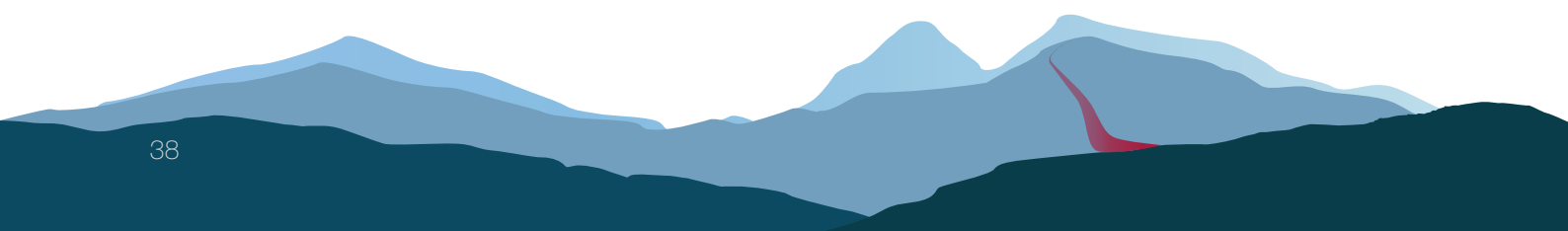
A union leader said he recognised that geopolitical concerns were influencing views on democracy. The discussion of democracy is not an abstract thought project. Trade unions are the most democratic organisations in the country. Because teachers participate in their unions, they have the skills set to teach students about democracy. The discussion should be about trust and support. Every child needs to be able to maximise their potential.



**Sweden** said that the country faced a crisis in situation in relation to students' role in the classroom. Ninety-six percent of teachers believe that, because of an overemphasis on children's rights, students should have little or no say in the classroom. They said that students believe that democracy is about getting your own way and not listening to other people in the room.

Sweden said it is vital that the focus in primary schools should be on children learning basic skills such as reading and writing. Twenty-five per cent of students at fifteen cannot not read properly. The threat to democracy arises from children not being able to read properly. If they cannot, they will be easy targets for fake news. Rather than increasing the focus on children's rights, the main focus should be on teaching basic skills.

A union leader concluded by saying that if we want to shape children's futures teachers need to be empowered.







## 5 | The ISTP 2025 Closing Session

The School Choir of Kársnessskóli heralded the closing session. Describing the songs **Katrín Jakobsdóttir** said that they were both extremely appropriate! The first was about the onset of Spring. The second was a song sung on May Day, traditionally the day celebrating workers.

Katrín then gave a short summary of the discussions in the three plenary sessions. She said the discussions had been extremely rich and stimulating. It was obvious countries shared aspirations and ambitions. There was a consensus in Session 1 that ECEC is critical to the success of children's future and the future of societies. It contributes to bridging the socio-economic gap, reducing inequalities and enabling children to succeed in later life. It also contributes to increasing countries' GDP. ECEC enables both parents to return to the labour market which is also good for gender equality. Obviously, investment in ECEC is a wise move. However, achieving comprehensive and effective early years education is not without its challenges. One example is the challenge of recruiting and retaining ECEC educators.

From Session 2, Katrín said it is clear that the well-being of students and the well-being of teachers are integral to each other. Schools are not only communities themselves but part of the wider community. They are not immune to society's challenges. Teachers and school leaders need to be trusted and supported. Students, teachers and school leaders need to be empowered.

Katrín described Session 3 as a conversation about democracy not only within schools but about learning how to participate democratically within the wider society. It should focus on how students can learn how to evaluate information and think critically about society, including the impact of technology on society. There is the challenge of stopping democratic institutions being eroded. There is a need for sound technological understanding and how teachers and students can



acquire technology skills. It is difficult for educators to keep up with the speed of technological development especially when students are learning in real time. Not only do we need to learn but there needs to be a strong ethical education accompanied by strong civics education.

In the pre-Summit seminar on AI, Katrín said, it was clear that AI was transforming ideas about knowledge, education, creativity and the arts. The question that arose was, how could we preserve humanity and human creativity?

Governments and educators need to work together to make sure new technology serves the interests of the common good. AI needs to serve as one of the tools in education not as its master.

Katrín concluded by saying that many challenges facing education are similar. Most countries are facing teacher shortages. Demands have never been stronger. Societies need to actively invest in education, not least in ECEC. They need to value public workers such as teachers and to create the conditions where teachers are supported by parents, communities and learners. Teachers are the central element in the transformation of education systems. Within the Summit, she concluded, there had been wonderful discussions and sincere dialogue between unions and Ministers. While there are huge challenges to face, strong education systems are key to meeting them.

### Country Commitments for 2025- 2026

Having met as delegations, countries described their agreed commitments for the coming year. The commitments appear in full in Appendix D.

Two features stand out in the country commitments. As requested by the host and co-hosts, the commitments are preceded by a short summary of the insights delegations had gained in the Summit plenaries and the pre-Summit seminar. They are overwhelmingly positive about what had been learnt.

The second feature of the commitments countries are that they draw closely from the discussion on the sub-themes in the three plenaries particularly in relation to the development of ECEC provision, the enhancement of student and teacher well-being, the relationship of digital technology and AI to education and democratic values, the expansion of education for democracy, the enhancement of educators' professional development and strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers.

In addition, several countries made specific commitments on funding and on expanding structures for social partnership.

### ISTP 2026

Estonia thanked Iceland for making the 2025 Summit such a success. It announced that it had accepted the invitation to host ISTP 2026 in Tallinn. The Summit would take place on March 8-11 2026. The title of its main theme would be, 'Switching Gears. Teachers and Learners in the Future Learning Environment.'

Strands of discussion would focus on how teaching could be redesigned, how cutting-edge technology could be included in education, how AI could be used in preparing teachers, and how the teaching profession could evolve particularly in relation to autonomy, trust and wellbeing.

Estonia extended a warm invitation to countries to attend.



**Katrín Jakobsdóttir** invited **Andreas Schleicher**, to give his closing remarks. She expressed her appreciation of his knowledge and ideas.



Andreas Schleicher said it had been a true privilege to attend the Summit. There had been answers and solutions created in an atmosphere of exchange and trust. The arguments for strengthening ECEC had been a hundred per cent about our future.

Latvia had been right. Early years education was children's first experience of education, and we had to get it right.

However, there was a long way to go. The ECEC sector is still fragmented. If he had one concern about the discussion it is that there could have been more commitment about the need for more resources. What societies perceive about commitment is important given that they ask who else is in the room?

Andreas highlighted South Africa's deep commitment to additional resources for ECEC. We need to ask what is it that we're trying to achieve and why? We should be more creative about how to align resources to actual needs. The discussion had shown that education is the first line of defence. He highlighted Singapore as a country that is making progress in this area.

He had found the second session the most inspirational. He explained that the expectations of teachers were growing by the day. We expect so much more of teachers than their job descriptions. A compassionate response is expected from teachers to so many needs. Teachers are expected to play a role in creating success in people's lives and have a social value.

Teachers' success in their own lives contributes to their well-being. There needs to be a balance between structures and professional autonomy. However, autonomy is about interdependence. It is also about, 'I do what I know is right in a collaborative culture.'

Sweden is right, Andreas said, schools cannot not solve all the problems of society. He pointed to the example of Singapore which had demonstrated its support for teachers by publishing public guidelines on schools' relationship with parents. They are about how to get parents on board. How we valued teachers, Andreas said, is about how we value our collective future.

Session three, demonstrated that knowledge and empowerment occupy two sides of the spectrum. Students need to be able to understand the world and their role within it.

Education systems need really good strategies to achieve this. The road map to educational progress is littered with badly implemented good ideas.

The value of the ISTPs only runs as far as the extent to which commitments are put into practice. He hoped that this is what ISTPs will be remembered for.

Andreas said that it is not easy for teachers. Capacity needs to be built, and work organisation changed. The right accountability measures which encourage innovation should be put in place. The collective mindset should be one of development rather than compliance. There is a need to tackle institutional structures which are currently often built around habits rather than meeting the needs of learners.

Teachers are expected to be design thinkers who spot trends. In fact, the biggest challenge to teachers is they have to learn about the future today which they want their students to live tomorrow. There is a need to understand what motivates parents and educators.



Andreas believed that the ISTPs creates alliances and coalitions, not command and control structures which undermine trust. In fact, creating trust is what they are all about.

He expressed his thanks to all who had participated in the Summit. He particularly wanted to thank Iceland as host. He also wanted to thank EI. The OECD, he said, is always at its best when it is working with EI.

**Katrín Jakobsdóttir** introduced Larry Flanagan who gave the closing remarks for Education International. He is currently the Chair of the OECD's Trade Union Advisory Committee on Education and Skills, formerly the General Secretary of the Education Institute of Scotland and still a practising teacher.



**Larry Flanagan** said that it was an impossible challenge to sum up such a rich Summit. He wanted to thank Andreas Schleicher and Haldis Holst for their excellent context setting.

Larry said he had been particularly struck by Andreas' comment that the reality is that children from socially and economically deprived backgrounds are not receiving sufficient high-quality early childhood education in most countries. He also noted his comment that education systems depended on the quality of their teachers.

He welcomed Haldis Holst's comments that teacher well-being is a pre-requisite for quality education. Larry highlighted Haldis' belief that pedagogical leadership from teachers in early years is possible because they were part of the team of early years workers.

Larry noted comments by Australia and Estonia about the importance of early years provision including Estonia's belief that that ECEC had been responsible for its success in PISA. He noted that there had been consensus in the plenary about the need to identify the necessary investment for ECEC provision.

Iceland, Larry said, is an excellent example of high quality ECEC provision. He noted that it was part of a broad Nordic model of such provision, and that ECEC's financing in the Nordic countries is proof of the saying that where there's a will, there's a way.

The second plenary illustrated that a strong sense of values is needed to underpin equity and well-being. His country Scotland was committed to inclusivity. He noted that teachers' commitment to education is sustained by moral purpose. In fact, while salaries are important, it is the moral purpose of teaching that makes the job attractive.

Larry said he particularly wanted to reference Ukraine's teachers. Their heroic efforts in continuing to teach, including by creating underground schools, illustrates that they are driven by moral purpose.

There had been an excellent discussion on the teaching of democracy in schools. He noted that countries such as Iceland, Latvia and Estonia are showing that democratic practices could be modelled. He thought that Poland's comment that children weren't digitally native but digitally naïve is a reminder to the Summit that children are children and that it is the role of parents and educators to nurture their growth.

Teaching, he said, is a relational activity. A clip from one of the Summit's videos, in which a child said that what was important is that that sometimes teachers give you a hug, is an illustration that children need emotional hugs.

Teachers face real challenges around professional freedom. Both teachers and children need the freedom to teach and learn without fear.

Larry concluded by saying that there had been really fruitful discussions in the Summit. He thanked Iceland for hosting an excellent Summit. He thanked Iceland's planning team for its hard work and for organising at least fourteen planning meetings. He also thanked Andreas Schleicher for his partnership approach to the Summit and EI. Above all Larry said he wanted to thank all those who had attended the Summit and made it such a success.

He finished by thanking John Bangs from EI. ISTP 2025 was John's last Summit. His commitment to the Summits from their inception had been unparalleled. Prior to being the Rapporteur for the last two Summits he had been the representative of EI at the centre of the Summits' organisation from the beginning.

On behalf of the **Icelandic** host, **Magnús Þór Jónsson** said that John had been one of the key persons in the Summits. He said he wished to give a token of gratitude to John on behalf of Iceland. It is a carving of a European Golden Plover which is an Icelandic national treasure. It is the harbinger of Spring and had been first spotted on the last day of the Summit!



Replying, **John Bangs** thanked Larry and Magnús for their kind and generous comments. He said he would treasure his gift. He highlighted the massive and valuable commitment of all the ISTP host countries to the Summits over the years. He also wanted to thank all the education officials, the 'hidden geniuses', who had made the Summits such a success over the years. They had never created red line barriers to what was possible. John thanked David Edwards and Andreas Schleicher for their crucial partnership in creating the Summits. He concluded by thanking all the Ministers and teacher unions who had attended the Summits, and Iceland for making ISTP 2025 one of the best.

**Magnús Þór Jónsson** then thanked the ISTP Planning Group. Some had said that holding the Summit in Iceland was ambitious if not crazy. He couldn't have been prouder of the Summit's success. It had been important to bring the Nordic countries together including the Faroe Islands. One country was missing, and that was Greenland. He wanted to spotlight Iceland's solidarity with Greenland in light of recent comments coming from authorities in the US which undermined the country and its community.

He noted that there had been no representatives from the United States at the Summit. The US had been greatly missed but he wanted to acknowledge and thank Becky Pringle, President of the NEA and Randi Weingarten President of the AFT for coming to the Summit.

He urged countries not to follow the path of isolation. In concluding, Magnús thanked Katrín Jakobsdóttir for her successful moderation of the Summit. He concluded by thanking all the participants at the Summit for actively participating.

As Moderator **Katrín Jakobsdóttir** then concluded the Summit. She said that it was obvious that education is one of the most important tools we have to ensure equality and prosperity. Investing in early childhood education is vital. It both strengthens the economy and enhances gender equality. There is an alliance of well-being for both teachers and students. She hoped the good relations and collaboration between Ministers and Unions would be taken back to their countries.

She had attended the 2012 ISTP in New York and had understood then their goal of creating continuing dialogue between Ministers and unions. She believed in strong inclusive education systems.

Katrín had been inspired to see everyone working together. She had thoroughly enjoyed working with the Ministry's staff and with the OECD and EI. It had been a great learning process. She thanked all participants for their involvement and participation and wished everyone a safe journey home.

### A Reflection on the ISTP 2025. John Bangs-Summit Rapporteur

The International Summits on the Teaching Profession are unique. To describe them as such is not an excessive use of hyperbole. No other event brings Education Ministers and Union Leaders together on the international stage.

The question is, why? For me the answer is that the ISTPs are an idea whose time has come and stayed. Ministries and teacher unions need each other to develop policies which are both strategic and successful. Yet there are precious few opportunities at national level for Ministers and unions to learn together from other countries. The Summits have created the golden opportunity for practical and blue skies educational thinking for both in partnership.

The second reason is that the Summits have focussed on the teaching profession itself. Professional issues have been front and centre in every Summit discussion and time is spent exploring them. This can be rare at national level where short agenda driven meetings between Ministers and teacher unions on immediate issues are often standard practice.

Iceland's 2025 ISTP was quite simply a perfect example of a successful Summit. It demonstrated just how far the Summits have evolved. As the report shows, both Minister and Union leaders were very comfortable with each other taking turns in leading their countries' contributions. In some earlier Summits, delegates would have been counting the minutes each side had used up!

Both Ministers and union leaders were also prepared to speak outside their comfort zones and recognise their own responsibilities in meeting challenges. There was very little if any grandstanding. The discussion was genuinely iterative and productive.

The discussion on early years provision emphasised just how essential countries believe comprehensive early years provision is to their social and economic success. The Summit's unambiguous recognition of this was a first.

It was impressive to witness delegates' preparedness to dig deep into the contentious relationship between technology and AI and students' well-being and raise edgy issues about students' skills and culture.

The discussion on the porosity of schools with their communities genuinely took thinking forward, as was the related discussion on responding to the diverse needs of students. How to tackle and learn from violent student behaviour on the one hand and on the other, how to encourage other students to emerge from invisibility and become active members of their school communities were issues that were discussed head on.

Permeating the Summit was the positive nature of pluralism itself, whether it was reflected in the respect for different views which characterised Summit discussions or on the need to uphold and enhance democratic values in society.

The range of countries at this year's Summit were unique, with a genuinely global representation, an almost complete representation of the Nordic countries and, worth noting from my point of view, the UK fielding Ministerial representation from its four countries for the first time!



Every Summit host country has made sure that the production of its Summit matched its importance. Iceland's attention to every organisational detail as well as to ensuring the smooth running of Summit proceedings could not have been bettered.

I've attended every Summit since their inception. They are a good example of seed corning an initiative which has then grown independently. The United States' contribution to founding the Summits should be remembered and I hope it returns. Yet despite the United States' recent absences from the Summits the ISTPs have evolved and grown.



The role of the OECD and Educational International as Summit co-hosts has been crucial in establishing continuity and without the commitment of the host countries the Summits would not exist. As a result of this highly effective tripartite relationship, the International Summits on the Teaching Profession are now one of the highest profile and essential educational events in the international calendar.

I profoundly believe that the Summits are a model of creative social partnership and collaboration-and vital for the future of education. ISTP 2025 was the last Summit in which I will be actively involved. I could not have had a better Summit in which to say farewell than in Iceland. And this year's ISTP could not have been in better hands.

So, this just leaves me to give my very best wishes to Estonia for its ISTP in 2026 and to all future Summit hosts.



# ISTP 2025 Children's voices



Opening Session



Session 1



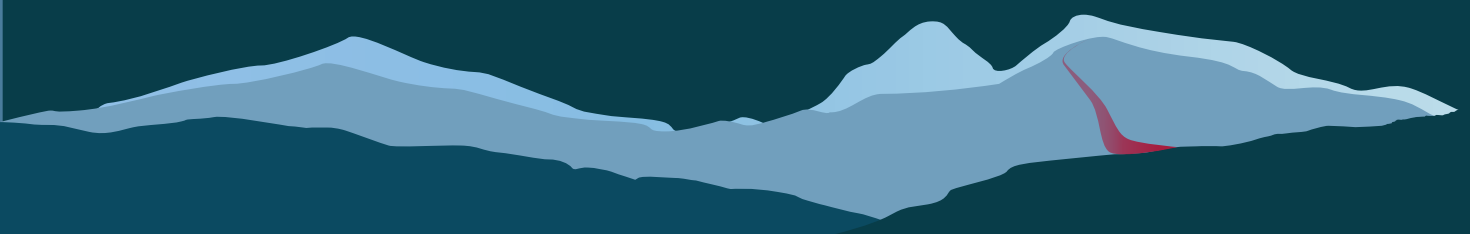
Session 2



Session 3



Closing Session



# A | Appendix A: ISTP 2025 Programme

## Pre-Summit — Monday 24 March

### 09:00 - 09:45 Icelandic education system and policy

Recent developments in the Icelandic education system and policy – setting the scene for the school visits

10:00 Departure from Harpa to school visits

### 10:30 - 11:45 School visits

11:45 - 12:00 Departure from schools to Harpa

12:00 - 13:00 Buffet lunch

### 13:15 - 15:00 Pre-Summit seminar — Exploring the frontiers of AI in education

13:15 - 13:17 Introduction by Katrín Jakobsdóttir, former Prime Minister of Iceland

13:17 - 13:27 Scene-setting from Andreas Schleicher, OECD

13:27 - 13:37 Scene-setting from Randi Weingarten, Education International

13:37 - 14:20 Small group discussions

Each table was invited to examine one of the guidelines & guardrails, using the guiding questions:

- How has your country followed this guideline?
- What are some of the challenges of implementing this guideline, and why?
- If we were to develop a new version of the guidelines and guardrails, what should we focus on?
- Where do countries see value in further work at the international level on AI in education?

14:20 - 14:55 Facilitated open discussion

14:55 - 15:00 Final remarks by the moderator

15:00 - 15:15 Refreshments

### 15:15 - 17:00 ISTP briefing by Education International and the Icelandic Teachers' Union on the programme and the main topics of the Summit (EI affiliates only)

19:30 - 21:30 Welcome reception for all participants Harpa - Hnoss – Ground floor

## Summit Day 1 – Tuesday 25 March

- 08:45 - 09:15** Morning reception for ministers and union leaders (HOD and HOD+1 only)
- 09:30 - 11:30** Opening session (Open to the media and streamed)
- 11:30 - 11:45 Refreshments
- 11:45 - 12:00** Official photograph of the ministers (family photo)
- 12:00 - 13:00 Buffet lunch
- 13:00 - 15:00** Session 1 - Building a foundation for equitable and inclusive education: The role of high-quality early childhood education and care
- 15:00 - 15:15 Refreshments
- 15:15 - 17:15** Session 2 - Supporting educators to foster equity and well-being: How well-established services enable educators to promote inclusive, supportive learning environments
- 19:30 - 21:30** Ministerial dinner, Ministers only — Harpa - La Primavera Restaurant 4th floor
- 19:30 - 21:30** Trade union leaders event, EI affiliates only — UPPI, located above The Fish Market, Aðalstræti 12, 101 Reykjavík

## Summit Day 2 – Wednesday 26 March

- 09:00 - 11:00** Session 3 - The educator's role in child-centred education systems: Empowering young people to actively participate in shaping their futures
- 11:00 Refreshments
- 11:00 - 12:00** Working session / Country delegations' meetings
- 11:30 - 12:00** Press conference with the organisers
- 12:00 - 13:00 Ministerial and trade union leaders lunch / Buffet lunch for delegates
- 13:00 - 15:00** Closing session (Open to the media and streamed)
- 15:00 Refreshments
- 15:45 / 16:00 Optional excursion



## **B |** Appendix B: List of Heads of Delegations

### **Australia**

Mr Blair Boyer  
Minister for Education, Training and Skills

### **Czech Republic**

Mr Jaroslav Miller  
Deputy Minister for Education, Youth and Sports

### **Denmark**

Mr Mattias Tesfaye  
Minister for Children and Education

### **Estonia**

Ms Kristina Kallas  
Minister of Education and Research

### **Finland**

Mr. Anders Adlercreutz  
Minister of Education

### **Germany**

Ms Simone Oldenburg  
Minister for Education and Daycare Facilities

### **Iceland**

Mr Guðmundur Ingi Kristinsson  
Minister of Education and Children

### **Latvia**

Ms Dace Melbārde  
Minister for Education and Science

### **Lithuania**

Mr Jonas Petkevičius  
Vice-Minister of Education, Science and Sport

### **New Zealand**

Ms Erica Stanford  
Minister of Education

### **Norway**

Ms Kari Nessa Nordtun  
Minister of Education

### **Poland**

Ms Barbara Nowacka  
Minister of National Education

### **Singapore**

Mr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman  
Second Minister for Education and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Spain**

Mr Abelardo De La Rosa Díaz  
Secretary of State for Education

### **Sweden**

Ms Lotta Edholm  
Minister for Schools

### **Switzerland**

Mr Armin Hartmann  
Minister of Education

### **United Kingdom and devolved governments**

Ms Catherine McKinnell  
Minister of State for School Standards

Mr Paul Givan  
Minister of Education Northern Ireland

Ms Jennifer Gilruth  
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Scotland

Ms Lynne Neagle  
Cabinet Secretary for Education, Wales

## Special observers

### Faroe Islands

Mr Djóni Nolsøe Joensen

Minister of Children and Education. Ministry of Children and Education

### Hong Kong (China)

Ms Yuk Lin Choi

Secretary for Education

### Slovak Republic

Mr Tomáš Drucker

Minister of Education, Research, Development and Youth

### South Africa

Ms Siviwe Gwarube

Minister for Basic Education

### Ukraine

Mr Yevhen Kudriavets

First Deputy Minister of Education and Science

## Host and Co-hosts

### Iceland

Mr Guðmundur Ingi Kristinsson

Minister of Education and Children

### Education International

Mr Mugwena Malueke

President of Education International

### OECD

Mr Andreas Schleicher

Director for Education and Skills

## C | Appendix C: An Analysis of Countries' Reports on Progress made in Implementing Commitments made at ISTP 2024

Last year's Summit commitments made by countries were rich and varied. There are a number of themes which emerge from progress made in achieving those commitments.

A recent focus of previous Summits has been on the impact of Artificial Intelligence on Teaching and Learning, with AI being a major theme at the 2024 Summit.

**Singapore** has further developed its Transforming Education Through Technology Master Plan. Its Student Learning Space is now enhanced by AI enabled features which provide both feedback to students and real time analyses of student responses in class and post homework discussions. Students are supported by self-paced SLS modules.

**Spain** is acting to incorporate AI in schools to improve teacher and student competencies and well-being and reduce bureaucracy. This includes collaborating with regional education administrations to offer teachers training and resources and offering a guide with case studies on the use of AI in schools. It reports that further work is needed on incorporating AI into teacher training.

Within the context of its 2025 Public Service AI Framework **New Zealand** is introducing AI into Education. For example, there a Maths and Pangua tutoring trial has been introduced for years 7 and 8. The Ministry has worked with Education Stakeholders to develop guidance and resources on how genAI can be used safely, ethically and appropriately. Resources have been published which show how AI can be used for student assessment alongside practical studies on AI use. This is supported by an IT initiative, Safer Technologies in Schools, which assesses AI products.

**Estonia** has established an AI Implementation Council. Its programme AI Leap, which aims to give teachers free access to the world's AI Learning Applications, starts this September.

**The Czech Republic** has established a digital well-being group to support schools. It has also widened the digital learning offer for teachers and drawn on the support of ICT Experts.

**Denmark** is carrying out ongoing work on strengthening students' abilities to reflect critically on technology by developing a new subject, 'Technology Comprehension' for primary and secondary schools.

In **Ireland** the Department of Education and teacher unions are actively exploring the role of AI assessment particularly for senior school students. It is seeking to ensure through professional learning networks that teachers acquire AI skills. There is also a particular focus on improving training and lifelong learning in STEM subjects.

**China's** main focus on Digitalisation and AI in education has been through the development of its Smart Education Platform of China.

**Germany**, through KMK and the unions have agreed a Digital Pact 2.0 involving the investment 5 billion euros from the Lander and Federal governments which will improve the digital infrastructure in schools provide teachers with further training and promote the development of innovative teaching. The unions are participating in dialogue in the National Education Dialogue alliance and semi-annual presidium and contributing an agreement paper on extending digitalisation.

Steps to enhance teacher learning and training also feature in the progress reports. At the core of **China's** IT in education development is its Smart Education Platform of China involving 25 million teacher trainees with 4500 primary and secondary teachers being involved in special science programmes. These are carried out in liaison with China's

Academies of Science and Engineering. There are teaching training sections for basic to higher education teachers within the Education Platform. 1000 digital resources and 291 new online training studios for primary and secondary teachers have been launched.

A work plan for international educational exchanges for teachers is being promoted. Examples of this approach are International Teacher Training and Promotion Plans including plans for a Global Teacher Development Institute. A recent example of this approach has been a teacher exchange to Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

**Iceland's** revision of its initial teacher training and professional development programmes is based on the comprehensive competence framework set out in its 2020 Education Act. The framework provides guidance to teacher education institutions on revising learning outcomes and teacher qualifications. It reports that the institutions have undertaken a thorough revision which is advancing effectively.

Iceland's National Action Plan for Teacher Recruitment has led to an increase in teacher training enrolment and a 150% increase in newly qualified teachers graduating from teacher training programmes.

**Singapore's** Professional Learning Eco system now includes; Networked Learning Communities, the Singapore Teaching Practice model, and the AI in Education Ethics Framework. The Smart Nation Educator Fellowship provides experts who advise on students' digital proficiency. Teacher competency in designing student learning experiences within Singapore's 21CC programme are being enhanced by professional development.

**The Czech Republic** is focussing on improving teacher training quality by improving training materials, establishing working groups and creating teacher mentors. It is also developing teacher learning in digital well-being and cyber security.

With Universities, **Spain** has developed a framework of professional competencies for teachers which it is reviewing with education unions. It is creating a working group, which is co-ordinated with autonomous communities and unions, to update the teacher training curriculum.

With all partners including Unions, New Zealand is legislating and working through its Teaching Council to strengthen its initial teacher education provision. Measures include; raising entry standards, introducing core teaching tasks in ITE and aligning ITE with current curricular reforms. A dedicated Ministry programme is now marketing ITE to raise the attractiveness of teaching.

**New Zealand** has also invested in growing its school onsite training programme, expanded its Maori Medium Employment Based ITE to support untrained teachers to become fully qualified, and continued its Teach First NZ programme.

**New Zealand** also aims to secure teacher retention by supporting beginning teachers through a better jobs programme and a Maori Medium Beginning Teacher Retention Programme. New Zealand is supporting leadership development through its leadership advisory service, Principal Development Map and an integrated package of support. Finally, its Teaching Council has strengthened the mathematics entry requirements for student teachers in primary education and provided bridging courses to support students.

**Germany** through the KMK and Unions are creating a joint framework for the qualification of single subject teachers, a dual teacher programme and a Masters degree for Bachelor graduates in subjects in subjects with a high teaching demand. Training will become more practice and career orientated. It has adopted guidelines covering the responsibilities of school principals on inclusion, digitalisation, and the diversity of students.

In its report **Finland** has given a high profile to the development of Early Childhood Education and Care provision. Progress includes new funding for ECEC training in Universities, an alliance between six cities to pilot purchasing ECEC programmes from Universities and a proposal to develop ECEC leadership.

**Sweden** is focussing on enhancing basic knowledge in the curriculum for ECEC children and its schools inspectorate is reviewing early years' and primary pupils' access to learning materials.



**Ireland** is expanding its after-school and childcare provision in tandem with its school buildings programme.

Countries reported progress in their commitments on VET and future ready competences. **Finland** is taking steps to unify the VET supply chain. This involves identifying and increasing funding for students needing low-threshold learning support and updating Finland's core curriculum. It is also committed to new VET programmes for enhancing student knowledge.

**Estonia** reports that its decision to raise the school leaving age to eighteen will be accompanied by the modernisation of VET. Its aim is to ensure that around half of Estonia's young people are in vocational schools.

**Germany** through KMK and Unions plan to adopt in 2025, the Global Orientation Framework Ico-operation project between KMK and the Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development- Education for Sustainable Development in the upper secondary school level. This will provide a framework for schools and school textbook publishers and teacher training. Germany through KMK and the Unions has agreed a recommendation on encouraging innovative learning for sustainable development.

Improving teachers' working conditions and retention, by enhancing teachers' career opportunities and salaries and by reducing teacher workload, features in country progress reports.

**Iceland's** actions to tackle teacher shortages and enhance retention have led to an agreement with Unions to enhance compensation packages for teachers. A framework for reassessing the teaching profession includes improving teacher working conditions and allocating additional resources to schools to maintain quality.

Collaborating with key stakeholders Iceland is working on a comprehensive Bill on Inclusive Education. By providing enhanced and integrated services to schools Iceland believes it will also improve teacher retention.

**Estonia's** partnership agreement covers teacher retention.

**The Czech Republic** is piloting a teacher career system.

**Finland** is reviewing staff retention in ECEC. It is starting negotiations with Unions and Regional Authorities to address the reform of the teaching profession and improve working conditions and the quality of education.

Legislation is being drawn up in **Sweden** to improve safe work in schools alongside proposals to regulate teachers' time and reduce administrative tasks.

**Spain** is starting negotiations with Unions and Regional Authorities to address the reform of the teaching profession and improve working conditions and the quality of education.

Some country progress reports show that their reforms are deep and system wide and that there are additional financial actions to implement them. **Sweden** has six national enquires which are either ongoing or just completed. They focus on; developing a new curriculum, the VET skills supply, a new school grade and merit system, municipalities' ability to fund schools and a new voucher standard system, limits on profit withdrawals by independent providers and reducing teacher workload.

**Finland** has identified significant specific funding for; implementing low threshold learning support, implementing early childhood support, subsidising municipalities to implement ECEC reforms, increasing the number and training of special needs teachers, increasing the number of weekly lessons per year, and improving ECEC teacher training.

Improving equity and quality features strongly in the progress reports. In **Estonia** the aim is to reduce dropout rates reforming VET and extend the school leaving age to eighteen.

**Iceland's** Bill on inclusive education will create an Internal Services support system for schools to ensure the embedding of inclusive practices. External School Services will provide advisory support to schools on teaching, professional development, collaboration between families and schools, student counselling and assessments through local authorities.

**Iceland's** Education Directorate will co-ordinate these services through a national support framework. The Bill is pending submission to Parliament by the new government.

**Finland** has introduced discretionary grants from early years to lower secondary education to improve quality and equity focusing on inclusion and well-being. There will be special measures to raise the participation rate of immigrant children.

**Ireland** is prioritising diversity and inclusion in enhancing student access to STEM subjects particularly among girls.

**Ireland** is increasing the number of special schools and classes, SEN teachers and teaching assistants and expanding Early Intervention classes. It is establishing a new scheme to support schools with the highest level of disadvantage. It is expanding its summer programme for students with SEN and Home School Community Liaison Scheme.

Ireland is reviewing and enhancing educational support for Traveller and Roma students.

**Germany** through KMK and Unions has adopted a focus on good skills in reading writing and arithmetic and on the socio-emotional development of children while stressing the importance of multi-professional teams.

Curricular reforms feature in some reports.

**Singapore** has set up workshops on creating effective curriculum leadership and has strengthened its guidance on enhancing teacher competence in designing learning experiences drawing on its 21CC programme.

**Sweden** is committed to supporting the green transition through a strategy for teaching STEM subjects. It describes progress on creating a new curriculum which focuses on creating better conditions for students' learning.

**New Zealand** has created on-site training programmes for student teachers and schools on implementing its knowledge rich curriculum.

A number of countries made commitments on different forms of partnership.

The discussion at the ISTP 2024 about how to develop partnership working throughout the Education system led to developments in the creation of partnerships in a number of countries.

**Estonia** is developing an overarching partnership agreement between its Education Ministry, Teacher Unions, School Principals and School Owners which covers a range of issues including teacher career opportunities, salaries and workload.

**Singapore** is focusing on developing partnerships for student learning with parents and industry.

**Spain** is acting to strengthen collaborative institutions within the Education system through the strengthening of state and regional school councils by opening up negotiations between them on the reform of the teaching profession. It is also strengthening its Territorial Cooperation Plans with its Regions through its Sectoral Conference on Education.

In implementing its joint commitment with teacher unions to creating a better balance between practical and theoretical teaching and strengthening students' ability to reflect critically on technology, **Denmark** organised a post Summit joint Ministry / Educator Union roundtable last December. The discussion was opened by the OECD's Andreas Schleicher who described the competencies teachers needed to succeed in schools and wider society.

A key commitment in **Ireland's** Statement of Strategy action plan is to strengthen relationships with key education partners. Input from partners is sought on establishing creative initiatives in clusters of schools, expanding after school and childcare provision and developing a workforce plan for recruitment and retention.

## D | Appendix D: ISTP 2025 — Country commitments and key insights

### Australia

#### Key Insights

- The challenges confronting Australian schools are no different to those other countries are grappling with, including teacher shortages, student and teacher wellbeing, impact of technology, and the rise of disinformation. To address the impact of growing inequity, funding public schools is imperative to provide schools, teachers and students with the resources and support needed to address these challenges. The ISTP Summit has provided an important opportunity to share solutions and strategies implemented by countries as Australia focuses on three priority areas: equity and excellence, wellbeing for learning and engagement, and a strong and sustainable workforce.

#### Three Commitments

- Continuing the work to address the national teacher shortage by building a pipeline of teachers reflective of the Australian community, and to retain existing teachers, by supporting them to have rewarding and longstanding careers. Strategies and support should have regard to the recommendations of the United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession.
- Positive student and teacher wellbeing is critical to providing students, particularly those in priority equity cohorts, with appropriate support, experiences, high quality teaching and learning, and resources to positively and confidently engage in learning, which will result in improved academic achievement.
- Supporting student engagement by designing and implementing reforms in consultation with the profession, that promote greater student participation, attendance, inclusion, and/or enhanced school-family engagement.

### Czech Republic

#### Key Insights

- There is an urgent need to provide support to teachers, both material, such as competitive wages, adequate equipment, as well as non-material, such as supporting their well-being, further education and development, lowering the administrative burdens and creation of motivating environment.

#### Three Commitments

- provide further education and training to pedagogical staff to develop their competencies leading to individualization of education, cooperation between the teaching assistant and the teacher, and the cooperation between kindergartens and primary schools
- complete the process of reduction of high deferral entry rates (from 25 % to 5 %) to compulsory education and ensure the measure enters into force on September 1, 2026, and provide related measures in pre-primary and primary education
- emphasizing the reduction of administrative burdens and the enhancement of teachers' professional and personal well-being, so that teachers can devote themselves fully to their core teaching activities and respond effectively to the individual needs of their pupils

## Denmark

### Key Insights

- The discussions at ISTP have strengthened our focus on the importance of ensuring good human frameworks in classroom. This is to ensure that the school can fulfill its entire purpose clause.

### Three Commitments

The Danish Ministry of Children and Education and the Danish Educator Organizations' Council aim to strengthen their shared commitment to the development of quality education, focusing on the importance of highly skilled educational professionals:

- Focusing on initiatives that enhance the qualifications and professional development of ECEC professionals

We strive to ensure that the early childhood education and care settings are of a quality that ensures the development and well-being of all children. In the following years, we will focus on initiatives, such as targeted funding, that enhance the qualifications and professional development of ECEC professionals to ensure that more ECEC staff receive formal training. Building on the implementation of the minimum staff-child ratio the aim is to ensure that ECEC staff and leaders are well equipped to provide a supportive and equitable learning environment.

- Initiating a nationwide conversation about well-being of children and young people

Poor well-being among some groups of children and young people is a growing concern in Denmark. Educators and ECEC staff often find themselves in situations where they need to address challenges of student well-being lacking the necessary resources to address these challenges in their daily work. The Danish government has established a Commission for well-being of children and young people covering the age group 0-25 years, which has recently delivered its final recommendations. In the coming year, based on the Commission's recommendations, we will initiate a national dialogue on how we can better understand and address the challenges of children's and young people's well-being focusing on the role of - and the support for – educators and ECEC staff.

- Finally, we will follow up on ISTP 2025

In spirit of the continuing collaboration between the Danish Ministry of Children and Education and the Teacher Trade Unions a follow-up on ISTP 2025 event will take place.

## Estonia

### Key Insights

- Available and affordable high-quality early childhood education plays a crucial role in developing social-emotional skills and reducing socioeconomic gaps. Maintaining a high standard in early education is essential, which can be supported by linking it to teachers' salaries to ensure motivation and consistency in quality.

### Three Commitments

- We are committed to pedagogy-driven approach in integrating technology into education. We will roll out the AI-Leap program in upper secondary schools, ensuring that educational practices guide the use of technology for meaningful learning outcomes.
- We are committed to supporting the careers of school leaders and education professionals by implementing the teacher career model and the school leader competency model, fostering professionalism and strengthening leadership capacity.
- We are committed to supporting children's wellbeing by upholding and advancing democratic principles in teaching and in school management, ensuring a healthy and safe mental and physical environment.



## Finland

### Key Insights

- Equity, wellbeing, democracy and participation are all interlinked. All of those are challenged today due to societal and rapid tech changes. The role of school and teachers in defending them is more important today than ever.

### Three Commitments

- We are committed to ensuring that the continuum of early childhood education and care (ECEC), preschool education and comprehensive school enables a clear, age-based pedagogical basis for teachers. It is important that we have enough ECEC teachers and that ECEC as a whole is also adequately resourced.
- We are committed to close cooperation between the Ministry and the trade union, as we monitor the reform on learning support and consider how the legislation is implemented in pre-primary and basic education and how the additional state funding is used in municipalities. If we find that the law is not implemented as appropriate, we commit to correcting the shortcomings by clarifying the legislation.
- We commit to developing channels of influence so that a wider number of children and young people are heard when their views are asked for.

## Germany

### Key Insights

- Well-being of teachers and students and students' achievement go hand in hand.
- Democratic participation should be strengthened in the classroom. Critical reflection gains importance as a key competence.
- Teachers and principals need the backing by governments, parents and society at large.

### Three Commitments

- We create the foundations for early, individual and talent-oriented support for all children, thus promoting the social participation of all people in the long term. We enable children to experience transitions as positive steps in the course of lifelong learning and, to this end, strengthen important conditions for success, such as educational partnerships and cooperation between educational institutions.

On the basis of jointly developed qualification requirements, we create attractive qualification offers for educational professionals. By creating appropriate framework conditions as well as personal development and career prospects, we increase the attractiveness of the profession, which also leads to an increased retention of professionals in the field.

- By deploying multi-professional teams, we create task-related and individual differentiation opportunities that enable teachers to concentrate on pedagogical and conceptual work while contributing to the sustainable support of the health of teachers and all those involved in the school. Combining clear objectives and development opportunities with the appropriate financial resources boosts the motivation and networking of educational staff at all levels. We strengthen school leaders in their leadership role and identify opportunities for the further development of appropriate professionalisation measures.
- The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education (BMK) and the education unions GEW and VBE advocate strengthening education for democracy, political education and education for sustainable development in schools and in teacher training and further education in the face of growing social challenges, and are committed to creating the necessary framework for this. The aim of schools is to ensure that democratic and human rights values and norms are lived, exemplified and learned.

BMK, GEW and VBE agree that it is necessary to continue the joint dialogue at the national level in order to adequately support the ongoing processes, to include the pedagogical perspective and the experiences of teachers, and to achieve common strategies.

## Latvia

### Key Insights

- Systemic solutions to increase inclusion, equity and wellbeing in education

### Three Commitments

- Increase initial training & general accessibility and professional capacity of support staff in cooperation with the universities/higher education institutions.
- Expand and intensify social dialogue among Ministry of Education and Science, Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees and other stakeholders to identify critical milestones for better solutions in education in the future strategically.
- Identify and implement a set of systemic solutions for quality, equity, well-being and inclusion in education by highlighting & combining & using the already existing mechanisms, practical tools, initiatives and elaborating the new ones, also looking for ways of reasonable use of AI to build pathways for personalized learning.

## Lithuania

### Key Insights

- While innovation – especially AI – can transform education, it must never come at the cost of human connection. Technology should support, not replace, the safe and trusting relationships that make real learning possible. For countries like Lithuania, where we are navigating both digital integration and deeper system reforms, this means prioritizing teacher autonomy, investing in well-being, and listening to the voices of those at the heart of education: our students.

### Three Commitments

- Further strengthening partnerships with various stakeholders to enhance inclusivity in the education system
- Ensuring the monitoring of the implementation of general education programs and initiating improvements as needed
- Promoting the development of social and emotional competencies within school communities to enhance psychological safety and create a violence and bullying free environment

## New Zealand

### Key Insights

- Despite facing similar challenges, we have the opportunity to learn from each other, focus on what works to raise student achievement and leverage the relationships between our countries. No one jurisdiction has the answer, but a shared focus on achieving excellent and equitable outcomes for our students unites our purpose.

### Three Commitments

- Focus on socio-emotional skills, self-regulation and early oral language acquisition in early learning
- To develop our provision of learning support so that we are delivering the right service, to the right child at the right time to raise achievement and close the equity gap.
- Take the next step with implementation of clear, supported leadership pathways and career development for aspiring and in-service school leaders.

## Norway

### Key Insights

- The crucial role play has for young children's well-being, learning and development

### Three Commitments

- Ensure good pedagogical leadership and strengthen the teacher's role:  
The Norwegian delegation will cooperate to ensure good pedagogical leadership and strengthen the teachers role. We will work for increased recruitment of teachers to early childhood education (ECE) and teachers training. Qualified ECE teachers will meet children's needs and provide quality ECE. Qualified teachers in early childhood education and care are important in ensuring that ECE institutions meet the children's need for care and play and promote learning and formative development as a basis for all-round development. Also, we will cooperate to support and strengthen play and support practical teaching methods. We shall place extra emphasis on the inherent value of play, and the role and importance of free play in ECE.
- Partnership to recruit and retain teachers in the sectors:  
The Norwegian delegation will, through tripartite cooperation, continue to work on recruiting and retaining teachers in the sectors. This includes working for an attractive teaching profession and to clarify the teachers role. The tripartite cooperation will be used actively to contribute to local collaboration on "the team around children and students". A clear understanding of the roles and competencies of the professions will help ensure that all children are included and receive the follow-up they need.
- Strengthen the role of early childhood education and schools as common arenas to contribute to social levelling and inclusion  
When democracy is threatened, we must invest in common community arenas. ECE and schools are meeting places for everyone – and is our best defense against exclusion. The Norwegian delegation will work to strengthen the role of ECE and school as common community arenas to contribute to social leveling, inclusion and democratic participation. We will work to highlight the ECE and school's role in the work on democratic preparedness. Quality education provides children opportunities for a better life.

## Poland

### Key Insights

- Only through a collaborative approach, where teachers' voices are integrated into policy-making, can we foster student agency.
- Early education is key, as it shapes the foundation for learning in the years ahead and builds social and economic welfare of countries.

### Three Commitments

- Enhanced Support for Educational Specialists  
The Ministry of Education plans to train over 1,000 educational specialists from psychological and pedagogical counselling centres. The training will focus on diagnosing and supporting students with perceptual disorders and autism spectrum disorders.
- Professional Development in Health Education  
In preparation for the introduction of a new subject—Health Education—into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools from September 2025, the Ministry will launch free, postgraduate qualification programmes for teachers. Delivered by 11 selected universities.

- Improving Teachers' Working Conditions and Career Stability

A comprehensive amendment to the Teachers' Charter is underway to address declining interest in the teaching profession. Proposed changes include: increasing benefits, unifying workload regulations for educators, expanding eligibility for compensatory benefits, and clarifying rules for career advancement and working hours.

## Singapore

### Key Insights

- The commitment to social mobility and inclusivity begins with building a high-quality and accessible school system. By investing in education and developing a strong teaching workforce, we create foundational opportunities that shape our children's future success regardless of their starting points.

### Three Commitments

- Enhancing Early Childhood Education and Care Sector

MOE will be working closely with EC educators to develop professional development tools to foster a culture of continuous improvement. We also strive to close the development gap between children from different socioeconomic backgrounds by promoting greater inclusivity. In 2025, we will expand our pilot programme to integrate early intervention support in preschools.

- Supporting Educators' Well-being

We are committed to supporting our educators throughout their careers. This year, we will be looking to promote more flexible work arrangements to meet educators' needs at every stage of their careers. We will also refine our educator appraisal system to help school leaders and educators better leverage their strengths, identify areas of improvement and gain greater clarity about their professional growth and career progression.

- Reinforcing Child-centred Education

MOE will continue to focus on children's learning needs when designing learning experiences and broaden the definition of success. We will provide resource and avenues to develop students' diverse interests and talents.

## Spain

### Key Insights

- The continuous improvement of education implies the recognition of teachers, equity, inclusion and equality as a guarantee of progress and social cohesion.

### Three Commitments

Spain, in line with the approaches and objectives of this ISTP 2025 and in coordination with trade unions, education administrations and education experts, is committed to continue providing the necessary funding to:

- Develop a Strategic Plan for Inclusive Education, in collaboration with all educational agents, which meets the needs of students at all stages, starting from Early Childhood Education to achieve the best quality and the highest schooling, aimed at attending to and compensating situations of vulnerability, complete educational integration and educational success for all students.
- Strengthen, recognize and give prestige to the teaching profession through initial training and professional qualification of teachers, improving their working conditions, providing continuous training oriented to the needs of the education system, providing mentoring in the first years of practice and articulating teacher professional development.
- To intensify, at all stages of the education system, education for democracy, for active citizenship and for social participation, favouring the acquisition of skills and competences aimed at equality, tolerance and coexistence.



## Sweden

### Key Insights

- The importance of early childhood education for later life outcomes

### Three Commitments

- Continue the joint efforts and dialogue with a view to attract and retain highly qualified and certified preschool teachers, teachers and school leaders. Jointly strive to introduce new measures that will improve teachers working conditions and school environment.
- Continue to improve equity by, for example, strengthening the overall state involvement in the school system and take measures to ensure a more equitable financing model to create better conditions for a high-quality school system.
- Continue the work to support schools and teachers in their role as crucial actors responding to global challenges such as the green industrial transition by, for example, inspiring more young people to choose study programmes in STEM subjects. In order to do so, students need to be given early support to feel the confidence to excel in mathematics.

## Switzerland

### Key Insights

- Pre-Summit Seminar about IA and the opportunity to discuss the Guidelines on an informal basis and setting. We would like to stress especially Guidelines Nr 3 (Teacher agency and professional learning) which is very useful from our perspective.

### Three Commitments

- One of the long-term goals of our education policy is to have at least 95% of every age cohort obtain a recognized upper-secondary qualification. This cannot be achieved without addressing the special needs of learners as soon as possible, and the best way possible. If possible, young people should remain integrated in the mainstream education system.
- For almost 20 years now, the principle of integration before separation has been the guideline for the special educational needs policy: Learners with special educational needs should be integrated into the ordinary school structures as much as possible. The separation into specialised classes and institutions should always be the last resort. A cornerstone which has proven useful is the standardised procedure which assesses the special needs of learners and allows to define the kind of special supportive measures needed.
- The task of inclusion is a common challenge and goal for Ministries, Teachers and Schoolheads. The cooperative approach we have in this respect is a key element for this achievement.

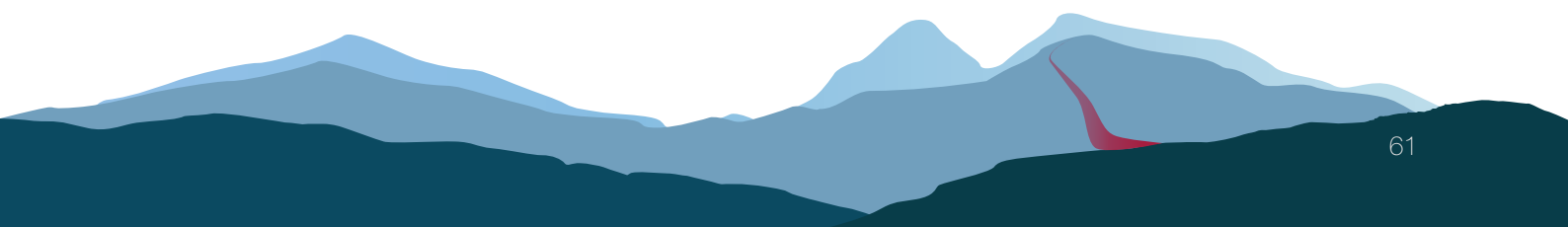
## United Kingdom (England)

### Key Insights

- Importance of strong foundations for our youngest children - through high quality teaching, a focus on wellbeing and enjoyment, and appropriate use of technology to enhance learning.

### Three Commitments

- We will work together to raise the status of the early years sector to continue to grow and support the workforce, improving access to high-quality early education and giving more children the best start in life. We will do this via a national recruitment campaign and the introduction of an experience-based route for early years practitioners.



- We will strengthen our offer of professional development by introducing an updated training framework for the first three years of a teacher's career. This includes enhancements regarding early cognitive development, supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and high-quality numeracy, literacy and oracy.
- We will work together to support the effective use of high-quality technology by teachers, leaders and other staff in education settings. This will include the co-creation and delivery of high-quality AI tools for education, as well as developing online resources for teachers and leaders to support the safe and effective use of AI.

### United Kingdom (Wales)

#### Key Insights

- Our similarities are so much greater than our differences. The challenges we face unite us.
- We are driven by the same aims, one central principle of enabling our children to make the most progress, while becoming the best version of themselves. Brave, happy, healthy and good people
- Independent of our focus, independent of our policy and principle, our joint paradigm enables us to work together to learn from each other and develop together to enhance all education systems, across our nations

#### Three Commitments

- For early years education, our commitment is to continue to strengthen the continuum of care and learning provision, with Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care dovetailing into the Curriculum for Wales.
- For equity and wellbeing, it is to continue to support learner and practitioner wellbeing through our Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing.
- For child-centred education, it is to continue to support educators to empower children and young people to shape their own futures, through our statutory Enabling Learning guidance.

### United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)

#### Key Insights

- We are facing many similar challenges in regard to ensuring effective supply of well-qualified teachers, learning and teaching globally and there is much to learn from each other.

#### Three Commitments

- We will work together to deliver more affordable, accessible, high-quality early learning and childcare opportunities to support children's development and ease financial pressures for working families.
- We will work together to deliver on the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government priority of 'Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs'.
- We will work together to make teaching in Northern Ireland an attractive, high-status profession where every teacher has access to the world-class professional learning, support and resources they need to excel in their profession.

## United Kingdom (Scotland)

### Key Insights

- The criticality of quality education, teachers and young people to help in protecting and promoting democracy, peace, social and climate justice. The imperative of instilling in young people a sense of hope and agency to change the world for the better.

### Three Commitments

- We recognise the potential of new digital tools and approaches to assist teachers and to support learners to develop the skills, knowledge and capacities they need in an ever-changing and uncertain world. Through our partnership approach, including local government, we will look at the opportunities and challenges presented by artificial intelligence, considering carefully the guidance produced by the OECD and Education International, and create an equivalent set of guidelines and guardrails for the Scotland context. We will consider this work in the context of Scotland's AI strategy and principles and the commitment to develop a new digital learning strategy. We will also consider any areas for discussion within the SNCT. We will look for opportunities to reduce teacher workload, enable collaboration and to support learning and teaching in the interests of enabling quality education for equity, equality, democracy and peace, including through the use of appropriate digital tools.
- We recognise the relationship between improving teacher wellbeing and further improving children and young people's wellbeing and learning outcomes. Through partnership working, including social dialogue and collective bargaining, we will seek to make progress on commitments to reduce teacher workload, and to support and empower teachers, towards improving recruitment and retention across the profession.
- We want to ensure all children and young people develop a broad range of knowledge, understanding, skills and capacities to enable them to thrive and to shape the world in the interests of equality, democracy, peace, and social and climate justice. We recognise the critical role of teachers in this complex endeavour and the need to support them and to trust in their professionalism. We will work together to ensure the right balance in the curriculum at all stages from 3-18 to enable quality learning and teaching around all capacities, ensuring relevant opportunities for quality professional learning for teachers and time for them to engage in it, and to further the empowerment agenda in our school communities.

## The People's Republic of China

### Key Insights

- China highly recognizes the important role of the International Summit on the Teaching Profession in promoting international educational exchanges. We look forward to working with countries worldwide to share the latest research findings, technologies, and high-quality educational resources. Together, we can advance the empowerment of the teaching profession, promote comprehensive educational reform, and achieve higher-quality, more equitable, and inclusive educational development.

### Three Commitments

- Strengthen the compensation safeguards and well-being of the teaching profession to enhance the profession's appeal; to advance teachers' professional competencies to deliver higher-quality teaching.
- Promote multi-stakeholder collaboration among governments, schools, families, and communities to build a synergistic educational ecosystem, together nurturing a supportive environment for the growth of students.
- Promote well-managed and safe integration of AI in education to promote innovation and transformation in pedagogy, learning and evaluation, equipping students with literacies and skills that will prepare them for the future.

## Iceland

### Key Insights

- Honest and impactful dialogue.

### Three Commitments

- Establish a national council of all major stakeholders in the education system to ensure a social dialogue and collaboration with teacher organizations in forming and implementing a comprehensive and holistic national teacher policy.
- Improve the working conditions of educators by providing schools with increased support and integrated services. Investing in quality education by increasing the number of highly qualified teachers across all levels of education through recruitment measures and by identifying and addressing the factors that attract teachers to the profession and impact teacher retainment.
- Actively support teachers' professional agency and autonomy by supporting opportunities for continuous professional development by providing and supporting high-quality, relevant, and accessible learning opportunities for all educators.



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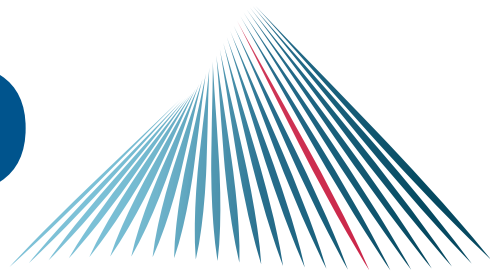
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2025 **ISTP**



INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION



**Government of Iceland**  
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