



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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60th anniversary of the first European School

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European School/Luxembourg
12 April 2013

Madame la ministre, Excellences, M. le Secrétaire général, Madame la directrice, chers parents, chers élèves, mesdames, messieurs,

Je voudrais à mon tour féliciter les écoles européennes, et bien sûr en particulier aujourd'hui la plus ancienne d'entre elles, l'école de Luxembourg I, qui les représente si bien. Je tiens à les remercier au nom de l'ensemble du personnel des institutions européennes à Luxembourg, à Bruxelles, mais aussi sur les autres sites des écoles européennes.

If I may now switch to English...

Looking at it today, it is hard to imagine that this school's story began in 1953 in a former villa with just a handful of students. Indeed, until the Luxembourg II school in Bertrange-Mamer was opened last year, this was in fact the biggest of all the European schools.

There is a saying in English: 'mighty oaks from little acorns grow', meaning of course that great things can come from small beginnings. This is true not only of the school itself, but, more importantly, of the many hundreds of thousands of pupils who have passed through its doors over the last 60 years.

The aim of any school is to give its pupils the best possible start in life, to equip them with not only the education but also the life skills they will need to see them through the rest of their lives. This is never an easy task, of course, but the fact that the European Schools have done so through their unique approach combining different languages, cultures and education traditions, makes their performances all the more impressive.

And let's not forget that this was an approach that began right here in this school! After 60 years of successfully educating of young European citizens, the European School system and the European Baccalaureate are widely recognized and appreciated across Europe.

The success of any school is due to a number of factors, and this is no different for the European School system.

First and foremost, any successful school needs good teachers, and over the last 60 years the seconded and locally recruited teachers of the European Schools have shown time and time again that they are amongst the brightest and best in Europe.

As a parent myself of children at a European School, I have seen for myself the dedication and commitment of the teaching staff that has consistently helped the European Schools to be among some of the best educational institutions in Europe, as the excellent results in recent PISA surveys carried out by the OECD clearly show.

But good teachers, important as they are, are only part of what makes a good school. There must also be strong commitment from parents to support their children's education, and this is seen time and time again throughout the European School system.

It is thanks to parents' associations that our children benefit from school bus services, canteens and a whole raft of after-school activities that complement their education. Parents are also widely involved in the organization of events such as the one here today.

Any good school needs a clear vision and insightful management, and here too the European Schools have been extremely well served over the years.

Directors such as Mrs Vassilacou, supported by their staff, are adept at running schools of all different shapes and sizes, each with their own specific organisational and budgetary challenges, and yet at the same time giving each of them their own special character.

Each and every European School is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of the pupils, teachers, management and directors – but there is also another contributory factor that is unique to our system: the collaboration with Member States and the Commission, representing all the European institutions.

Let's not forget that without the continued commitment of Member States to provide the schools themselves and to second teachers to them from the national education systems, the unique method of teaching that constitutes the European School model would quite simply not exist.

If we want to continue to attract the very best and brightest people from across Europe to the European Public Administration, to encourage them to leave behind their homes, their families and their friends and to move to Luxembourg, Brussels or anywhere else in Europe to work for the greater good of 500m European citizens, then we have to provide them with the very best support that we can. The European School system, enabling children from the four corners of Europe to be educated as if they were at home, is a key part of that support.

That was the vision that inspired the creation of this, the very first European School, right here in Luxembourg 60 years ago. It is a vision that still inspires the European School system today, and which, I am sure, will survive for many years to come.

I thank you for your attention