

The Future of the European Schools

Summary of Brussels Steering Group Meeting 22/6/2018

Dear EEBI Parents,

There was a meeting of the so-called Brussels Steering Group (Groupe de Suivi) on Friday, 22 June to discuss issues surrounding the Future of the Brussels Schools. The meeting was attended by the presidents of the four Brussels APEEEs as well as the Secretary General, Directors, representatives of the Commission, and representatives of teachers. Representatives from the Belgian government were absent.

The meeting treated the Future of the Brussels Schools and in particular the results of the meetings of the Brussels Task Force, a group set up in spring by the Belgian authorities and including representatives of the Belgian Communities, representatives of the Régie des Bâtiments and a team from the Secretary General's Office (of which a director and a representative of the Commission eventually made a part). The Task Force was formed to address the long delays in the provision of a fifth school, the continued increase in the Brussels European School population of approximately 400 students/year and the severe overcrowding that has resulted.

The Task Force is involved in parallel negotiations on several fronts:

1. **8 May meeting between Commission Oettinger and the Belgian Minister Jan Jambon to negotiate a protocol on the Future of the European Schools.** The protocol is expected to address the long delay in the delivery of the fifth school and the need for transitional solutions. Once agreed, the protocol will be signed by Minister Jambon and the Secretary General of the European Schools.
2. **Expected mid-July pronouncement of Belgian Council of Ministers regarding the allocation and use of a parcel belonging to the ex-NATO site for a full fifth European School to be opened at the earliest in 2024.** The Régie des Bâtiments has worked closely with the Ministry of Defense to identify an appropriate plot for a European School. The parcel identified in the middle of the former NATO site is in an area designated for public institutions and lies entirely in the Brussels-capital region; it is bordered by a green zone and has access via the Boulevard Léopold III.
3. **Following these, the submission by the Régie des Bâtiments of a note to the Council of Ministers related to the fifth European School and including in addition the *permanent gift of the Berkendael campus* as well as foreseen temporary measures.**
4. **Ongoing discussions between the Régie des Bâtiments and SPF Finances regarding the temporary use of "la Trésorerie" site on Avenue des Arts to house European School students from September 2020 until the opening of the new site.** The current thinking is that the building will be vacated all at once to allow the opening of the entire site in September 2020 for 1000-1200 students. They are currently studying possibilities to install science labs and add capacity to the canteen. We will know more by the end of the year 2018. The final technical analysis should be sent to the Office of the Secretary General by June 2019 at the latest in order to keep the foreseen timeline.

The next meeting of the Task Force will be in September 2018.

After the formal report, Groupe de Suivi members were informed that the Trésorie building (Avenue des Arts 30) would most likely house the S6 and S7 students of Ixelles and Woluwe due to the proximity of these schools to the proposed site. The two populations would be kept separated and each would continue to be managed from its main seat. There will be no possibility for a bus network and there are no sport facilities on the site. Labs will be built. It was underscored that other options for the use of the Trésorie building may still be considered. (See communication from the Secretary General.)

Propositions about the fate of the Berkendael site were less developed. The site should become permanent, and there is some suggestion that it may be permanently affixed to Uccle with the population distributed and managed across both sites in order to reduce overcrowding at Uccle. We highlighted the importance of honouring promises that have been made to parents enrolled at Berkendael as well as the need to find a more secure and stable solution for future parents. These are still early days in the discussion.

In the meantime, the Impact Assessment on the best longer-term use of the available infrastructure will likely commence in January 2019 to be finished the following year.

The Groupe de Suivi will convene again in September 2018. If you have any questions on these developments, please contact your class and sections representatives.

Kind regards,

Kathryn Máthé
APEEE President