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DRAFT REPORT

on the European Schools system
(2011/2036(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Jean-Marie Cavada

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the European Schools system (2011/2036(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of European Union,
 - having regard to the Commission report to Parliament entitled ‘The European Schools’ system in 2009’ (COM(2010)0595),
 - having regard to the Convention defining the statute of the European Schools¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2005 on options for developing the European Schools System²,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 723/2004 of 22 March 2004 amending the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities and Conditions of Employment of other servants of the European Communities³, ,
 - having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into force on 3 May 2008 and was ratified by the European Union on 23 December 2010, in particular Article 24⁴ thereof,
 - having regard to the annual report by the Secretary-General of the European Schools presented to the Board of Governors at its meeting of 12, 13 and 14 April 2011 in Brussels⁵,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Legal Affairs (A7-0000/2011),
- A. whereas Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the Union shall contribute to the development of quality education and that its action aims to develop the European dimension in education through the teaching of languages,
- B. whereas the European Schools enable pupils to affirm their cultural identity and to attain a high level of knowledge of foreign languages,
- C. whereas the European Schools cannot be put in the same category as international schools because they meet a need to educate children in their mother tongue,

¹ OJ L 212, 17.8.1994, p. 3.

² OJ C 193E, 17.8.2006, p. 333.

³ OJ L 124, 27.4.2004, p. 1.

⁴ <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.

⁵ Ref.: 2011-02-D-39-fr-1.

- D. whereas the European Schools operate in a way that is no longer suited to the present circumstances,
- E. whereas in the Schools in Brussels and Luxembourg the problem of excessive numbers of students is detrimental to the quality of education and prevents the enrolment of children other than the children of EU institutions staff,
- F. whereas the educational model on which the European Schools are based should be promoted in the Member States,
- G. whereas it is difficult to bring together within the same educational system students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, who may have very different talents and capacities,
- H. whereas in order to help bring students together and to foster mutual understanding between them, certain lessons are taught in the same language to joint classes of the same level,
- I. whereas the European Schools are funded by contributions from the Member States and a balancing contribution from the EU,
- J. whereas the economic crisis has repercussions for the financing of the European Schools,
- K. whereas the number of students without a language section (SWALS) is continuing to grow,
- L. whereas the SWALS are given learning support in the language of the language section in which they enrol and classes in their mother tongue, which leads to significant and increasing structural costs,
- M. whereas a special levy on the salaries of officials, intended to be used inter alia for the European Schools, was introduced in 2004,

General considerations

1. Regrets that the European Schools are often wrongly considered to be elitist schools, when their mission is to provide mother-tongue education for students whose parents may be required to change their place of work or return to their country of origin;
2. Considers that the European Schools should serve as an example and that exporting this model to the national education systems would assist professional mobility;

Organisation and spread of the European baccalaureate system

3. Considers that the budget restrictions that the Schools will have to accept must be accompanied by a real increase in their management autonomy;
4. Stresses the need to give the European Schools the foundation of an adequate legal base, within the EU's area of competence, and wishes to be involved in any discussions on the subject;

5. Urges the Board of Governors to think further ahead about infrastructure requirements and to take measures that will help avoid the problems of excessive numbers; calls on the Member States and the Commission to encourage the development of Type II and Type III Schools;
6. Encourages the Member States to promote the concept of European Schools on their territory by creating pilot establishments;
7. Invites the Member States to develop syllabuses for use in all EU countries;
8. Recommends that the Member States should promote within their own educational systems certain concepts borrowed from the European School system, to encourage the emergence of European citizenship from a very young age;
9. Points out that students who hold the European baccalaureate can apply to any university in the EU and urges the Member States to ensure that the relevant provisions are complied with;
10. Encourages twinning between the European School and national schools;

Budgetary aspects

11. Notes that revenue is static or falling, particularly in connection with enrolment from contract bodies or families outside the Community institutions who are now being turned away because of lack of places
12. Notes the need to rationalise the Schools' management costs, but points out that attempts to curb expenditure must not bring into question fundamental principles that form the basis of the European Schools concept, such as mother-tongue teaching by native speakers;
13. Calls on the Commission to define its budget contribution so that these principles are respected and there is adequate provision for students with special educational needs (SEN);
14. Notes that some states are increasingly going back on their obligations regarding the secondment of teachers, particularly because of the difference between the percentage of children of their nationality being taught and the contribution that they are being asked to make to the Schools' budget;
15. Encourages the creation, once the quota of students is reached, of new language sections so the SWALS can be educated in their mother tongue and there is no discrimination with regard to students from other language sections, with a consequent reduction of the costs associated with the SWALS' particular status;
16. Points out that the lack of seconded staff must be compensated by local recruitment of staff whose salaries are paid by the Schools; calls on the Board of Governors to ensure that the Member States who do not contribute financially by seconding teachers pay an equivalent financial contribution to the Schools' budget;

17. Considers that the current funding system places a disproportionate burden as regards secondment and supply of infrastructure on certain Member States, and calls on the Board of Governors to review the way in which the Schools are funded and the recruitment of teachers;
18. Calls on the Commission to take steps to define the percentage of the special levy assigned to the European Schools;

Educational aspects

19. Calls for general use of the working languages for teaching all non-fundamental subjects;
20. Stresses the need for an external evaluation of the European Schools' syllabuses;
21. Hopes that the recruitment of local staff meets the excellence criteria and that they are checked by inspectors;
22. Reaffirms that provision for students with special educational needs remains a priority and asks the Board of Governors to ensure that coefficients are applied to this category of students when calculating class sizes;
23. Calls on the Board of Governors to consider the creation of a school-leaving certificate other than the baccalaureate for students who wish to specialise in vocational courses;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States and the Board of Governors of the European Schools.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. Current situation

The first European School was founded in Luxembourg in October 1953 at the instigation of a group of officials. This educational experiment, which brought together children with different mother tongues, was speedily judged to be successful and, over the years, 14 European Schools were founded in various towns; these correspond to the present Type I Schools.

In 2010 these Schools had 22 778 pupils, 14 292 of them in the Schools in Brussels and Luxembourg who accounted for 63 % of the students. Between 2007 and 2010 the School population increased by 8.35 %. Two new Schools are due to open in Brussels and Luxembourg in 2012.

Pupils are divided into three categories. Category I pupils are basically the children of officials and contract staff working at the EU institutions. The percentage is constantly increasing and they currently represent almost three quarters of the total Schools population. They account for over 90 % in the four Brussels Schools, where insufficient infrastructure has led to restrictions on enrolling Category II pupils (those who are admitted under agreements concluded between the Schools and certain organisations and undertakings) and Category III pupils (those whose parents are required to pay fees). Because of the constraints on premises, the Board of Governors has decided no longer to sign Category II contracts for the Brussels Schools.

2. Educational aspects

The educational organisation of the European Schools requires basic teaching in the pupil's mother tongue. Thus each School has several language sections. The breakdown and content of courses are the same in each section.

When the conditions for creating a new language section are not fulfilled, students without a language section (SWALS) are enrolled in another language section and receive teaching in their mother tongue and special courses to bring them up to standard in the language section in which they are enrolled.

To encourage genuine multicultural education, stress is placed on the study, understanding and use of foreign languages. The study of a first foreign language, used as a 'working language' (English, German or French) is compulsory from the first primary class. All the students learn a second foreign language from the second year of secondary education. Language courses bring together students from different nationalities; they are given by mother-tongue teachers. This mixing of languages is also found in art, music and sports education, where the classes consist of groups from different sections.

Another feature is the weekly European Hour in the primary school, where children from all sections come together for games and cultural and artistic activities.

The European Schools offer only one educational branch, which leads to the European baccalaureate. As students with educational difficulties are not able to change specialisation,

assistance is provided for students with special educational needs (SEN), so a maximum number of students can obtain the certificate. In 2009-2010, the average percentage of primary and secondary students repeating a year was 2.7 %¹.

3. Budgetary aspects and staff policy

As stated in the preamble to the Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools², the European Schools operate under a *sui generis* system, based on cooperation between the Member States and the EU.

Article 25 of the Convention states that the budget of the Schools shall be financed by:

- (1) contributions from the Member States through the continuing payment of the remuneration for seconded or assigned teaching staff and, where appropriate, a financial contribution decided on by the Board of Governors acting unanimously;
- (2) the contribution from the European Communities, which is intended to cover the difference between the total amount of expenditure by the Schools and the total of other revenue;
- (3) contributions from non-Community organisations with which the Board of Governors has concluded an Agreement.

Of the contributions from Member States, in 2010 there were 64 posts for seconded teachers not filled by the States; 27 of these were for English speakers. English is the language studied by almost all pupils, and the SWALS are primarily enrolled in the English section (and French section)³. This situation has led to an imbalance between the percentage of UK students and that of seconded teachers of the same nationality. As a result the Board of Governors at its April 2008 meeting in Helsinki adopted general principles to determine fair cost-sharing amongst the Member States on the basis of the percentage of its nationals among the students (see point 4).

An approach has been adopted whereby Member States who so wish can second teachers to provide teaching in a language that is not their own. After two years it has become evident that few Member States are willing to bear the cost of working-language teaching posts.

The only way of remedying the shortage of teachers is to make use of locally recruited staff, financed from the Schools' budget. A third of the hours taught in the European Schools are thus taught by locally recruited staff, which of course increases the EU contribution to the Schools' budget.

Thus it can be seen that, since 2005, the trend in the various players' contributions to the Schools' budget system has been a fall in the share borne by the Member States, a rise in the share borne by the Commission and a fall in the share borne by the Category III students⁴.

¹ Facts and figures on the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year in the European Schools, Ref.: 2010-D-569-en-3.

² OJ L 212, 17.8.1994, p. 3.

³ In 2010, in the Brussels Schools, 66.83 % of the SWALS were enrolled in the English section, as opposed to 29 % in the French section and 4 % in the German section.

⁴ Annual Report of the Secretary-General to the Board of Governors of the European Schools, Ref.: 2011-02-D-39-fr-1.

4. The 2009 reform and opening-up of the system

In cooperation with the European Parliament, which set out its views *inter alia* in its 2005 resolution on the European Schools¹, in 2004 the Commission began to reflect on how best to reform the European Schools system in a way that would allow it to meet the challenges of an enlarged Union. This reform was also seen as an opportunity to increase access to European studies. As Parliament pointed out in its 2005 resolution, the European educational model has proved itself and it is desirable that it should be accessible to pupils outside the European Schools.

In May 2009 the Board of Governors approved the principles of this reform in three areas:

- simplifying the general governance system so decisions are taken at the appropriate level;
- ensuring that the running costs are divided fairly among all Member States;
- opening the system to Type II Schools (national schools approved by the Board of Governors that give priority to taking in children from the European institutions) and Type III Schools (national schools approved by the Board of Governors which can take in children without making a distinction).

Since then, several national schools on EU territory which provide European schooling have signed a convention of accreditation that enables them to deliver the European curriculum and perhaps also to award the European baccalaureate.

5. Rapporteur's assessment

The European Schools were set up to ensure that the children of the European institutions' staff who are required to live and work abroad in a different cultural environment have access to education in their mother tongue so these children can be reintegrated into a school in their country of origin at any time. These Schools are therefore a necessity and not a luxury.

It should be borne in mind that education is free in all the Member States and the institutions' staff have no other option than to enrol their children in these Schools if they want them to be taught in their mother tongue.

Over 50 years after the creation of the first European School, it is clear that the concept must change and adapt to new economic and social requirements. It must nevertheless remain a model of inspiration for national school systems, in developing European citizenship and encouraging mobility.

Although the financial crisis requires some budget cuts, it is essential to consider the situation more from the angle of investment in the future of young Europeans than from the angle of costs. Savings should not weaken the fundamental principles on which the system is based.

¹ European Parliament resolution on options for developing the European Schools system (OJ C 193E, 17.8.2006, p. 333).

In this respect, it is essential that teachers should continue to provide education in their mother tongue. Any deviation from this principle is an aberration; if the system has difficulties in finding native speakers, it means that the recruitment policy should be reformed. But before thinking about further reform, the rapporteur thinks that the present system, whereby the Member States should make a financial contribution to the Schools' budget if they do not second teachers, should first be fully exploited.

On staff policy, the rapporteur notes that the corollary to the Member States' failure to respect their obligations on secondment is very strong pressure on the EU budget. An increasing number of staff have to be recruited locally and paid directly by the Schools, which increases the balancing contribution paid by the Commission. It is imperative that the defaulting Member States should be reminded of their obligations to provide teachers in accordance with the quotas.

In this context, to ease the burden on certain Member States, particularly those who provide teachers in language sections where a majority of SWALS are found, efforts should be made to ensure that the concept of mother-tongue teaching should be applied as soon as the quota of pupils required for opening a language section is reached. It is, moreover, the only way of avoiding any discrimination between SWALS and others.

The rapporteur also thinks that substantial economies could be made if general use were made of the working languages (English, German and French) for teaching all non-fundamental subjects.

In general, the rapporteur thinks that there should be more of a move towards the setting up of Type II and Type III Schools, which would represent a practical step towards 'European' education accessible to a greater number of students.

The evaluation of the running of the European Schools is positive and this system opens up stimulating prospects for providing a framework for a European educational system. However, it is the Member States' responsibility to work not only for the conservation of this system but also for the expansion of this unique and exceptional model of education in Europe.