

Schola Europaea

Office of the Secretary-General

CONFERENCE CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS (15-16 May 2006 – NOORDWIJK – THE NETHERLANDS)

The two documents being here placed on the website give information as supplied by the Dutch presidency, on the outcome of a conference held in Noordwijk as part of the initiative launched by the Dutch Minister for Education, Mrs van der Hoeven and Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr Kallas.

At the request of the Dutch presidency these documents are being passed to the members of the Board of Governors and of the Preparatory committees.

Conclusions of the Conference on the Future of European Schools 15 – 16 May 2006 at Noordwijk, the Netherlands

1. Vision

The broad vision of the future of the European School System is based on creating a general **coherent primary and secondary educational system** fulfilling common requirements and criteria, whatever the type of school providing it (see hereafter), and leading to a common diploma recognised in all Member States: **the European Baccalaureate**.

2. Strong points of the European Schools and points that can be improved

The present European School System (ESS) is characterised, in the opinion of the Conference, by the following strong points:

Pedagogic

- The learning of three or more different modern European languages (multi-linguism) including the mother tongue;
- A strong attention to European Citizenship;
- A surrounding in which children from many different nationalities in a natural way learn to cope with cultural differences;
- The European Baccalaureate (EB) which is recognized by the 25 member states. The EB-diploma guarantees in most cases, but not in all, entry to Higher Education in each of the Member States of the EU at equal level with the secondary school absolvers of their own educational system.

Governance

- The system is an opportunity for intergovernmental cooperation in the field of education (which is not a community competence).

Points of the European School System that can be improved are:

Pedagogic

- The quality of the European Baccalaureate;
- Some pedagogic aspects of the ES System (mother tongue education, language sections, curriculum, teachers, inspection);
- The incorporation of the education developments at national level into the ES System;
- An out stream level below the Baccalaureate level will improve the ES system;
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Students without a Language Sections (SWALS)

Administrative- Financial Procedures / Audit and Evaluation

- The financial and administrative procedures;
- Audit and Evaluation;
- The cost effectiveness of the ES system;
- The need of a more equitable division of the costs over the different partners;

Governance

- The decision making process of the ES at the Board of Governance level (the present one with 25 member states is not efficient: too cumbersome, too slow);
- The position of the bureau;
- Increasing the autonomy of the school and the conditions for it (accountability);
- The management structure of the different schools;

3. Considering new answers to new needs: an European Schooling System with one European Baccalaureate

The European Schools (ES) were created initially to educate EU staff children. Nevertheless, this does not imply that ES can be created at every new agency/institution.

However in the context of decentralisation a solution for education of children of mobile EU employees needs to be found.

The present system of ES - in case it is expanded to many new places where new European Agencies will be initiated - leads to difficulties in the sending out of seconded teachers. In case of expanding of the ES system these organisational aspects as well as the cost sharing should then have to be reconsidered.

The Conference concluded that it is necessary to think beyond the current ES System composed of 13 existing European Schools, and to consider **a more flexible concept**: a "European Schooling System" with clearly defined criteria which could apply to different types of schools (see hereafter) according to the local conditions.

The Conference is of the opinion that in case of development of the present ES System towards such a European Schooling System, the starting point should be that **only one pedagogical system** should exist. In this way a European Schooling System is ensured, wherever the school is located and whatever the type of the school providing the European education.

The Conference distinguished in their discussion the following three types of "European Schools/ European Schooling":

Type 1: These are the classical existing European Schools¹.

Type 2: These are national or international schools which will provide European education to the children of EU Staff and may be opened where European Agencies or equivalents are about to be founded or where existing schools have presented General Interest Papers and are seeking accreditation currently from the Board of Governors.

Type 3: The conference has considered the idea that, independently of the existence of an EU agency or institution, it should be possible to have accredited schools entitled to offer the European Baccalaureate, according to the criteria and conditions laid down, if a Member State decides to take such an initiative. This type requires further reflection.

¹ Article 28 of the Convention: "*The Board of Governors, acting unanimously, may conclude participation Agreements concerning an existing School or one to be established in accordance with Article 2 with any organizations governed by public law which, by reason of their location, have an interest in the operation of the Schools. [...] (Example Munich). This possibility should be maintained.*"

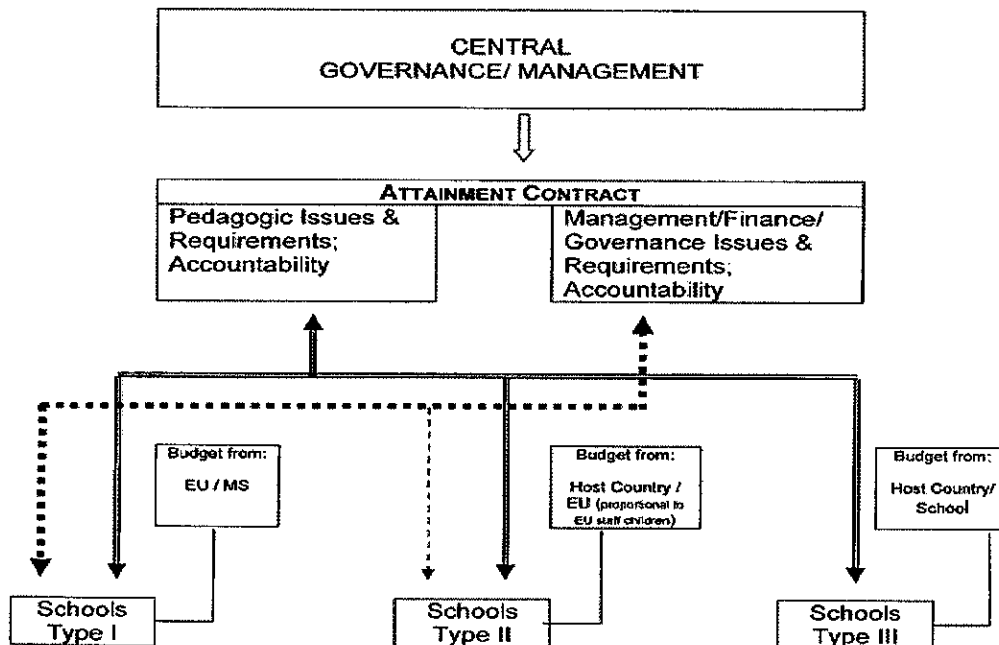
For all types of schools, the general denominator is that the schools work towards one common diploma the “**European Baccalaureate**” based on a ‘**common curriculum**’, with as far as possible **Mother Tongue Education (MTE)**. This conform to the requirements set by the European School System regarding pedagogic targets, and conform to the demands regarding exams and accreditation. These elements will be supervised by the Board of Inspectors (see hereafter).

Inspections should assure the coherence of the “European Schooling System” and provide a quality control function. The appropriate organisation should be defined for every school, according the type 1, 2, 3.

Attainment contracts / contracts d’objectifs should be the base of agreements made between the Management of the European Schooling System in Brussels and the different schools. These contracts comprise for all types of schools pedagogical issues and requirements, to ensure coherence and high quality education. Attainment Contracts should also cover Management, Administrative / Financial and Governance issues but are only required for ES type I and to some extend to type II. For all type of schools the attainment contract will also contains accountability arrangements. (Attainment contracts for type III schools are only related to Pedagogical issues)

The sharing of costs of a ES type I between the European Community as a whole and the different Member States should continue as it is in the present ES system, though the allocation of costs among the individual Member States needs to be reasonable and equitable.² The costs of the ES type II will be shared between the host country and the European Community according to the number of EU staff children. The costs of the type III schools will be carried entirely by the schools / host country.

The graph below visualizes this “Steering Model”.



² Regarding the sharing of costs one delegation emphasized that as a condition for its approval for reform measures there should be a proportional contribution based on the service provided.

4. Improvements to be made at the present European School: Type I

The Conference is of the opinion that the pedagogical quality of the present European Schools must be enhanced, that the administrative / financial procedures of the European System must be strengthened and that the Governance of the European Schools should be improved.

Pedagogical:

Mother Tongue education (MTE) should be a priority. It should be such, that a request of parents to teach their child MTE should be granted whenever possible.

The teaching of the first foreign language should start at an early age.

There is a need for more collaboration between the language sections, so that more homogeneous, tuned, curricula are being developed.

Improvements and innovations at national level must be incorporated faster in the different curricula.

The ES System must have more European added value. A joint pedagogical content needs to be developed (in history and literature) with a European dimension which can be taught in different language sections.

The ES should be better incorporated in their "surrounding".

Teachers and management need to be trained continuously and facilities for this should be made available.

The examine system needs to be professionalized, so that there is a clear distinction between the persons that prepare the exam, the persons that examine the pupils, and the persons that study the results of the examination.

There should be an assessment on a number of core subjects for all pupils attending the ES at the age of 16. At that moment, the school results are comparable. This moment of assessment could serve as a graduation moment, i.e. students could either leave the school or go up for the exam programme at the age of 18. Where possible, the exam programme from the age of 16 till the EB, must offer for the pupils more specialization in teaching materials. There should also be a reflection on how to deal with pupils who leave the school before the end of a cycle.

The quality assurance by the inspectors of the teaching and learning process in the schools should be based on a common inspection framework and a common approach. General and proportional inspections of schools should be the core business of the inspectorate. Joint inspections must be developed.

Governance:

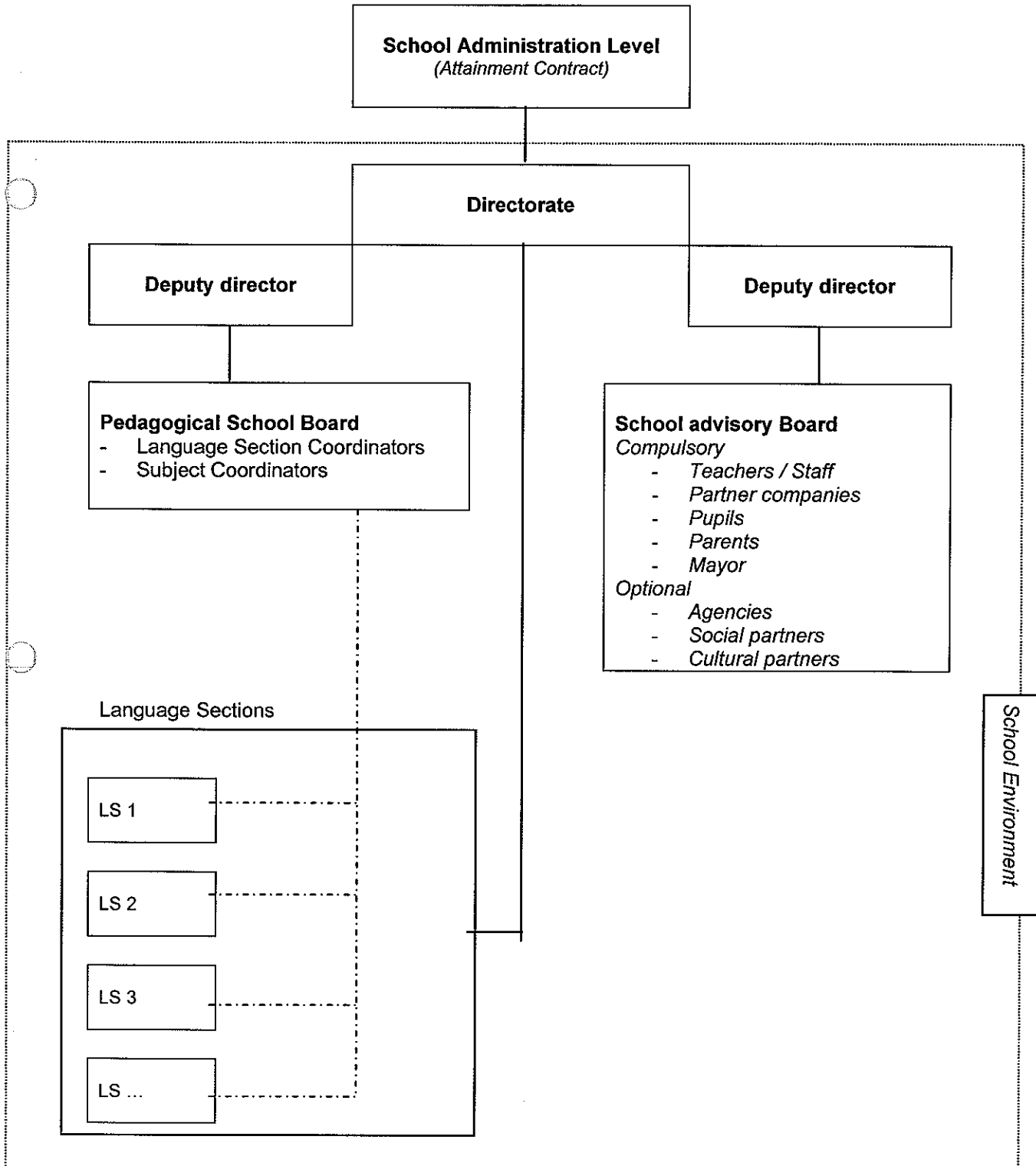
There is a consensus in the Conference that greater autonomy of the ES is desired but must be balanced by greater accountability. Connected to increased autonomy are quantitative and qualitative goals to be set and agreed upon, as well as clear rules to the schools giving account (attainment contracts).

The Executive Management will have to draw up these attainment contracts (as mentioned before in paragraph 3) with each ES in the fields of finance/administration and pedagogy. The autonomy is therefore automatically linked to greater responsibility.

More autonomy and more accountability enquires a strengthened school management. This could be accommodated by the introduction of middle management.

A graph, that is put forward as an option for a "Governance model at school level" is presented below.

Governance on School Level
European School Type I
 (option)



Financial control and procedures, audit and evaluation:

Regular internal audits and evaluations should be performed by an independent unit. This is necessary for the effectiveness and efficiency of the ES system and linked to the attainment contract. These audits and evaluations must take place at the bureau in Brussels but also at the ES themselves.

The current Financial Regulations (FR) of the ES should be adapted according to new modern insights. Starting point is here the Financial Regulation of the EU as it has been adopted by all Member States. However, while adapting the present FR of the ES towards such new FR it must be kept in mind that one is dealing with schools and with an intergovernmental organization.

(In the future the current financial and budgetary daily management should be performed by the executive management,)

The establishment of a resource / allocation system at the European Schools should be a first step in the process towards more autonomy. It will increase the transparency of the existing ES system.

Possibilities to increase the cost – effectiveness:

More cost – effectiveness can be reached by diminishing the amount of seconded teachers (salary costs more than 60% of the costs of the ES) by reducing the linguistic diversity of teaching in certain subjects as the school career proceeds. Another idea is to change the translation policy for the documents of the BoG and the advisory bodies. For instance translation policy could be different for working documents and documents that contains decisions.

5 European School Type II

General requirements:

Any Member States which is candidate to host an EU agency (or equivalent) or Institution (or equivalent) should be required to propose a possibility for an ES type II.

These national (or international) Type II schools accomplish conditions and criteria to be accredited to offer a “European Schooling” and to offer the European Baccalaureate.

They should meet the standards for accredited schools for assuring a European education, and offer access to the « EU Baccalaureate » for the children of staff of the agencies.

Pedagogic requirements:

Mother Tongue education (MTE) should be a priority. It should be such, that a request of parents to teach their child MTE should be granted whenever possible. MTE should be given by native speakers. The home country may deliver if they wish, in agreement with the host country, the MTE teachers.

All **other teachers are recruited** by the school/host country. Preferably, some of these other teachers should be native speakers. (For instance the language teachers).

Students should as much as possible take a Baccalaureate exam in their mother tongue and in one of the other languages.

There should be an assessment on a number of core subjects for all pupils attending the ES at the age of 16.

The responsibility of the Board of Inspectors is the same as in Type I for defining pedagogical requirements. However for type II schools the Board of Inspectors will, instead of looking at the performance of all teachers, concentrate on the performance of individual MTE teachers.

Cost sharing:

The member states where the agencies will be established must bear a greater responsibility than in the present type I school for delivering European Schooling.

A type II school must make more use of the national educational infrastructure.

The host countries will have to deliver the funding of the new type II European Schools. And the EU Community should pay the costs of the children of the EU Staff.

However, firstly a clear view has to be established what a type II school should look like, especially what the requirements for this type should be.

6 European School Type III

The ideas followed hereafter were discussed by the members of the Conference. They felt that realising these ideas could have a far reaching impact. Therefore the Conference proposed that these ideas need further elaboration.

These ideas discussed are:

- On the initiative of a Member State, (national) schools (type III) can be allowed to adopt the European Schooling program, in order to give students access to the European Baccalaureate diploma. Such an initiative does not have to have a relation with a European agency/institution. These schools should fulfil the "accreditation" criteria and offer the "EB programme".
- The board of inspectors have to set the rules for accreditation and inspection.
- Attainment contracts should be the base of agreements made between the management of the European Schooling System in Brussels and the school.
- The costs of accreditation / examination must be met by the school.

Opening up the European Baccalaureate system, affording the European Baccalaureate diploma within certain limits to interested schools, is a decision that will have to be taken at a ministerial level³.

³ The discussion at the conference concentrated on the consequences for the educational systems in the MS in case the "European Baccalaureate" will be opened. Aspects in this discussion are "the influence of the costs of accreditation on the equity of accessibility" and the question of "subsidiarity / how can we guarantee the responsibility for the content of education in their respective countries".

7. Overall Governance Structure of the European School System

The Conference agreed that a **reform on governance** is necessary: The Board of Governors should focus and decide on **strategy, budgetary and political issues**. As far as **Ongoing policy and Management** is concerned a reform is necessary and further reflection is needed.

The majority of the participants prefer a further reflection on the necessary governance reform. Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and the Commission are of the opinion that the "Overall Governance Structure of the European School System" model as presented hereafter forms a good basis for this reform.

The Conference agreed that it is important that the European Schools maintain to be an Intergovernmental organisation.

PRINCIPAL POLITICAL QUESTIONS: STRATEGIC LINES



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

*Intergovernmental and European Commission, meeting (once/twice) a year,
Focusing and deciding on strategy and political orientations
Participation of Parents en Staff on certain subjects.*

Complaints Board

Ongoing Policy and Management. (To be worked out)

Permanent Independent Finance Control, Evaluation and Audit Unit

- Ensure quality control on financial aspects and evaluation;
- Supports and give expert advice to school directors.

Permanent Board of Inspectors

Consists of 25 inspectors¹, divided over primary and secondary from EU; comes together in Brussels 3-4 times a year deciding on:

- Inspection / quality control;
- Implementing BoG policy;
- Link between Member States and Schools;
- Formulates the pedagogical guidelines in the "attainment contracts";

and advises the Permanent Management Board.

¹) If the MS wish, they could make available more than one inspector for the appraisal of teachers of their language section.

Executive Management (Bureau)

Headed by Executive Dir./ Secretary General (SG)

- Current management, including budget and finance management;
- Preparing the non-pedagogical goals of the attainment contract; include the pedagogical goals of the "Attainment Contract" prepared by the boards of inspectors, and sign the overall "Attainment Contract" with the schools;
- Organisation of accreditation & examination (EBacc. etc) based in Bureau and under supervision of Board of Inspectors;
- Staff policy;
- Coordination of training;
- Other management issues.

Budgetary Advisory Committee

Consist of 25 members of MS and the Commission.

Advises on issues concerning employment conditions and budget.

↓ One "Attainment Contract" per school ↓

↑ autonomy versus accountability ↑

SCHOOLS PROVIDING EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND OFFERING EUROPEAN BACCALAUREATE

- All schools (1+2+3) are to be linked to the ESS by an "Attainment Contract" defined by the Executive Management Board, according to guidelines defined by the Permanent Tightened Management Board.
- All types (1+2+3) of school, offer a tuned curriculum and respect requirements on pedagogical aspects.
- Schools (1+2) benefiting from any form of EU financial contribution would also have to fulfil additional requirements on financial and managerial aspects.
- Participation of Parents en Staff on certain subjects.

Clarification remarks

Permanent Inspection Board

The present Permanent Inspection Board should be reduced to 25 members of the MS evenly divided over inspectors from primary and secondary education.

The core business of the inspectorate is:

- the quality assurance of the teaching and learning process in the schools (general inspections and proportional inspections);
- the appraisal of the individual teachers appointed by the national authorities;
- the organization of the European Baccalaureate. They will set the pedagogical goals of the attainment contract and control their implementation, through inspections and feed-back reports from schools.

If the MS wish, they could make available more than one inspector for the appraisal of teachers of their language section.

European Baccalaureate

Within the office of the Executive Management Board a unit is to be set up to deal with the organization of the EBacc. and with the accreditation of Type III Schools. This unit will be supervised by the Board of Inspectors.

(Regarding the organization of the European Baccalaureate the inspectors are presently working on a proposal to rearrange the organization. In this proposal they will take into account also the aspects of costs).

Budgetary Advisory Committee

The present Administrative and Financial Advisory Committee will be changed into a Budgetary Advisory Committee.

The main task of this Committee is to advise the Executive Management Board on budgetary issues and issues regarding employment conditions. The members of this Committee are experts on these issues in their home country and bring in their national knowledge.

Permanent Independent Finance Control, Evaluation and Audit Unit

A new Permanent Independent Finance Control, Evaluation and Audit Unit will be formed. Its task will be to ensure quality control on finance and budgetary aspects and to support and give expert advice to school directors.

Parents and Staff participation

Representatives of parents and staff should participate in the BoG and at the different ES. Where appropriate the representation of the parents should be proportional according to the different categories of children they represent.

Noordwijk, 16 May 2006.

Closing document of the Conference on the future of the European Schools 15 – 16 May 2006 at Noordwijk, the Netherlands

At Noordwijk, the Netherlands, on 15 – 16 May a conference on the future of the European Schools was held. Participants were representatives of the ministers of the EU countries and the Commission.

The conference was opened by Minister van der Hoeven of the Netherlands, Vice President Kallas of the European Commission and State Secretary Pedreira of Portugal.

The participants of the conference agreed on the following conclusions which drew up a new general vision on the future and on the evolution of the European School System.

They agreed to consider in the future 3 types of schools:

Type 1: These are the classical existing European Schools.

Type 2: These are national or international schools which will provide European education to the children of EU Staff and may be opened where European Agencies or equivalents are about to be founded or where existing schools have presented General Interest Papers and are seeking accreditation currently from the Board of Governors.

Type 3: Independently of the existence of an EU agency or institution, the Conference has considered the possibility to have accredited schools entitled to offer the European Baccalaureate, if a Member State decides to take such an initiative. However this type requires further reflection.

For all types of schools, the general denominator is that the schools work towards one common diploma, the **“European Baccalaureate”**, based on a **‘common curriculum’**, with as far as possible **Mother Tongue Education (MTE)**. This conform to the requirements set by the European School System regarding pedagogic targets, and conform to the demands regarding exams and accreditation. These elements will be supervised by the Board of Inspectors.

The future system should be based on **greater autonomy for the schools** which will be balanced by a **greater accountability** in pedagogical issues and, when relevant, in management/finance and governance issues. Agreements to this purpose between the central management in Brussels and the individual school should be included in Attainment Contracts. These contracts comprise for all types of schools pedagogical requirements, to ensure coherence and high quality education.

Concerning the **sharing of cost** the Conference agreed that it should be made more **reasonable and equitable** and that further analysis is necessary in order to make proposals on **new criteria** of cost sharing between the member states.

The Conference agreed that a **reform on governance** is necessary. The Board of Governors should focus and decide on **strategy, budgetary and political issues**. As far as **ongoing policy and Management** is concerned a reform is necessary and further reflection is needed.

Closing statement

See, for more details of the conclusions, the complete text.

Minister van der Hoeven and State Secretary Pedreira, who closed the meeting, thanked the participants for their difficult work during this conference.

They will, together with Vice – President Kallas, reflect on the results of the conference, and will soon send their colleague EU ministers a letter with proposals on how to proceed.