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Pedagogical Development Unit

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Joint Report of the Italian Presidency of the Boards of Inspectors and of the Joint Teaching Committee – 2023-2024 School year

Approved by the Board of Governors of the European Schools at its meeting on 3, 4 and 5 December 2024 in Brussels (Hybrid)



Report on Italy's 2023-2024 Presidency of the European Schools' system

INTRODUCTION

On August 1st, 2023, Italy assumed the rotating Presidency of the European Schools (ES) from Ireland. Following the Presidency Handover Meeting, convened in Rome on 23 June 2023, Italy's Presidency team embraced the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the ES system, with specific reference to the challenges posed by the "*Report on the System of European Schools: State of play, Challenges and Perspectives*", adopted by the European Parliament in September 2023.

Italy's Presidency team is pleased to present its final Presidency Report to the Joint Teaching Committee, the Budgetary Committee, and the Board of Governors' meeting in December 2024.

Italy's Presidency team wishes to thank and acknowledge the high levels of support received during its Presidency, particularly from the Secretary-General *Mr Andreas Beckmann*, the Deputy Secretary-General *Mr Manuel Bordoy*, the Head of Unit and Executive Coordinator to the Secretary-General *Mr Károly Pála*, the Head of the Pedagogical Development Unit *Mr László Munkácsy*, all members of the Units in the Office of the Secretary-General (OSG), and members of the Irish Presidency team.

A special word of thanks is also due to the Joint Board of Inspectors, the Quality Assurance Steering Committee's members and all stakeholders across the system who supported Italy's Presidency of the ES system.

The Presidency team also acknowledges the collaborative efforts of each member of the team.

The members of Italy's Presidency team during 2023/2024 included:

- *Mr Antonio Cenini* - President/Chair of the Board of Governors of the ES
- *Mr Donato Scioscioli* - Italy's Head of Delegation of the ES and member of the Board of Governors of the ES, Diplomatic Counselor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- *Mr Edoardo Fedeli* - Italy's Deputy Head of Delegation of the ES, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- *Ms Sabina Santarossa* - Diplomatic Counselor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- *Mr Roberto Ricci* - President/Chair of the European Baccalaureate during Italy's Presidency, President of the National Institute of School System's Evaluation in Italy (INVALSI)
- *Mr Carlo Rubinacci* - Nursery/Primary Inspector assigned to ES, Chair of the Nursery and Primary Board of Inspectors and Co-Chair of the Joint Board of Inspectors and Joint Teaching Committees during Italy's Presidency, Ministry of Education and Merit
- *Ms Diana Saccardo* - Secondary Inspector assigned to ES, Chair of the Secondary Board of Inspectors and Co-Chair of the Joint Board of Inspectors and Joint Teaching Committees during Ireland's Presidency, Ministry of Education and Merit

- *Ms Roberta Fantinato* - Director of European School, Parma
- *Mr Alessandro Bosco* - Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- *Mr Emanuele Urbani* - Officer, Ministry of Education and Merit
- *Mr Fabio Apuzzo* - Officer, Ministry of Economy and Finance

PRESIDENCY'S PRIORITIES

The Italian Presidency started at a key moment in the development of the European Schools' system. In recent years, recurrent discussions were held in the committees of the European Schools, on the vision for the future of the system and on how to enhance its capability to face challenges in an ever-changing context.

After a long period of consultations, in 2023 the European Parliament adopted the "*Report on the System of European Schools: State of play, Challenges and Perspectives*", which emphasizes the need for a new vision and mission of the ESS.

In this framework, as a follow-up of the European Parliament's Report on the European Schools' system, the Italian Presidency identified two priorities, which address some key recommendations. The identification of these two priorities meant to build on the experience of the European Schools' system, in continuity with the achievements of previous presidencies while taking into account the Report.

Italy's Presidency wished to stress the importance of the EP Report as took it the reference document for focusing on the future vision for the European Schools' system.

Italy identified two main priorities:

1. PROMOTING ENHANCED REFLECTION ON THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS SYSTEM

Main deliverable:

- a draft Action Plan as a follow-up to the EP Report by April 2024.

2. REINFORCING ETHICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL BEST PRACTICES PINPOINTING THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

Main deliverables:

- development of a process leading to the teacher career framework for the European Schools;
- the first ES Teachers' Forum.

PRIORITY 1: PROMOTING ENHANCED REFLECTION ON THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS SYSTEM

With regard to Priority 1, the main deliverable was identified in the development and approval of a new **Action Plan**, as a follow-up to the EP Report adopted in September 2023.

Therefore, since the Extraordinary BOG Meeting in Luxembourg in October 2023, the reflection revolved around the analysis and evaluation of the 37 recommendations included in the EP Report.

Further, another deliverable we expected in the framework of the same priority was an enhanced reflection and increased consultations within the BoG and among the whole ESS constituency on the future vision of the ESS.

IMPLEMENTATION

At the outset, our work began with a first analysis of the EP Report with the precious cooperation of the OSG, whereby each recommendation was evaluated according to their relevance, feasibility and state of play. And, eventually, this analysis set a structure and working method that helped to promote our collective reflections also in the following months.

Specifically, the European Parliament had identified a wide number of key areas for the ESS to address. However, given that a number of the recommendations regarded issues beyond the competence of the BoG, the Italian Presidency aimed at prioritizing those areas that could be clearly implemented through the current governance and management system, especially over the course of a short or medium-term period.

Since our first preparatory meetings, the **Enlarged Presidency Working Group** was identified as the most appropriate forum to promote this reflection on possible reform. Therefore, at the Extraordinary BOG Meeting in October, which offered the first opportunity to discuss the EP Report with all members of the enlarged constituency, the national delegations were asked - and eventually approved- to invest the Enlarged Presidency Working Group with this task.

In line with its mandate, the Working Group convened in full format on a number of occasions since November 2023, but, until the following April, a series of additional consultations were implemented at bilateral level, including with many other delegations and individual stakeholders outside the working group.

During the entire process- the entire set of EP recommendations were discussed in the framework of **3 clusters**, respectively relating to **Pedagogy** (mission, functions, objectives and quality assurance), **Administration and Governance** (management, organization and structure), and **Resources** (human resources, infrastructure and legal background).

Further, each Cluster was subdivided into different Units, reflecting a possible structure for the draft Action Plan, whereby each recommendation was associated to a possible action and/or measure, wherever deemed feasible and appropriate, while specifying also the responsible actor and the expected outcome.

Finally, all Actions were classified according to their respective timeframe of development, following the definition of: work in progress, short-term, mid-term, long-term, or non-defined.

Indeed, during this timeframe, the Working Group also deliberated in light of the insights gathered from previous BoG discussions, and a first update on the 'work in progress' was presented in occasion of the December BoG Meeting in Brussels.

After finalizing the Draft Action Plan in January 2024, the document was then presented and discussed also by the *Joint Board of Inspectors*, the *Joint Teaching Committee* and the *Budgetary Committee*.

Moreover, on 13 February 2024, the content of the Draft was shared with the *Committee for Culture and Education* of the European Parliament, in occasion of an audition attended by the Italian President Antonio Cenini, the Secretary General Andreas Beckmann and the Acting DG of Human Resources and Security of the European Commission, Christian Roques.

Finally, at the April BOG Meeting in Parma, the Action Plan was approved after a much-participated discussion, which however did not lead to significant amendments of the submitted text.

OUTCOMES, EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNT

A) MAIN DELIVERABLES OF PRIORITY 1

1. Approval of the Action Plan

With the approval of the Action Plan, we may agree that the main deliverable of this first Italian priority has been met.

And, in light of this important outcome, we are also grateful to the Troika and to the Office of the Secretary General for the enormous efforts they have put towards the achievement of this goal.

Indeed, we should take note that the provisions which were agreed in April did not match all requirements outlined in the European Parliament's Report, which – amongst others- called on the BoG to '*update the mission, principles and objectives of the ESS in the form of a new 'ESS Charter', to be introduced by the end of 2024.*

However, we believe that the development and approval of this Action Plan, as a first follow-up to the EP Report, represents an important step, also in that direction, given that it helped to prepare the ground for further actions and deliberations under Cyprus's Presidency.

Indeed, **the main challenge of this deliverable** was to draft a document which could obtain the required consensus from all Members of the Board of Governors, while meeting the ambitious expectations of the European Parliament and other individual stakeholders.

Moreover, considering the long and inevitable timelines associated with the internal procedures, as well as with the necessary negotiations implied by the governance of a multilateral organization with multiple and diverse stakeholders, it was easy to imagine that the most ambitious reform projects would be strongly conditioned or held back.

Therefore, the solution devised by the Italian Presidency was to propose the contextual adoption, by the Board of Governors, of a **Political Declaration** regarding those recommendations where a consensus could not yet be obtained.

2. Approval of the Parma Declaration,

The *Parma Declaration*, which was eventually adopted in April 2024, may thus be considered another deliverable in the framework of this priority, as it shall help to sustain the momentum of our ongoing reflection, by tracing a path in those areas in which a concrete action could not be agreed upon by the end of the Italian Presidency.

Now we trust that this baton will be carried forward, thanks to the enthusiasm and determination of the Cypriot Presidency.

3. Enhancing a collective reflection on the future vision of the ESS

Finally, we may state that during the Italian Presidency the deliverable of '*Enhancing a collective reflection on the future vision of the ESS*' has been equally met, in light of the increased consultations promoted on this topic, within the BoG and among the entire ES constituency.

Further, the April BOG in Parma offered the opportunity to launch a new dedicated **Task Force** in view of furthering our reflection on the **mission and vision of the European Schools System**.

Since then, the Task Force has already met twice, and is now scheduled to meet at least other two times over the course of 2024, with the objective of outlining the structure and the contents of a new **Mission and Vision statement**, which should be submitted at the BoG in December, under Cyprus' Presidency.

B) COLLATERAL OUTCOMES, EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNT

In addition to the foreseen deliverables associated to the planned Priorities of the Italian Presidency, we believe that the organisation of **the Board of Governors and of the Teacher's Forum in Parma** provided a unique opportunity for enhancing:

- the **visibility and communication of the European Schools System** at the national level, and
- the **understanding of its important role and relevance** in the framework of European education.

Surely, this result was mainly achieved through the participation of Minister Tajani to the BOG's closing session.

However, great credit for this result must also be attributed to the active support received from local institutions and other local partners.

The budget target of Euro 140.000 (mostly for the Board of Governors and the European Schools Teacher Forum in Parma) was amply met, also thanks to financial and logistical support from a number of local stakeholders in Parma (Scuola per l'Europa, EFSA, City Administration, Provincial Industries' Union. The resources contributed by the stakeholders complemented the dedicated funds on the budgets of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Education and Merit

In fact, all events in Parma were (at least partly) organized with a range of local partners, who provided dedicated organizational means, logistics and/or substantial financial support towards our planned activities.

In addition to the Scuola per l'Europa, we witnessed:

the active engagement of the Municipality of Parma;

the generosity of the Provincial Industries' Union- UPI,

the logistical support of the Teatro Regio di Parma and of the Complesso della Pilotta,

the music of the Conservatory of Parma, ...

as well as the support of other entities who demonstrated a genuine interest for our initiatives.

The contribution of our local partners therefore helped to:

-integrate and/or complement the budget which the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation had managed to allocate towards the events

- enhance our program in terms of visibility, communication, and prestige, given that such extensive engagement managed to trigger even wider interest and curiosity among the local public, as well as media coverage of the Parma events

PRIORITY 2: REINFORCING ETHICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL BEST PRACTICES PINPOINTING THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

The rationale behind this priority is related to the importance that all school systems have competent, engaged and motivated teachers who are inspired to offer learning experiences that may develop the full potential of each pupil.

According to research literature and reports from European and international organisations, teachers play a main role in defining and creating quality education.

What goes on in the classroom, and the impact of the teacher and teaching, has been identified in numerous studies as the crucial variable for improving learning outcomes. The way teachers teach is of critical concern in any reform designed to improve quality. (UNESCO 2004, p. 152)

Two main strands of development for this priority were identified:

- The organization of the first Teachers' Forum
- Development of a process leading to the teacher career framework of the European School system

The first Teachers' Forum

The 'Report on the system of European Schools: state of play, challenges and perspectives', prepared by the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament suggested the creation of "*an annual celebratory event to share pedagogical best practice, pool knowledge among schools, teachers and students and showcase their work and projects to the broader system, with national education representatives being invited in order to raise awareness of the ESS*" (recommendation no.33). On this basis, the Italian delegation organized the first celebratory ES Teachers' Forum in Parma on 8 and 9 April 2024, aimed at exchanging best practices and lessons learnt on selected topics through the engagement of teacher representatives of all European Schools and Accredited European Schools. Italian teachers and national education representatives were also invited.

ES Teachers' Forum was promoted and organised by the Italian delegation, including representatives of MAECI (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation) and MIM (Ministry of Education and Merit), in cooperation with the OSG, the Scuola per l'Europa di Parma, which hosted the event, and the Municipality of Parma.

The main objectives of the ES Teachers' Forum were:

- to promote the sharing and enhancement of innovative teaching experiences within the European Schools system, implemented in the infant and primary cycle and in the secondary cycle, in the traditional European Schools and in the accredited European Schools
- to create an opportunity for the national system to learn about the pedagogical value of the European Schools
- to provide an opportunity for professional development and the exchange of good practices for teachers of European Schools and for Italian teachers.

ES Teachers' Forum was intended for nursery, primary and secondary teachers from the traditional European Schools and accredited European Schools.

Therefore, a call was circulated among traditional and accredited schools, to invite them to apply for the selection to hold a workshop within the ES Teachers' Forum. Twelve project proposals were selected, two for each of the six topics below, submitted by twelve different schools.

The topics selected for the first edition of the ES Teachers' Forum were as follows:

1. Plurilingual and intercultural education
2. Artificial Intelligence
3. Early childhood education and care
4. Inclusion
5. European values and democratic citizenship
6. Sustainable development

Considering the Teachers' Forum as an opportunity both to boost professional learning and to give visibility to the best teaching practises, the event was marked by the following highlights:

- Monday 8 April morning: four keynote speakers lectured the audience on four selected topics: plurilingualism and intercultural education, inclusion, education for sustainable development, European values and democratic culture
- Monday 8 April afternoon: workshops on good teaching practices were held from the twelve selected schools which had been previously selected by a selection committee
- Tuesday 9 April morning: the outcomes of the workshops were presented

Post event survey

Objective of the Survey

A post event survey was administered to the 210 participants, with a response rate of 99/210 corresponding to 47%. The primary aim of this survey was to assess the overall effectiveness of the Teachers' Forum, and to determine the replicability of the event. The feedback gathered is intended to identify areas of success and opportunities for improvement in future editions.

Survey Methodology

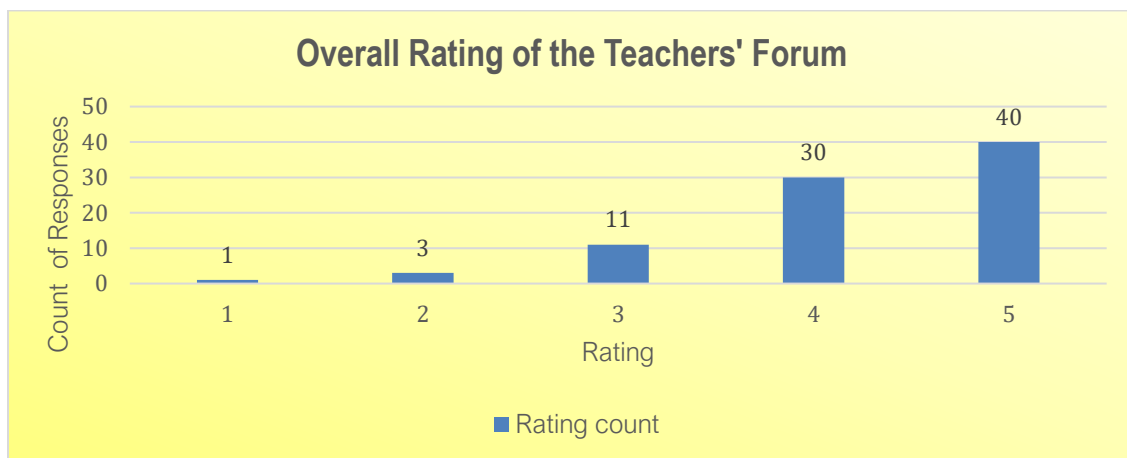
The link to the survey was sent to all participants of the Teachers' Forum immediately following the event. Participants were asked to complete a series of questions that included both rating scales and open-ended responses, providing a comprehensive view of their experience.

Analysis of Overall Satisfaction

The overall average rating for the Teachers' Forum was **4.23** out of **5.0**, indicating a generally high level of satisfaction among the participants, highlighting the success of the event's organization and content quality.

Rating Distribution:

- **5 (Excellent):** 40 responses
- **4 (Good):** 31 responses
- **3 (Average):** 11 responses
- **2 (Poor):** 3 responses
- **1 (Very Poor):** 1 response



Graph Analysis: The chart for the overall rating of the Teachers' Forum shows a significant concentration of ratings at the high end, with 40 'Excellent' and 31

'Good' responses. This distribution not only highlights the overall positive reception but also points to areas where expectations were exceptionally met or exceeded.

Summary of Feedback Themes

Feedback indicated specific dissatisfaction with the length and execution of activities on the second day. Conversely, networking opportunities and keynote speakers were the highlights for many, suggesting that future events could benefit from a stronger focus on these areas.

Least Liked Aspects

Many respondents indicated issues specifically with the second day of the event. Several attendees mentioned that the speeches, particularly on the second day, were too long.

Most Enjoyed Aspects

- Meeting Colleagues: Networking and meeting colleagues from other schools was a highlight for many attendees.
- Keynote Speakers: The presence and contributions of keynote speakers were highly appreciated.
- Topics like Artificial Intelligence: Specific topics like artificial intelligence were mentioned as engaging.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Best Practices and Panel Discussions: There is a strong desire for more panels and discussions on best practices.
- More Time for Workshops: Respondents would like more time dedicated to workshops.
- Opportunities to Ask Questions: Participants want more chances to engage directly with speakers.

TEACHERS' FORUM WORKSHOP SATISFACTION ANALYSIS

Response Rate: 83/140 participants (59%)

Average Ratings and Response Distributions

Workshop satisfaction ratings were also positive, with contents, methodology, and results all scoring above 4.0 on a 5-point scale, translating into a composite score of **8.4** out of **10.0**.

The response distributions for workshop organization showed that a vast majority found the organization satisfactory, with 79 participants responding positively. However, comments suggested a desire for more practical examples and extended durations, indicating a need for more interactive and extensive sessions.

Analysis of Workshop Suggestions

Participants showed a keen interest in workshops and planned to integrate learned methods into their practices. However, logistical concerns, such as the need for smaller group sizes, were pointed out as areas needing improvement for more effective learning environments.

Average Ratings

Satisfaction with Contents: 4.6/5

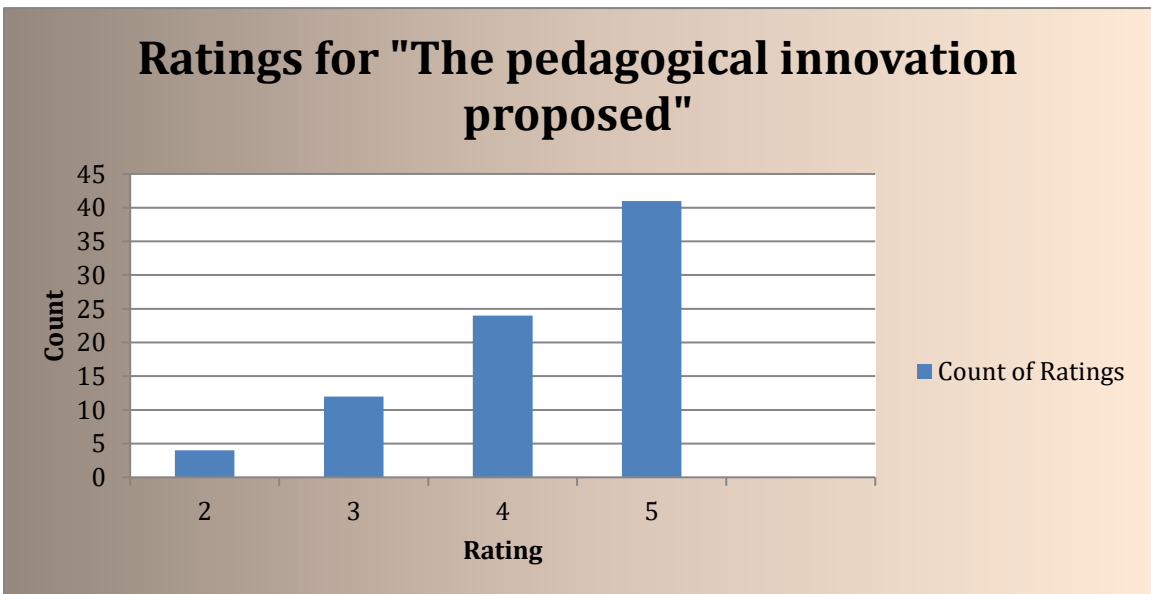
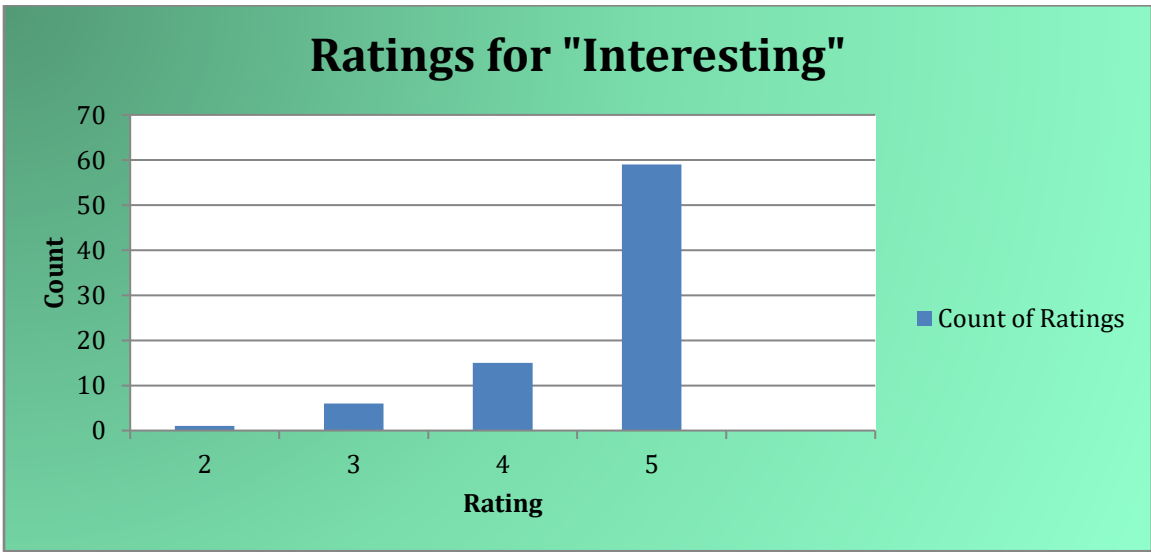
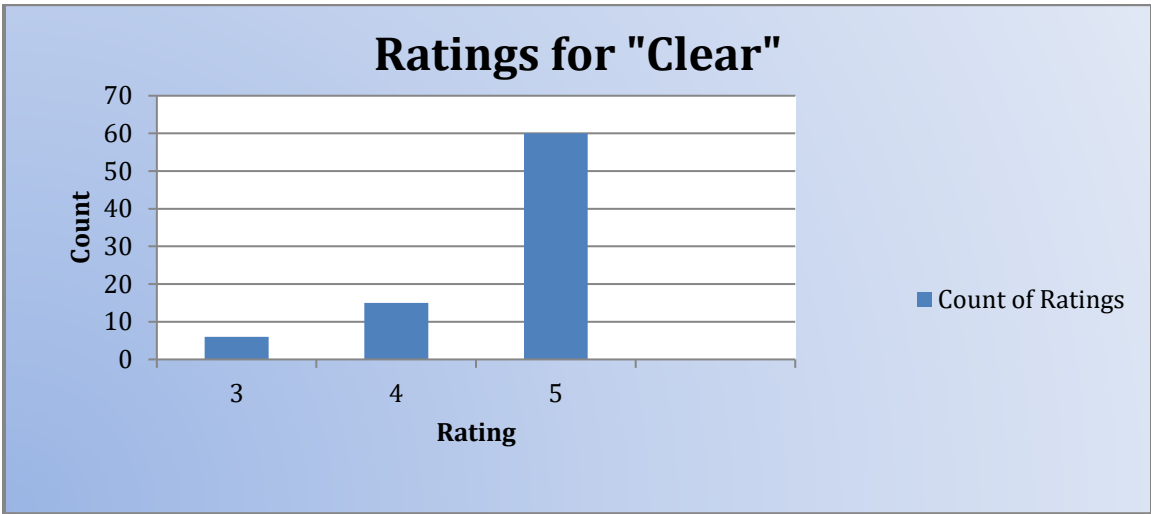
Satisfaction with Methodology: 4.5/5

Satisfaction with Organization: 4.1/5

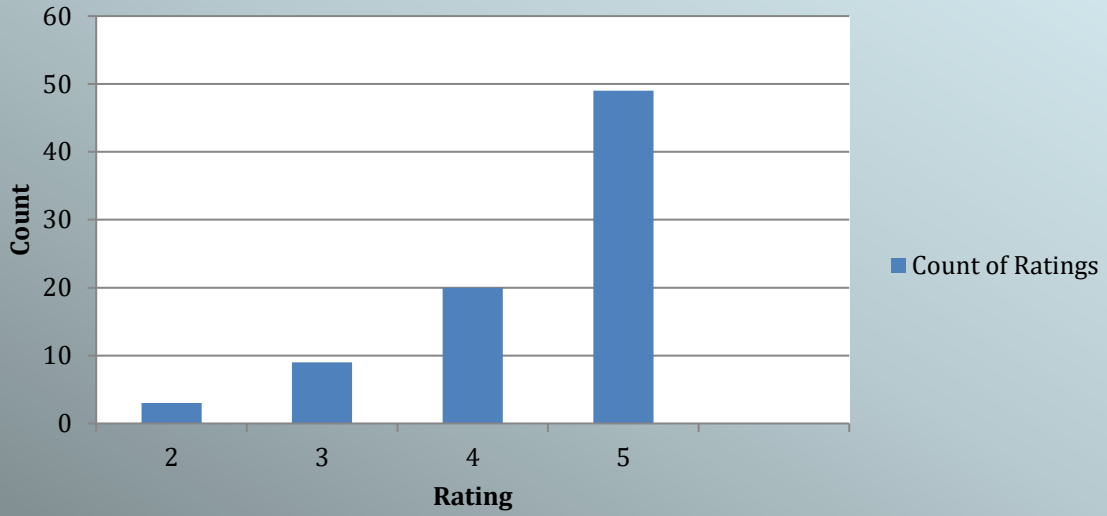
Satisfaction with Results: 4.2/5

Overall Satisfaction: 8.4/10

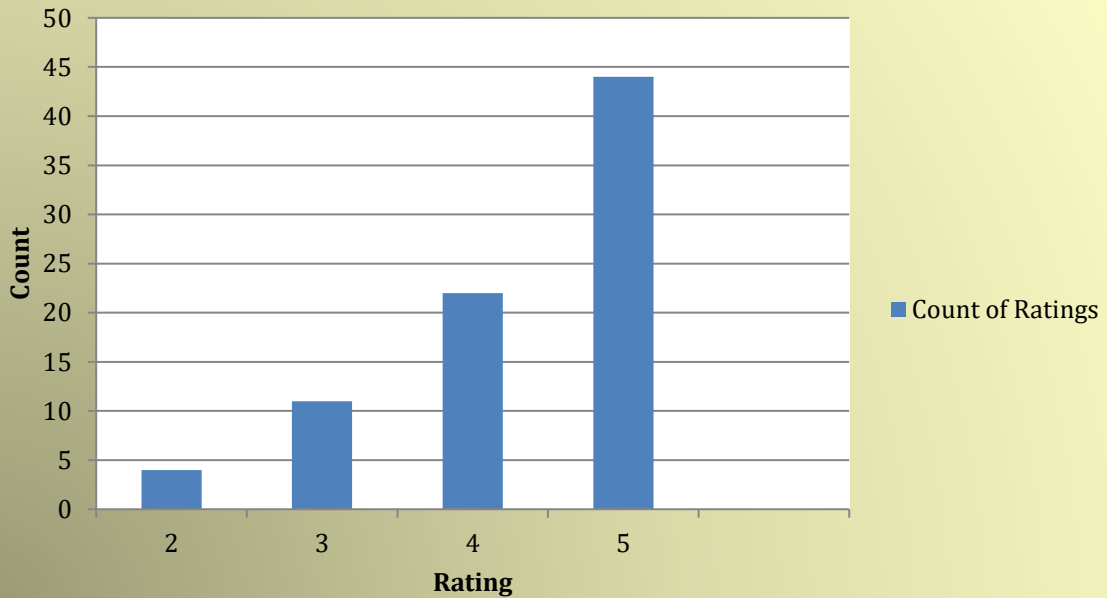
Graph Analysis: The ratings for specific aspects such as 'Clarity', 'Interest', and 'Pedagogical Innovation' reveal strengths and areas for potential enhancement. High ratings in 'Pedagogical Innovation' suggest that creative and novel teaching methods were well-received, while the variability in 'Clarity' ratings indicates a need for more consistent presentation quality across workshops.



Ratings for "The replicability of the project proposal"



Ratings for "Consistent with your expectations"



Analysis of Workshop Suggestions - Teachers' Forum

The suggestions made by the Teachers' forum participants highlight areas for potential improvement and enhancements desired by attendees.

The comments reflect diverse perspectives on the workshops' content, delivery, and organization.

Key themes have been identified to better understand the participants' experiences and suggestions for improvement.

Interest and Engagement

Many participants expressed a high level of interest in the workshops, planning to adopt what they learned.

Specific feedback praised the ideas presented and the overall educational value of the workshops.

Logistics and Setup

Concerns were raised about logistical aspects, including the need for more computers and smaller group sizes for effective learning.

Content and Delivery

Suggestions included more practical examples, extending workshop durations, and allocating more time for hands-on activities.

Accessibility and Inclusion

There was a focus on the need for content that is adaptable and applicable in various educational settings was emphasized.

Implementation and Feasibility

Participants discussed the challenges of implementing new ideas within existing regulations and educational frameworks.

The importance of providing proper support and conditions for presenters was noted to enhance the effectiveness of workshops.

In conclusion, these are the recommendations for the event in the future based on the data analysis:

1. Enhanced Focus on Networking and Keynote Sessions: Expand these aspects by allocating more time and resources, as they are highly valued by attendees.
2. Streamlined Schedule for Day Two: Address the feedback regarding the length and engagement levels of the second day's activities.

3. Interactive and Extended Workshop Formats: Increase the duration and interactive components of workshops to enhance practical learning and participant satisfaction.
4. Improvement in Logistical Arrangements: Prioritize the availability of necessary equipment and optimal group sizes to facilitate effective workshop environments.

Development of a process leading to the teacher career framework of the European School system

The JTC in February gave the mandate to set up a working group for the development of a process leading to the teacher career framework for the European Schools to be completed within a timeframe of two years.

It is chaired by Italy's Inspectorate and includes Inspectors, representatives of school management (Directors and Deputy Directors) and teacher representatives from both the traditional European Schools and the Accredited European Schools, as well as an expert in the field.

So far three meetings were held where the members discussed key concepts which should represent the foundations of the framework while considering their various interpretations based on their experience of the European School system but also of the future applicability in the system. A Teams space has been created for sharing documents and exchanging messages.

Teacher professional development and learning, evaluation and career progression across the system are taken into account as possible constituents to include in the framework draft.

The members are also considering how to consult stakeholders in order to receive additional input and ensure transparency. The most likely approach is an online questionnaire to be administered by the end of the current year. Piloting of the most relevant elements of the framework which will have an impact on schools and staff will be planned.

The forthcoming Cyprus Presidency have shared their priorities that include student and staff well-being. It has been suggested by the OSG that the Presidency's proposed staff survey on well-being (linked to retention) could be undertaken as part of this Working Group's consultation on teacher careers. As noted by the Working Group members, whilst well-being is a valid part of career progression, not all well-being issues may be addressed by implementing a career framework. If this new additional element is confirmed, the project milestones and dates will need to be revised as well as the composition of the working group and the budget allocation.

The idea is that the proposed Framework is designed to be a practical tool to be used by all schools and teachers, both seconded and locally recruited ones. In any case realizing the ambitions of the framework will need logistics and budget to be considered and aligned. That is why constant exchanges and feedback from the OSG are requested to be able to progress effectively with the forward planning.

CONCLUDING WORDS

A series of Recommendations of the 2023 European Parliament's Report specifically address the 'governance' of the ESS and of the BoG in view of strengthening EES mission and effectiveness into the 21st century.

The Italian Presidency aimed to focus on a series of actions designed to valorizing existing pedagogical best practices and lessons learnt, while promoting further reflection on the possible evolution of teaching and learning methodologies following the introduction of the concept of teacher career within European Schools.

The Italian Presidency's hope is that the collective reflection and the actions implemented up to now might continue under the Cypriot Presidency and the next ones, in view of adjusting the EES to current and future 21st century objectives.

