

INTERPARENTS Meetings at the European School, Brussels I 5-6 October 2009

INTERPARENTS met at the Brussels I European School (Uccle) on 5-6 October 2009 for the second time this year. Twelve of the thirteen member Parents Associations were represented (apologies from Frankfurt). Chair: Carine Lingier, President of Interparents. An informal discussion on associated schools was held Monday afternoon in order to prepare the Tuesday meeting with the associated schools which are national schools accredited by the European school system to deliver a European School inspired curriculum and, where applicable, also the European Baccalaureate. Two schools Heraklion and Helsinki were present and the others sent in reports. It was extremely informative and there was a lively exchange of views.

The Management Committee reported that Sunday evening it had met the **Slovenian Presidency** for the second time, the first being in June 2009. Direct contact with the Presidency was very important and they hoped these regular meetings would be continued under future presidencies. They requested to meet the Baccalaureate Inspector, as they had done under the Swedish Presidency, again with the hope that this would become a tradition. Main issues raised were:

- Reduced participation and access to document preparation and working groups and the increasing tendency of working groups to exclude Interparents, and other stakeholders.
- Reduced voting rights of Parents in the Admin Boards.
- Issues linked to the implementation of Reform – autonomy of the individual schools, Bac, associated schools.

Following discussion on the **Reform of the schools system**, it was agreed that the working practice of INTERPARENTS would need to adapt in view of only 2 meetings of the Board of Governors and the increased decision making powers of the Budget Committee (BC; former CAF). These changes also highlighted the need for more access to documentation at all levels. To date, Interparents had 5 meetings a year – 2 preparation meetings to the Teaching Committees (4 representatives attend TC on a rotative basis) and 3 preparation meetings for the Board of Governors (President + another member). It was discussed whether additional meetings were necessary to prepare the Budget Committees and decided that preparation through email exchanges would first be tried out. The President successfully negotiated for all Parents' Associations to have access to the BC documents.

With the reform, responsibilities are shifting on a central and local level. This school year is considered as a year of transition in which the new structures of the decided reform will be put in place and minor adjustments are still possible.

In an attempt to structure the supposedly increased autonomy for the schools, a new organ is put into existence in the schools called SAC (School Advisory Council) which will make proposals and give opinions with a view to the setting of the school's priorities and objectives in all areas of school life. These priorities and objectives are used as the basis for the production of the multi-annual school development plan and of the annual school plan, on the basis of which the budget required for its implementation will subsequently be drawn up. The SAC also deals with the school's internal affairs. Interparents discussed the implementation of SAC in the various schools.

The Administrative Board of the school will carry more responsibility, with decision right in areas that up to now belonged to the central governance level. To assure that the central level keeps a tight grip on the schools, the voting right in the Admin Board has been reshuffled, leading to loss of half of the

votes (1 instead of 2) for the parents and the teachers. Interparents opposes this decision and its president has received a mandate to seek the most appropriate ways to take action. Furthermore, the possibility for the Secretary-General to have two votes in the case of a tied vote leads to question marks over the reality of the 'autonomy' of the schools.

On a central level responsibilities shift as well and Interparents tries to make sure that parents continue to participate fully in the governance of the system and have full access to the documents.

DOCEE is the new documentation system (launched September 2009) for the European school system. Two Interparents representatives per school (plus the APEEE secretariat where applicable) can have access to documents relating to Teaching Committee, Budgetary Committee and the Enlarged Board of Governors.

SWALS (Students Without a Language Section) is a very complex and sensitive issue and it has proven difficult for Interparents to come up with an elaborate position paper. A summary of the IP position will be presented to the SWALS working group in a meeting on 7/10.

The plenary meeting on Tuesday 6 October 2009 prepared the Interparents position for the Teaching Committees. Delegates to working groups reported on **distance learning, careers guidance SEN** and children with serious disability and the **BAC** reform.

Failure and doubling rates. Interparents has brought this issue to the attention of the system since years. Now, statistics and an analysis of the situation are among the documents of the Teaching Committee. As foreseen, the differences between the language sections are striking and the relatively low marks of the French section are a hot issue. Interparents will work to keep the topic on the agenda and continue to push for measures to be taken.

Rapporteurs: Caroline Hetterschijt and Ana Gorey.

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