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Minister of Education and Science
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SIIM KALLAS
Vice-President of the
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*Ms Mariastella GELMINI
Ministro dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca
Italy*

Dear Colleague,

Following the communication of the Commission in 2004 and the resolution of the Parliament in 2005, the Dutch Presidency of the European Schools and the Commission took the initiative to start the reflection for a reform of the European Schools system. This responds to the necessity to cope with new challenges in the enlarged EU, but also because of the creation of new agencies or equivalent within the Member States themselves. This reform is, at the same time, a unique opportunity to promote and provide possibilities of wider access to the European curriculum for children of EU citizens.

In November 2006, under the Portuguese Presidency, the Ministers responsible for the European Schools reached political agreement on the main principles of this reform. In January 2007, the Board of Governors agreed on a concrete action plan based on the principles decided at Ministerial level. It is recognised that the conditions for opening the European Schools system and the possibilities of a wider accessibility to the European Baccalaureate in the type 2 and 3 schools¹ belonging to national/local educational systems would be based on maintaining coherence of the European Schools system and ensuring the quality of education. That would be achieved through attainment contracts between the school and the Board of Governors of the European Schools system.

There was also political agreement on an increased school autonomy with clear conditions ensuring quality of education. This would be combined with an increased accountability at all levels and the coherence should be maintained through attainment contracts. This will imply improved governance at central and local level. In parallel an agreement on fairer burden allocation between Member States who have to second teachers in type I European schools was necessary.

¹ Type 1 schools are the 14 existing classical European schools

Type 2 schools are national or international schools which provide European schooling to the children of EU staff where European Agencies or equivalents are or will be existing

Type 3 schools are national or international schools which provide European schooling independently of the existence of a EU agency or institution

The various representatives and the Secretary General have been working hard under the Portuguese and Finnish presidency and have allowed us to realise most of these goals. Major issues have already been agreed to prepare an opening of the system for pilot type 3 schools in the Member States giving them the possibility to award the European Baccalaureate. The efforts made for future type 2 schools by some of the Member States to anticipate this process must be highlighted and they can now benefit from the accreditation process.

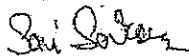
Referring to the cost-sharing where an urgent agreement is needed, the major principles on how to balance contributions by Member States in terms of seconded teachers have been already defined and agreed upon by the Board of Governors in March 2008 and confirmed in April 2008. It has been agreed to base the cost-sharing on the proportionality between the number of seconded staff and the pupils of each Member State, and not to involve a direct financial compensation. Another important principle agreed by the Board of Governors was the possibility of teaching by non-native speakers in certain cases with safeguards in order to guarantee the quality of education. Based on this principle, it is possible to determine both maximum and minimal levels of teachers' secondment.

In order to obtain a concrete application of the agreed decisions for the cost-sharing, your political impetus is necessary at this final stage.

~~The main remaining issues of the reform of the European Schools system now to be finalised are the opening of the system and the school autonomy and accountability on which a political agreement should be reached before the end of the year. That requires a reform of the governance both central and local, and the definition of "Attainment contract" which will link the schools to the system.~~

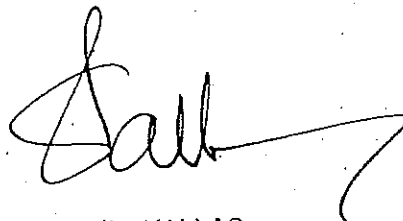
We trust that through your personal commitment to the process, the pupils and the efficiency of the system of the European Schools will quickly benefit from the reform.

Yours sincerely,



Sari SARKOMAA

Minister of Education and Science
of Finland



Siim KALLAS

Vice-President of the
European Commission

cc:

EU Education Committee
Members of the Board of Governors to the European Schools