



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY
Brussels Local Staff Committee

Brussels, 14 October 2013
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NOTE TO THE ATTENTION OF Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, VICE-PRESIDENT

Subject: Request for a meeting regarding the European Schools with the Brussels Local Staff Committee, Interparents and parent representatives (APEEEs) of the 4 European Schools in Brussels.

Dear Vice-President,

We are writing you in order to raise two closely-linked issues concerning the governance and the financial management of the European Schools awaiting imminent and important decisions:

- firstly cost-sharing, on which we address you both as the Commissioner responsible for the administration of the EU contribution to the European Schools and as the Commissioner in charge of staff matters de facto responsible for ensuring the best possible education for the staff's children;
- secondly the reorganisation of the secondary studies programme, on which we address you as the Commissioner in charge of staff matters.

As your own representative noted during the last Board of Governors' meeting (23 September 2013), leadership in these issues has so far been lacking and we hereby call upon you to use your influence to change the current state of affairs decisively. The EU budget already compensates additional costs in the European Schools arising from the failure of Member States to second as many teachers as the system requires. Unfortunately, this has not kept pace with developments and can result in a significant deterioration of the standard of education offered to staff's children; thereby reducing the overall attractiveness of working for the European institutions. This is unfair, particularly given that there are schools which are already operating very efficiently at costs comparable to other international schools.

The lack of a sustainable cost-sharing solution has brought to a head the issue of how the cost of circa €55 million - which is the direct contribution paid by Member States in the form of seconded teachers - is shared between the 28 Member States.¹ Staff representatives have already drawn your attention to this issue and requested your intervention. Indeed, on 11 July 2013, Mrs Souka herself recognised the need to revise the method of cost-sharing in order to reflect a fairer division of the burden among Member States whilst at the same time stressing that a solution should not result in an increased financial contribution by the EU.

For the Extraordinary Board of Governor's meeting of 23 September 2013, two proposals were presented:

- the UK proposal using the structural method of pupil percentage to share the real costs of the number of seconded teachers required

and

- the European Schools' Secretary General's Office proposal using the structural method of pupil percentage to share the "indicative" cost of the theoretical number of teachers that Member States ought to send if they were required.

Yet another possible cost-sharing model - based on that used for the European School in Munich (outlined in Doc. 2012-2-D-43) and supported by the Brussels Local Staff Committee - takes into account the differences in teachers' wages and standards of living amongst Member States and proposes that Member States' contributions would be based on GNP, in line with the principles governing the EU budget. Such a solution could also prepare the ground for discussions on some form of communitarisation of the system in the future.

The 'Munich Model' has the advantage of encouraging Member States to send the required teachers, as they are reimbursed for every teacher they send. In this way, it maintains and even strengthens educational ties with the Member States. The educational integrity of the system is ensured and the widespread recognition of the European Baccalaureate is promoted. Equally important, it does not require any changes to the founding convention of the European Schools².

¹Doc. 2012-2-D-43 p.9

²http://www.eursec.eu/fichiers/contenu_fichiers1/257/SW1-21994A0817en.pdf

The second matter of urgency is the reorganisation of secondary studies coupled with the new mandate to consider the continuation of language sections. This too is largely motivated by a desire to cut costs. Unfortunately, there are currently a number of proposals that would be detrimental to the educational value of the European Baccalaureate.

Among them is a proposal, presented as ‘filières’, which would severely limit students’ options in their final two years and fall short of the general entry requirements of universities in the Member States. This could threaten the validity of the European Baccalaureate as a certificate of general education, as ensured under the Convention.

Equally detrimental are proposals to have central subjects - such as mathematics and the sciences - taught in the second or even third language and to replace upper-level history, geography and philosophy with human sciences and upper-level science subjects with general science. These proposals clearly put students at a disadvantage compared to children educated in the Member States and could jeopardise admission to leading European universities.

In view of these serious threats and whilst recognising the need to limit costs, we ask you to defend the European School system by ensuring that changes to the organisation of secondary studies are subject to a full and thorough impact assessment and to ensure that cost-sharing safeguards the European School system and its educational ties with the Member States - access to the universities in Member States being a core objective of the Convention.

We are also requesting a meeting with you – ideally before the November ministerial meeting – where together with representatives from Interparents as well as the 4 Brussels-based APEEEs we could discuss the abovementioned issues and explore together possible ways forward.

(signed)
Daniela Mormile
President

Copy: Mrs I. Souka, Mr. F. Frutuoso de Melo, Mr.U. Moricca, DG HR
Ms. Pradines, Cabinet Sefcovic
CCP, LSC Members, CLPs, OSP, APEEEs