

Response to the Ideas in the Commission's Communication on the European Schools

Please rank the following ideas in terms of your agreement to each statement made and the importance you attach to each idea. Return before 30 June 2005.

Agreement Ranking:

- 0 = no opinion
- 1 = disagree strongly
- 2 = slightly disagree
- 3 = neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = tend to agree
- 5 = agree strongly

Importance Ranking:

- 0 = no opinion
- 1 = not at all important
- 2 = of minor importance
- 3 = neutral
- 4 = quite important
- 5 = very important

<u>Governance</u>	Agreement	Importance	Comments	Need for further clarification
Separation of the educational and administrative functions in the ES is desirable.	1	5	Overall responsibility for the running of a school should rest with the headmaster and the administration boards. Administrative functions could, however, be managed better and the salary administration of the detached teachers may be centralised if this generates proven productivity gains.	
An Education Council at an intergovernmental level should be created to oversee the educational requirements of the ES and assure inspections / evaluations, curricula development and the organisation of examinations.	1	5	We understand that this Council exists and is named Board of Governors of the European Schools (with its preparatory committees and the Board of Inspectors). The authority for education in the EU lies with the member states.	Is the Commission suggesting the establishment of a professional body to oversee the educational aspects of the ES, along the lines of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO)?

A feasibility study should be conducted to identify the potential benefits of organising the administrative functions of the ES in an EU body.	1	4	Studies are always welcome as long as they are based on correct information and carried out by independent organisations. Any decision should be based on proven productivity gains and sustainable working practices (avoiding blocking the system via bureaucracy). The parents must play a role in such an evaluation.	How does this fit into the recommendations made by the European Parliament?
Greater local autonomy at the Administrative Board level should be accorded to the ES, together with greater accountability and benchmarks for evaluation purposes.	4	5	Yes, within a well defined framework, including mandatory rules, due process, guidelines and a posteriori checks. Management by objectives should be favoured, implying well defined and measurable objectives, both quantitatively and qualitatively.	
ES should be responsible for the recruitment of teaching staff, providing the Director with a greater say on their appointments, while assuring the involvement of the MS competent authority.	4	5	However, directors should be constrained by due process and minimum requirements such as professional profile of the candidates. In particular, the choice should be allowed only within a shortlist of candidates preselected by the member states. The 9 year rule must be maintained in order for the teachers to have a true link to the national education system and culture that they represent.	
There should be a common statute of EU employee (eg. Contract Agent) for various positions.	1	5	We disagree that teachers should come under a statute of EU employee. The fact that they are detached by the member states assures that the 9 year rule is obeyed and that they are inspected regularly by the only competent authority, i.e. the member state that has detached them.	

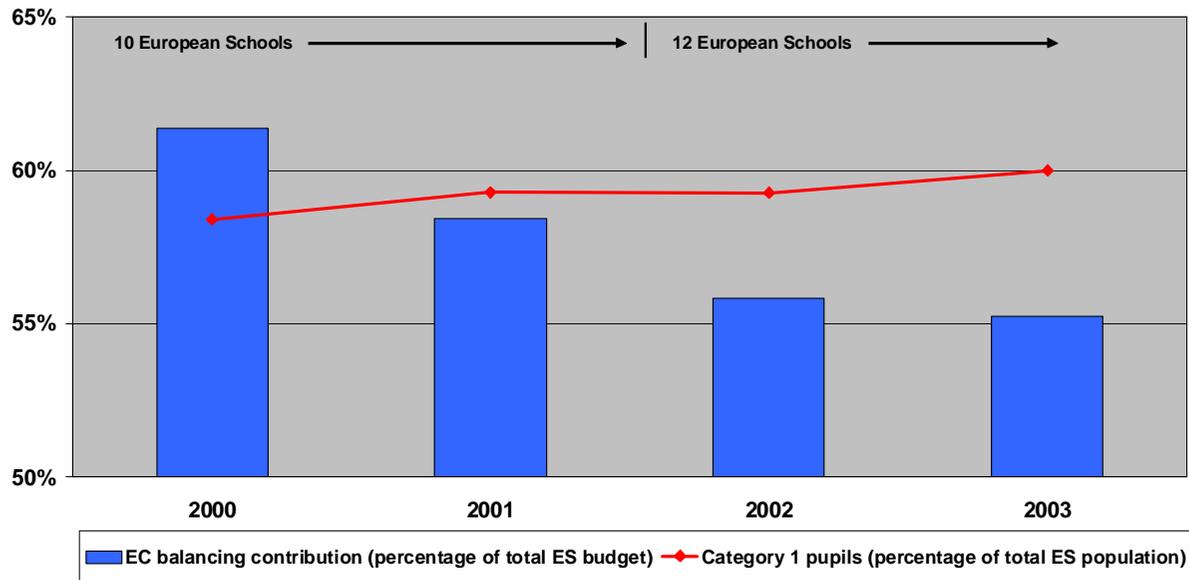
Key stakeholders in the ES system should have a more important role in the governance issues of ES, especially in the local School Boards.	4	4	It is our opinion that key stakeholders are the customers of the institution (pupils, parents, EU institutions, Category II users, host countries) and that internal stakeholders (all categories of staff) should be represented but not on the same footing. Of course, the member states should have proper representation, directly or, in local administration Boards, via the Secretary-General of the Board of Governors.	Who are the key stakeholders? Cat III parents contribute up to 15-20% of the budget in some schools, should they not be viewed as key stakeholders? Key stakeholders requires definition and the weighting of their vote equally assessed.
A code of good administrative conduct needs to reinforce and extend the transparency provisions	4	4	A policy document on good administrative behaviour has been discussed by the administration boards in spring 2004 and adopted by the Board of Governors in April 2004 with view to integrating it into the document on Quality Assurance in the European Schools.	
The remit of the complaints board should extend to all matters of complaint from those affected by the decisions of each school, including individual educational matters	5	5	Yes.	
EU institutions should have a greater degree of representation in the BoG.	1	4	All customers (pupils, parents, EU institutions, Category II users, host countries) should have appropriate representation, with adequate access allowing fruitful contribution. In this respect, the limitations currently applicable to parents' representation defeat the objective as they restrict one of the stakeholders able to make constructive and down-to-earth contributions to a position where they are not allowed to contribute fully.	Who will bear the costs of organising co-ordination between the EU institutions? Why do the EU institutions as well as the host countries only have an observer status in the administration boards of the schools?

<i>Finance</i>	Agreement	Importance	Comments	Need for further clarification
The budgetary system of the ES has to be modernised, the procedures simplified and more transparency assured.	4	4	Yes, provided that a proper balance is kept between the real managerial needs and the objective of the European Schools to provide first class education. The European Schools should not be over-managed and administrative costs should be kept to a minimum. School budgets should be published in the interests of transparency.	
The financing mechanism needs to be reviewed, including ways to compensate in the EU budget for the current direct contributions of MS	1	4	All alternatives for compensating member states for inappropriately high contributions should be explored.	
The ES need to improve the management of their budget.	4	4	Yes, provided that: a) savings and cost-consciousness in relation to a budgetary ceiling are not interpreted as mismanagement b) the budget still reflects the needs of the European Schools and not arbitrary standards set by bureaucratic experts c) non-spending due to changing circumstances are explained (a mid-year adjustment could be useful to release some budgetary provisions that are no longer useful)	
There need to be fixed parameters set for ES budget conforming to a Multi-Annual Programme.	1	4	Currently, fixed parameters are set only on the global contribution of the European Communities without any mechanism ensuring that these parameters are aligned with concrete needs and educational objectives. The 3 year plan is feasible but the 7 year plan is unworkable.	
The input of the EU budget has to be linked to the services offered to children of EU staff and the establishment plans of the schools	1	4	We believe this is already the case (see graph below this table).	

<p>There need to be clear, transparent and publicly available criteria for the admission of Cat. 3 pupils, beyond the simple criterion of space.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>We believe that with the recent modification of Category III e), this objective is achieved. Although it is clear that Category III children have a lower priority in term of access to the European Schools, it should be clear that once admitted, they should be treated on an equal footing with Categories I and II. Criteria for access should not hamper schools to benefit from the financial contributions brought by Category III fees. Each school has very differing needs and therefore the admission policy for each individual school must be different and appropriate.</p>	
<p>The Cat. 3 fees should be raised to come closer to real cost per pupil.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>European Schools are public schools. Our position is that from the real cost per pupil, the amount that host countries spend for providing free education for their residents should be deducted (see text on the right extracted from our working paper on Category III fees). Anyway, the Commission should not take currently enrolled pupils as hostage when aiming at the reduction of the contribution of the European Communities to the European Schools.</p>	<p>The school fees in no way exceed the average real cost per pupil of educating children in the European School system. The fees be calculated by deducting from this average real cost the average cost of education of a pupil in the Member State's publicly maintained school system, in the cycle concerned, in order to guarantee Category III families equality of treatment with respect to families residing in the Member States, given the Member States' obligation to provide access to free publicly funded education.</p>

<p>The BoG should consistently implement its own rules and decisions regarding the opening, maintaining and closing of ES or language sections.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>These so-called Gaignage criteria should be abandoned because they do not allow for sound financial and economical management of the schools. Besides that, we would agree that the consistent implementation of the rules and decisions of the Board of Governors would be a great achievement, indeed.</p>	<p>Some flexibility in the implementing of rules and decisions needs to be accepted, in particular in case an institution is willing to finance itself any language section.</p>
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EC contribution to the European Schools Budget (years 2000 to 2003)



<i>Educational Improvement</i>	Agreement	Importance	Comments	Need for further clarification
After 50 years, the ES system should undergo an external evaluation with a view to consider improvements.	4	4	Such evaluation should focus on the quality of teaching and the scientific level attained by the pupils of the European Schools at the level of the European Baccalaureate and the continued validity of the European Baccalaureate as an entry exam to universities in the member states of the European Union and beyond. Such evaluation should also take into account the equivalence of successfully completed years of schooling in the European Schools and in the member states which allows mobility of pupils between European Schools and the education systems of the member states.	What actions have been implemented following the publication of the so-called Bösch-report of the European Parliament?
There is a need for improved evaluations / inspections of the quality and services offered by the ES.	5	5	Both the Boards of Inspectors as well as individual inspectors should present a plan each year showing their actions. All teachers, regardless of their status, should be evaluated regularly. At least once a year each inspector should meet the parents and collect their opinions about the quality of the education. Locally recruited teachers and pedagogical advisors must also be subject to the same evaluations.	

The ES should expand their educational offer to include a broad, modern curriculum in line with the best practices in the MS and to cater for the full range of needs of the pupils.	3	3	The already existing options are often enough not realised due to budgetary restrictions or time table clashes, even in the schools in Brussels and Luxemburg. The provision for Learning Support is insufficient, at least a ratio of 1 weekly period per 10 pupils is needed. The provision for pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN) is inconsistently applied throughout the schools and needs are not catered for due to insufficient funding.	What does a broad, modern curriculum consist of? Who defines what the best practices in the member states are? Is the aim of Learning Support to make the whole curriculum of the European Schools accessible to their pupils? Is the SEN provision aiming at integration or at inclusion? Who will provide the necessary funds for teacher training and salaries as well as the provision of buildings and other infrastructure?
A study on an Alternative Leaving Certificate to the European Bac should be conducted.	4	4	yes	
Programmes should be harmonised better and Best Practices followed.	5	5	In particular, horizontal and vertical co-ordination needs to be improved and the necessary funding provided.	
There is need for improvement in the provision for pupils with difficulties (SEN, SWALS, LS) and for the evaluation of these programmes.	5	5	A clear distinction is necessary between SEN and LS on the one hand and SWALS on the other hand. SEN and LS cater for problems of individuals whereas the SWALS program is aimed at problems resulting from the organisation of the school and refers to language and culture related integration problems of pupils.	
The maximum class size in the ES should be reduced to 30 and there should be a special weighting for SEN and SWALS pupils.	5	5	The class division threshold should be lowered to 25. There should be a weighting for SEN and SWALS pupils.	

<p>The ES programmes should be shared with more pupils through the voluntary participation of other schools with the ES system.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>Harmonised education as provided by the European Schools should certainly be a model for national systems and we encourage its diffusion. The European Bacculaureate needs to be an efficient, transparent and competent accredited educational system. However, we do not accept:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the watering down of the equivalence of studies year by year with the educational systems of the member states; b) the funding of projects (partially or completely) run by the member states from the budget for the European Schools; c) the watering down of the value of the European Bacculaureate. The quality and the recognition of the European Bacculaureate as a university entrance qualification must be maintained and further developed. 	<p>The names ‘European School’ and ‘European Bacculaureate’ need to be protected in all official languages of the European Union in all member states of the European Union and beyond.</p>
<p>The European Bacculaureate must maintain its value and recognition in all Member States.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>By all means.</p>	<p>In several member states, holders of the European Bacculaureate are disadvantaged compared to holders of the national university entrance qualification. Some universities already now question the value of the European Bacculaureate.</p>
<p>Transitional arrangements for change in ES system should be foreseen and communicated to those concerned, in advance.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>According to the policy of good administrative behaviour adopted by the Board of Governors and in force for the Commission of the European Communities.</p>	

Other remarks:

Our answers in the initial consultation still stand.

Done on 30/06/2005

Delegation: Parents (INTERPARENTS)

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