



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Staff Committee Brussels

The President

Brussels, March 2nd 2010
CLP Bruxelles/DM/mp D 6 (2011)

**NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF JOSÉ MANUEL BARROSO,
PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND MAROŠ ŠEFČOVIČ,
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Subject: budgetary cuts to European schools

Dear President, Dear Vice-President,

The Local Staff Committee and the Parents Associations of the European schools in Brussels are very concerned about the announced cuts to the Schools budgets for 2011 and 2012.

The European Schools will receive a budget of €164 million from the European Commission for this financial year, with no increase at all for 2012. This represents a cut of €7 million over the amount budgeted for 2011 and a cut of €17 million for 2012.

Furthermore the European Commission is currently insisting that in addition to absorbing these cuts, the schools also pick up in 2011 the unbudgeted cost of the recent European Court ruling, granting European Commission employees (i.e. teaching and other staff employed at the schools) fully indexed staff salary increases, backdated to 2009.

For large schools such as Woluwe, Ixelles or Uccle this means having to find savings of around €2 million in both 2011 and 2012 out of running costs of circa €34 million, which are mostly fixed with little room for flexibility. The situation is not easier for the fourth school where higher additional costs will be generated by moving from Berkendael to Laeken in mid-2012,

For 2011 the expenses have already been committed based upon the original budget approved by the Board of Governors in April 2010. These expenses cannot now be undone as they almost entirely relate to the class and subject structure in place for the school year that started in September 2010; pupils cannot have their courses cancelled mid-way through the year.

This gets to the heart of the problem; around 80% of all costs in the schools are related to teaching staff. Therefore the only realistic way that significant cuts can be achieved is

by reducing the amount spent on teachers, which must inevitably result in fewer courses on offer or fewer courses in the mother tongue of the pupils.

We understand that schools cannot be immune from belt tightening in the current adverse economic environment and share the need to explore the scope for a more efficient use of resources. However cuts of this magnitude will affect core educational choices and endanger the future of our children.

The Local Staff Committee and the parents associations support the need to explore whether there is scope for greater efficiencies by combining groups and sharing resources better, but this alone will not close such a large funding gap.

The schools have transparent budgets without hidden reserves or spending programmes that can be delayed or adjusted to cover these short falls. Therefore the full impact of these cuts will fall on the quality of education and the associated expenses such as for pupils with Special Educational Needs, SWALS (students without a language section) and safety and security; there is nowhere else that this money can be found.

Local Staff Committee and the parents associations strongly disagree with the size of cuts the Commission and Member States are demanding, and ask the amounts to be revised.

In particular, we would like to focus our concerns on the following points:

- First and foremost, for 2011 the European Schools should not be asked to absorb the back dated cost of the teachers salary indexation as per the recent court ruling. This cost should have been provisioned for in the school budgets. The failure to do so cannot be assumed by the European schools that are already under pressure. We question the way these amounts have been budgeted as well as the discrepancy between the way the Commission dealt with this issue for its own administrative budget and the budget of the schools, and ask the Budgetary Authority to find another solution. For 2012, we urge the Commission and the Budgetary Authority to ensure that the amounts foreseen in the financial programming will not be reduced.
- Second, core educational subjects, such the sciences and other BAC related subjects and L2 in all vehicular languages, must not be touched, because this directly affects the chances of our children for further education. We strongly oppose any cuts to the core curriculum or extensions to teaching core subjects by non-native speakers or in non-native languages. This strikes deep into the quality of the European schools as well as into their very “raison d’être” . Already we see BAC results for the larger schools trailing; this trend must not be re-enforced through these cuts. Efficiency savings should be directed at non-BAC related subjects, but not the core curriculum.
- Third, cuts must not affect the replacement of teachers. Already the children in the big schools receive less than the stipulated 180 days of education. This will be compounded by the loss of hours due to illness and other teacher absences if the budget does not allow for appropriate replacement. Budgets for teacher replacement are already insufficient, and typically exhausted before mid year – a further example of how the current budgeting process driven by the Commission is not aligned with the reality of the schools needs.

- Fourth, cuts must not affect the maintenance of basic infrastructure for providing core services such as canteen, transport, periscolaire activities, nor safety and security measures which are the responsibility of the School system.

We would like to meet you at your earliest convenience in order to discuss these points.

The future of Europe as a knowledge economy is predicated on high quality education. We are confident that you will not allow the short term actions of the Commission and Member States themselves to be the first to undermine this principle.

Yours faithfully

Hans TORREKENS

President

(Signed)

APEEE I	APEEE II	APEEE III	APEEE IV
Pierre Choraine	Wolfgang Munch	Helene Chraye	Erika Schulze
(Signed)	(Signed)	(Signed)	(Signed)

Copies: Mrs Souka, Director General Human Ressources European Commission
 Interparents, APEE
 Staff Committees of the EP, Council, CES, CdR
 OSPs