

Uccle/Berkendael

Brussels, 21 June 2022

To:

Mr Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Budget and Administration, European Commission

Ms Gertrud Ingestad, Director-General Human Resources and Security, European Commission

SUBJECT: EEB1 Management Decision to Shorten the Secondary School Calendar in June 2022

Dear Mr Hahn, Dear Ms Ingestad,

We are writing on behalf of the European School Brussels 1 APEEE to raise concerns about the school's annual calendar and to urge the Commission to take action to address the situation. The EEB1 management has again taken the decision to shorten the school calendar, this year by 10 days for S1-S4 students and by 5 days for S5-S6 students¹. We note that not only is this measure contrary to school regulations, but that it was also communicated late in the school year (Friday, 13 May in the afternoon), which made it difficult for parents to organise alternative activities.

According to the *General Rules of the European Schools*, each school must offer "180 working days (*jours de cours*) for pupils" each year². In 2007 by decision of the Board of Governors, the schools were granted the possibility to suspend regular lessons in the Secondary cycle during the period of the Baccalaureate oral exams. Nevertheless, even in cases where the school management opt to suspend lessons, they are still required to organise replacement activities sufficiently far in advance as to assure their quality.³ The parents at EEB1 have likewise requested that such replacement activities be pedagogical and that they reinforce the formal curriculum.⁴

The APEEE deeply believes that all EEB1 students should be offered 180 school days each year, without discrimination. We also worry that our students receive less time in school than their peers at several other European Schools, not to mention across Europe, due to the sheer size of our school and the logistical complexity of organising exams as well as to the use of our site as an exam correction centre. We think that well-designed pedagogical replacement activities (focusing on project-based learning and cross disciplinary topics, e.g. education for sustainable development, digital skills, civic engagement, etc.) have real potential to bridge this gap. We were thus disappointed: that EEB1 children were once again deprived of the right to a full school year (after two years of significant disruption); that the EEB1 management did not plan replacement activities

¹ This is assuming that S5 students all participate in optional Work Experience; if not, S5 also miss 10 days.

² Ref. [General Rules of the European Schools, Annex 1](#).

³ Ref. [2006-D-2810-en-2](#).

⁴ See the [EEB1 APEEE position 180 Working Days for Pupils](#).



for suspended lessons; and that many EEB1 families were compelled at last minute to search for paid care alternatives. It is notable that this year marked the highest number of end-of-year days cancelled for S1-S4 students in memory — a worrying trend.

The APEEE has raised this issue for several years at our Administrative Board and last year in formal letters to the Office of the Secretary-General and the Commission DGHR. We appreciated Ms Ingestad's 21 June 2021 reply sharing our concerns about the legality of the measures put in place and promising appropriate follow-up by the Commission services. We have also recently communicated our position on this year's decision to the school Director, Brian Goggins and have received his short answer (in Annex). We would add that as staff of the European Institutions, the families of EEB1 believe in the fundamental value of rule of law and find the present circumstance extremely discomfoting.

In closing, we ask the European Commission to use the mechanisms at its disposal to address the school's continued failure to respect the rules in place, and in particular we would support plans to bring this issue to the Board of Governors.

Sincerely,

Valentina PAPA

President EEBI APEEE

Copy:

Mr Christian Roques, Director, Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security