



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 14 May 2013

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**EDUC 138
INST 226**

INFORMATION NOTE

from: Presidency

to: Council

Subject: European Schools

- *Information from the Presidency*

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Presidency on the above subject, which has been included on the agenda under "Other Business" for the next Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 16-17 May 2013.

European Schools
Information from the Presidency

1. A number of Member States consider that there are underlying problems with the European School system's current model, including with respect to cost-sharing.
2. In this context, colleagues will also be aware of particular issues which have arisen recently, notably the UK position on the secondment of teachers.
3. The relevant organs of the school system, namely the Board of Governors and the Secretary General, have made efforts to resolve the underlying issues of concern.
4. To date, however, these efforts have not yielded a result capable of commanding unanimous support.
5. The Presidency has been made aware of the strong view of parents with children in the European School system that the current situation has the potential to adversely affect the education of their children.
6. Colleagues will have seen the letter from Interparents entitled "European Schools in Crisis" which has been copied to all Ministers of Education and to the European Schools Board of Governors.
7. The Presidency is conscious of the separate and discrete nature of the inter-governmental European schools system and the Council. We are also conscious that a formal decision on this matter cannot be reached within the Council format.
8. However, given that there are relatively few occasions when Ministers of Education meet, and given the urgency of the issue, the Presidency considers it appropriate to raise this issue at political level, as an *other business* item on the Council agenda.
9. It is evident that a process needs to be put in place to resolve these issues.
10. The Irish Presidency stands ready to use its good offices, in partnership with other stakeholders, to assist in any way it can with developing a process intended to resolve the issues at hand.

INTERPARENTS

**ALICANTE BERGEN BRUSSELS I, II, III & IV CULHAM FRANKFURT
KARLSRUHE LUXEMBOURG I & II MOL MÜNCHEN VARESE**

- THE ASSOCIATION OF THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS -
www.interparents.eu

Strasbourg, 9 May 2013

For the attention of the Ministers of Education
and the Board of Governors of the European Schools

European Schools in Crisis!
UK Delegation Statement at April 2013 Board of Governors

Dear Ministers, Dear Board of Governors,

The European schools are currently in crisis because the UK authorities have been forced to take the drastic decision of no longer seconding any full-time staff for the school year 2013-2014 and beyond. This is principally due to the failure of the Board of Governors to solve the cost-sharing problem in particular, despite it being a top priority of the UK presidency in 2011-12, and, in general, the long-standing problem regarding the financing of the European schools system¹.

In the 1994 Convention, member states agreed to support the European schools and enjoy the benefit of them for their own nationals. They also agreed to a fair distribution of posts (article 12.4 (a)). The 2009 Stockholm reform failed to produce any improvement in the poor distribution of costs between the member states. According to this non-binding agreement, the UK is one of 8 member states over-seconding teachers in relation to the nationals enrolled in the European schools system. Despite previous years' warnings and very few teachers seconded recently, the UK still had 217 seconded teachers in the system in relation to the 114 calculated on the Stockholm quota. This coming school year alone will see the non-secondment of 40 teachers.

In view of the seriousness of the UK position at the start of their presidency, the Board of Governors set up a Cost Sharing Working Group at its December 2011. However, the September 2012 meeting was postponed - "indefinitely" it appears - as it has not convened in over a year.

We believe the Board of Governors has failed in its administrative duty to resolve this issue, thus forcing the current unacceptable position taken by the UK. Until this system is rectified, or substantial moves are made in the right direction, the UK will not revoke their decision. Interparents greatly regret the action that the UK delegation have been obliged to take, whilst understanding and having some sympathy with their motives.

¹ [European Parliament resolution on the future financing of the European Schools \(2002/2083\(INI\)\)](#)

Therefore, we urgently call upon the Ministers of Education to:

- protect the schools and the children within them
- act immediately to resolve this crisis, before the start of the next school year
- resolve the problem of the cost sharing debate and the general financing of the European schools system
- keep this essential service to the European institutions on track
- separate the pedagogical issues from the financial constraints
- put European Schools on the agenda of their next European Council Education meeting, and above all,
- preserve this valuable asset and promote the European Baccalaureate as the High Level Group² and the European Parliament intended

The UK and Ireland bear a huge amount of the costs of the students who have no language section of their own, second and third language teaching, as well as subjects taught in vehicular languages. Other member states too, bear significant costs in terms of seconding teachers or providing facilities and a serious discussion is long overdue. European schools are in crisis. Education is the best investment!

Looking forward to being kept informed of any developments.

Yours sincerely,

Ana Gorey
President
Interparents

cc.

President Herman Van Rompuy, European Council

President Martin Schultz, European Parliament

President José Manuel Barroso, European Commission

Ms. Doris Pack, Chair of the Education and Culture Committee, European Parliament

Ms. Erminia Mazzoni, Chair of the Petitions Committee, European Parliament

Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner, Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration

Mrs. Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner, Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

Mr. Kivinen, Secretary General of the European Schools

² [IP/06/1560, Brussels, 14 November 2006 - Promoting the European baccalaureate in an opened up and strengthened European schooling system](#)

UK STATEMENT TO THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The UK delegation wishes to formally notify the Board of Governors that we will not replace any teachers who are leaving the European Schools system in August 2013. Furthermore, requests from schools seeking exceptional tenth years have not met the standards stipulated at the Board of Governors meeting in December 2012. The Board is also aware of our long standing position regarding new Anglophone teaching posts.

This statement will come as no surprise to the Board of Governors. As the UK made clear during their European Schools Presidency in 2011/12, the current cost sharing system is unfair, places a disproportionate burden on a few Member States contrary to Article 12.4 of the European Schools Convention, and requires fundamental reform. Our position on the urgent need for reform has not changed for a number of years and remains consistent with the discussions conducted during our Presidency.

In response to concerns from the UK and others, the Board of Governors passed a non-binding resolution in Stockholm in 2009 which linked the number of teachers seconded by a Member State proportionately to the number of their pupils. Under this system the UK would currently assign only 114 teachers (for 1760 pupils) as opposed to our existing level of 217. Very little progress has been made in respect of implementing this resolution - currently only eight Member States meet this agreed threshold.

This disproportionate financial burden is neither acceptable nor sustainable. Consequently, the UK has no option but to adhere to the 2009 resolution and we are therefore not planning to assign any additional teachers to the European Schools system until substantial progress has been made towards proportionality.

Unfortunately, and despite a widespread consensus, as a Board of Governors we have not yet been able to agree on the necessary action to address this current imbalance and achieve the reforms needed to achieve a fairer cost-sharing system. Nevertheless, the UK stands ready as a willing partner in the Board of Governors to work for the achievement of those reforms.

The Board of Governors should be aware that the UK is determined that the education experience of all European Schools pupils will not be adversely impacted by this decision. The UK intends to work closely with the Office of the Secretary-General and individual schools to facilitate the recruitment of suitably qualified and locally-engaged teachers, including from the UK, by assisting with advertising campaigns and the provision of whatever support is necessary during this exercise.

We earnestly hope that the Board of Governors will now move swiftly to develop and implement reform. Meantime, we will explore with the Irish EU Presidency, the European Commission and others the option of placing this issue on the agenda of a future Education Council for discussion between Ministers, with the aim of building consensus and achieving an acceptable resolution of the current situation.

UK Delegation
15 April 2013