



Brussels, 12 August 2021

To: Katarina Grgec, Chair of the Board of Governors for the European Schools.

Subject: Selection of new Secretary-General for European Schools

Dear Ms Grgec,

The Board of Governors will be selecting a new Secretary-General for the European School system at its extraordinary meeting of 30-31 August. It may also be selecting a new Deputy Secretary General.

We are writing to you to share with you the outcomes of a survey run amongst Brussels schools community in the last few weeks, to gather parents' views on the key priorities for the future Secretary-General, the profile she/he should have and the key success factors she/he will need to manage in the role.

We hope that these reflections will be of use to the Commission in supporting this recruitment process.

The job of Secretary-General of the European Schools is without doubt the most important position in the European School system. The individual in this post has the possibility to shape the evolution of the schools during his or her tenure to a very significant extent.

The schools face unprecedented challenges at present, which the new Secretary-General will need to address. She/he will be responsible for the finances, staff, management, safety, direction and performance of the system, plus managing the relations between EU member states, facilitating the Board of Governors and working with the multiple stakeholder groups. Yet despite having all the responsibilities of a national school system, from the curriculum to exams to safety and wellbeing, there is only a small head office staff to manage everything.

Succeeding in this environment will take special skills, competencies and experience. The person selected carries on his/her shoulders the hopes and aspirations of the full European School community.

The results of our survey of parents are attached. In summary:

Priorities to be addressed:

1. Shortage of qualified teachers
2. Lack of school capacity in Brussels
3. Pupil safety and wellbeing
4. Devaluation of the European BAC in some Member states university admissions policies

Background and competencies for the new Secretary-General:

1. Has a track record in 'making things happen'
2. Background in education
3. Previously run a school system
4. Knows how to work with multiple public sector stakeholders



Key success factors for the system:

1. Solving the problems of teacher recruitment and management
2. Updated curriculum and best educational practice
3. Pooling of resources across the Brussels schools: teacher recruitment, induction, training and professional development, teacher replacement, career guidance, college admissions, enrolment
4. Creating a layer of heads of subject and section in the schools that have real power to assess and manage their staff so that Directors can focus on their overall management responsibilities

We suggest that potential candidates are asked how they will address the above listed “Priorities” and “Key success factors” as part of the interview process. In terms of profile, we believe that the successful candidate must have a proven background in managing a school system, with demonstrably strong management skills at a senior level of responsibility. Whether they come from within the European School system or from outside, we encourage the selection of a candidate who can bring knowledge and experience of best practice across both pedagogical and non-pedagogical areas. She/he should be able to drive change and work with multiple stakeholders to deliver outstanding performance.

We recommend that all candidates for this and other senior positions in the system are asked to go through a professionally managed assessment centre, as is now common for senior level appointments in organisations. Where possible they should be asked to provide 360 degree feedback and other measures of management competence from their current and previous roles.

To help them in their roles, all senior individuals in the schools system, including the successful candidate, should be supported through programmes of annual management training and professional development, as operate in the Commission and other organisations.

Finally, as this is a major public position, we believe it is appropriate that there is full transparency with regard to candidates.

For your information, we have also forwarded these survey results to Commissioner Hahn, Gertrud Ingestad, Director-General Human Resources and Security, European Commission and Sabine Verheyen, MEP and Chair of the European Parliament Culture and Education Committee.

Yours sincerely

Katie Mathe, President, APEEE EEB1 School
Giles Houghton-Clarke, President, APEEE EEB2 School
Tassos Papopopoulos, President, APEEE EEB3 School
Kristin Dijkstra, President, APEEE EEB4 School

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