

Brussels, 5 July 2022

MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY APEEE BOARD MEETING 30 MAY 2022

ATTENDEES 29

Voting Board Members:

Sylvie BAREL (FR Prim), Noémie BEIGBEDER (FR Sec), Talia BOATI (VP Administration & Uccle Primary; IT Prim), Sara DAGOSTINI (IT Sec), Marek DVORSKY (Berkendael, SK), Almudena FUERTES FERNANDEZ (ES Prim), Marc GUITART (member elected by GA), Delphine HÉBERT (Berkendael, FR), Karin HUNDEBØLL (DK Sec), Andreas KEIDEL (Berkendael, DE), Brigitte LUGGIN (DE Sec), Sara MARTELLI (Berkendael, IT), Julia MADL (DE Prim), Kathryn MÁTHÉ (Secretary; EN Sec), Pere MOLES PALLEJA (member elected by GA), Gundars OSTROVSKIS (VP Berkendael; LV), Valentina PAPA (President; EN Prim), Sigfrido RAMIREZ PEREZ (ES Sec), Malene SCHAT-EPPERS (DK Prim), Jan TYMOWSKI (Deputy Secretary; PL Prim), Istvan VANYOLOS (HU Prim), Monika VELIKONJA (VP Pedagogy & Uccle Secondary; SWALS), Alex WILSON (Bureau member; member elected by GA).

Deputy Board Members (non-voting):

Ioanna ANAGNOSTOPOULOU (Berkendael, EL), Bartosz HACKBART (Berkendael, FR), Silvia MATRICARDI (IT Prim Dep), Alba MARIÑO ENRIQUEZ (Berkendael, ES), Emese SAVOIA-KELETI (HU Sec Dep), Tibor SCHARF (DE Sec Dep).

Board members can find all supporting documents in the shared folders on OneDrive
(2022-05-30 APEEE Extraordinary Board Meeting/Supporting Documents)

1. Opening of the meeting

President Valentina PAPA started the meeting and welcomed all the participants.

She explained that an Extraordinary Board meeting was necessary to discuss the document on the future structure of Brussels schools, received on 20 May, ahead of the Enlarged Steering Committee Brussels (SCB) on 31 May. The Board Members were earlier invited not to circulate the document but to summarise the ideas contained in it, in order to gather feedback from their sections.

The President reported that she already indicated to the Secretary General that by sending the document so late and just before the school holidays, there would not be enough time for parents to properly consult before the SCB meeting and that APEEE would not be able to take any position. In response, she was informed that the meeting on 31 May would be a first discussion and that there would be a second meeting in June, with all stakeholders to have more time for consultation.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

2. Reflection Document on the future structure of the Brussels European Schools



Pere MOLES PALLEJA presented the outcome of the TASK FORCE “Future of Brussels schools” meeting held on 24 February in order to assess the draft document presented by OSGEE with two options addressing the overpopulation of European Schools in Brussels. In general, the document was perceived as containing many mistakes and technical inconsistencies, making it difficult to understand what was actually proposed. The general principle of the need to improve the efficiency of the use of the school capacity in Brussels was accepted as a fair objective, but the measures proposed in the document were either counter-productive for this objective (option A - maintaining the current system but moving some of the linguistic sections) or they lacked consistency (option B - introducing a campus-style system in which different levels are separated among sites).

What was important to notice and acknowledge is that the document was based on the assumption that Berkendael was to remain a permanent site and that a new school (Brussels V) was planned for 2028.

With regard to option A - with the phasing out of some sections (in the meaning of linguistic communities in a particular school) and phasing in of others (with DE, IT, ES, NL and EN sections to have less sites) - the Task Force considered the threshold of 550 students for a section in a school as technically flawed and leading to suboptimal use of the space. The estimation of option A would lead to an unnecessary use of around 91 classes (i.e. a classroom capacity of 2730 students, which equals approximately to the school capacity of Ixelles). At the same time, the Task Force appreciated that opening new sections could contribute to the linguistic diversity of the European schools.

The option B - splitting students into 3 levels - was identified by the Task Force as presenting possible advantages without considering any possible disadvantages, such as the risks for families with separated siblings. Inconsistency was pointed out with regard to the school capacity in the north and in the south of Brussels between Nursery - Primary and Lower Secondary, as well as that of the proposed management structure with Article 3 of the European School Convention. The Task Force also noted that option B would possibly require online teaching for small sections, which is questionable from a pedagogical point of view, in particular because of the refusal of the OSGEE to put in place any online pedagogical policy. The proposal would also imply a very complicated transition in 2028, requiring deep logistic arrangements, massive transfers, and a completely new management structure.

In conclusion, the Task Force acknowledged that there are some issues to be solved, particularly in the short term, but considered that many of these problems were actually created by the OSGEE in the past with the idea of the satellite classes that led to many mini-classes in Berkendael and Evere. It was recommended that the document should be revised by the OSGEE before wide distribution for consultation with the parents and further discussion.

During the debate, the following points were made by the Board members:

- It is positive to start a discussion about the future of European Schools in Brussels,
- The OSG should have an interest in multiannual planning,
- The APEEE does not have a mandate to negotiate anything at this point,
- The next document will need to be circulated to all parents,
- The document presented on 20 May is confusing, and important questions need to be asked,
- Criteria and capacity of schools should be properly explained, to be applied in the same way to all sections, with some possibly affected more than others but in a well-justified way,
- The planned benefits of the options proposed should be clarified,



- Efficient distribution of resources is important,
- The efficiencies can be made by merging the primary classes in single sites, but the overall goal should be to tackle overcrowding
- The well-being of children should be taken into account,
- Diversity and multicultural education are part of the School's mission,
- Any proposal should respect the multilingual values of European Schools,
- The introduction of geographical criterion for Model B needs to be clarified,
- The existing rules require small classes to be vertically merged (in the worst case - across 3 levels),
- The figures estimated by the OSG for 2028 are not convincing, and the calculation to arrive at the threshold of 550 pupils per section in school is not perfect,
- The likely increase of students' numbers is not taken into account,
- Transferring sections without transferring students will not work, and respecting the sibling rule will lead to inefficiency over many years,
- The enrolment threshold for non priority students in one class –is traditionally 26 students to leave room for special cases without forcing class splits--classes must split at 30 (with the exception of science classes in secondary which should remain under 26 due to lab constraints). For this reason the optimal class size is ~25 students; making classes of 20 will not solve overcrowding,
- The parents need more details about the distribution of sections and levels in options proposed, including those that concern current SWALS,
- If the option B (establishing campuses according to levels) is too complicated, it will leave option A as the only one to be discussed,
- There are potential benefits in separating the levels between sites, and educational systems in many European countries function that way, but the Model proposed is not supported by substantial data and any works on infrastructure depend on the Régie de Bâtiments.
- If model A were to be applied today, space would be made in Uccle for primary, but Secondary would continue to be overcrowded,
- The costs of both (or more) options should be properly estimated and presented.

The President concluded the debate by stressing that the document will be discussed during the SCB meeting on 31 May, and that no decision will be taken at that meeting. She agreed that the relevant data has to be properly used and presented, and that proposing any models should be based on the real capacity of specific schools, with a clear explanation of the effects on the problem of overcrowding. The President indicated that rationalising sections from two sites to one could improve the efficient use of resources (i.e teachers), but that in the proposed Model A, many issues remain unclear and problematic, among others: moving ALL FR in Berkendael risks to undermine the multicultural and multilanguage environment in the campus; not clear if IT section would be phased out from BKL; not clear why the DE needs to be phased out from EEBI, not clear what happens with the EL section, if they would have to move twice.

The timeline of transition needs to be clarified (including the consequences of respecting the sibling rule). She underlined that only a very general analysis was provided for option B, without precise



consideration of costs and negative impacts. The possibility of some classes being held only on-line during the transition period would be risky without appropriate guidelines on remote teaching. To end on a positive note, the President recalled that Berkendael was now confirmed as a permanent school.

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The next meeting is scheduled for the 23 June 2022.