

Interparents

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS Board of Governors meeting 4-7 Dec 2018

Summary of main points of interest

Dear parents,

this summary is produced by Interparents and intended to keep you up to date with recent developments and proposals submitted to the European Schools Board of Governors (**BoG**) meeting held in Brussels on 4-7 December 2018.

Proposals to increase the attractiveness of the European Schools for teaching staff – seconded as well as locally recruited – which are much needed and overdue in our view, take prominence.

Particular attention is also given to BREXIT and its possible consequences for our schools, and to the recent attempts at alleviating the problem of overcrowding at the four European Schools in Brussels.

Other important issues are the state of implementation of the new marking scale as well as the 2018 European Baccalaureate Report issued by the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools (**OSGES**), which includes for the first time a new table for the calculation of the administration costs for the BAC exams between the 13 European Schools and the Accredited European Schools (**AES**).

Finally, this summary also covers some other important new developments regarding Educational Support and Inclusive Education.

I. Proposals to increase the attractiveness of the European Schools for teaching staff - seconded and LRTs.

European Schools are facing more and more problems recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers.

These questions were raised at the highest level of OSGES and the European Commission and discussed in the “Enlarged presidency working group”, which is composed of representatives of the Commission, the current Greek presidency of the BoG, Estonia, Germany, Spain, France & Croatia.

The different proposals were presented to the Board of Governors. Some of the measures could be adopted at the next BoG meeting in April, and enter into force on 1 Sept 2019.

The main areas of concern are:

- 1) the recruitment of English native speakers, due to the reduction of secondments from the UK - and possible complete cessation of secondments following Brexit.
- 2) the cost of living in Luxembourg and Germany, and the competition from other schools like the Accredited European Schools (AES) offering better conditions.
- 3) Maths and Science teachers – given the shortage of seconded national teachers.

Proposals related to Seconded Teachers: The Expert National Detaché (END) model is already applied by the Commission. In this model seconded officials receive their national salary and in addition, a daily and monthly allowance; the two allowances add up to 4000 euros or thereabouts. The END model is a relatively simple system to put in place. But it was noted that the new system would inevitably lead to an income increase for some and a decrease for others. Thus, the BoG would need to put in place additional transitional measures and phase the system in over a period of 9 years.

Another proposed measure is to increase the length of secondments to 12 years and to also multiple (say 2) secondments under certain conditions.

Proposals related to hired teachers: OSGES acknowledged that there is a big problem in Luxembourg, Frankfurt and Karlsruhe. To tackle this, OSGES has suggested a mechanism for a locally adapted income for LRT, which is at least as high as that offered by state schools in the same location. The impact on the budget is estimated at nearly EUR 6.7 M for Luxembourg and EUR 300.000 for Frankfurt and Karlsruhe.

OSGES also proposes to offer permanent contracts after a probation period of usual length – and an additional 6 months notice period in case the LRT will be replaced by a seconded teacher.

The proposal also suggests “protected posts” for native language anglophone teachers, and to open up middle management positions for LRT.

II. Cost -sharing - new model discussed.

The current mechanism of cost-sharing has resulted in the overall reduction of seconded teachers.

Currently 1351 teachers are recruited through secondment—i.e. only 57 % of the total. In order to improve the situation, the BoG has set a target to reach 1500 teachers through secondment—i.e. 70% of the total. This should be achieved by increasing the quota of expected seconded teachers from each Member State.

A decision on this proposal is expected at the April 2019 BoG.

Interparents expressed its concern about the possibility that the new cost sharing mechanism may lead to an increase in non-native teachers in schools. Interparents would like to see Member States to opt for the alternative financial commitment in case second suitably qualified teachers lack the appropriate language level, thus giving to schools the funds they need to recruit suitably qualified teachers on member states behalf. Interparents pointed out the importance of the regulation regarding the minimum language level requirements that was approved by the BoG in Tallinn earlier this year, and asked the BoG representatives to make sure that the Administrative Boards of all European Schools receive a report of compliance or non compliance with the above regulation on an annual basis, and that a consolidated report is presented to the BoG every year.

III. Brexit¹ - impact on the European Schools

OSGES presented the current state of play with regards to Brexit and how it might impact the European schools.

The UK delegation expressed the view that the most likely scenario was the UK leaving with a withdrawal agreement where the UK will be bound by the Convention until the end of the transition period.

In the event of a Brexit without agreement (“no-deal” exit), according to the interpretation of OSGES, the UK will still be bound by the Convention until 31 August 2020. This includes secondments, inspectors and Bac recognition.

However, in such a scenario, the accreditation of the AES school in Culham would be at risk immediately on 31 March 2019. OSGES urged the BoG to find a solution for the cohorts currently in S6 and S7 in Culham.

Interparents suggested that, in the case of no-deal, the Working Group on Brexit should be given as broad as possible mandate to find practical solutions for the schools, teachers and students at Culham. Article 31.2 of the Convention would provide the legal basis for that.

IV. New marking system - German equivalence table and communication to Member States

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The discussion focussed on the recent modification of the conversion table of the marks applied in Germany for students seeking admission in their universities, which was met with criticism by parents and some delegations.

The Central Office plans to send a letter to all Member States informing them about the revision of the assessment system of the European Schools.

Interparents requested that the content of the letter should first be discussed in the Bac observatory Working Group, in the context of the adaptation of the Bac rules to the new assessment system.

V. Educational Support and Inclusiveness - key reports released

The BoG examined two important documents:

¹ The possibility of the withdrawal of the Brexit was not considered because the discussion preceded the Judgment of the Court of Justice of 10 December 2018.

a) Evaluation report on the implementation of the Educational Support Policy in the European Schools

b) Report on Inclusive Education in the European Schools

OSGES is considering hiring a coordinator for these matters. The post will be proposed to the BoG in April.

The delegations expressed their approval for the above mentioned documents and their recommendations.

The BoG welcomed the reports and mandated the Educational Support Policy WG to provide a single draft action plan for both reports, identifying priorities, timeline, and financial impact for their implementation.

VI. Situation of the European Schools in Brussels - status of fifth school and Berkendael and proposal for temporary site at Arts-Loi

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The Secretary General informed the BoG on the measures proposed by the Belgian authorities to address the present situation of overcrowding of the European schools in Brussels:

- The creation of a fifth school in the location formerly occupied by NATO (in Evere). The site would be ready as from September 2024.
- Berkendael would become a permanently available site for the European Schools
- A temporary site, with a capacity for 1 000 students, currently used by the Belgian Ministry of Finance and located in Rue du Commerce/Arts-Loi

According to the Belgian authorities, this temporary site is the only solution available for September 2020. From a logistical perspective, the site is considered generally appropriate for S6 and S7 students, but a feasibility study needs to be concluded before any decision can be taken. Parents expressed serious concerns about the project (i.e. lack of sport and educational facilities, need to commute teachers and transport issues for those living far from the center of Brussels) and requested to be actively involved in the decision making process already at this stage. Teachers would also like to be involved. Some Member States also expressed concerns and asked for clarifications about the project.

7. Accredited European Schools - expansion of the system and contribution to costs

Two new general interest files for accreditation were presented and favourably received (Paris La Defence, France and Templin, Germany)

Given the rapid growth of Accredited schools, they are expected to make a fair contribution to the general costs of the Central Office.

Member States could agree on that principle but the details of the actual allocation of costs still needs to be worked out.

A final decision is expected by April 2019.

Do not hesitate to contact your school's parent association and/or Interparents delegate if you would more information on any of these topics.

Sincerely,

Pere Moles-Palleja (President, Interparents)
Helen Valentine (Vice President, Interparents)