

European schools

Office of the Secretary-General

Pedagogical Development Unit

Réf. : 2011-01-D-57-en-2

Orig. : EN

Concrete measures to be taken to reduce the costs pertaining to SEN children in the European Schools

Budgetary Committee

Meeting in Brussels on 15 and 16 March 2011 – Room -1/15

1. Introduction

The Board of Governors discussed the increase in the SEN budget at its April meeting in 2010. The meeting reached the conclusion that “the growth in the SEN budget had to be brought under control by defining strict criteria for expenditure on pupils’ integration into teaching and excluding other expenditure on therapeutic provision, which should not be defrayable by the schools.”

The following measures have been taken:

- The SEN inspectors and the SEN Policy Group have produced a *Vademecum* (see Annex 1) concerning SEN for the schools in order to harmonise SEN provision and to share good practice.
- The tripartite agreement concerning therapeutic interventions during school time will be launched starting from 1.9.2011.
- Schools are grouping SEN pupils with similar types of needs together for support lessons, instead of providing individual assistance for them.
- Schools are encouraged to work in cooperation with local special educational needs centres.

The following measures are proposed for decision

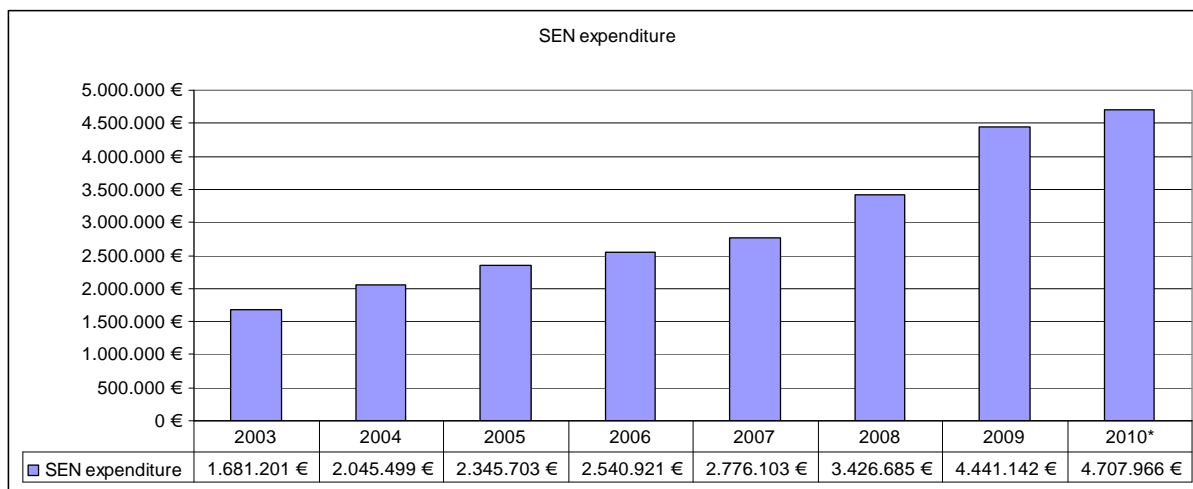
- The Board of Governors is asked to approve a creation of a new occupational category “SEN assistant” (Annex 2). The salary of the SEN assistant would be the same as that of the nursery assistant and it would be the same in the nursery, primary and secondary cycles.

2. Background information

Overall, the number of the SEN conventions has increased substantially during the last three years with 34 %. The number of secondary school SEN conventions has increased 42 % in three years. It is to be noted that the costs for SEN provision in the secondary cycle are considerably higher than in the nursery/primary cycles.

SEN CONVENTIONS				
	2008	2009	2010	%
nursery & primary	257	321	329	28%
secondary	204	253	290	42%
Total	461	574	619	34%

In the light of this increase of the SEN population, it is not surprising that the SEN expenditure has grown during the last three years with 27%.



The directors of the European Schools were informed about the position of the Board of Governors at the end of April 2010 and the message was conveyed at the annual Advisory Group meetings in all the schools in May.

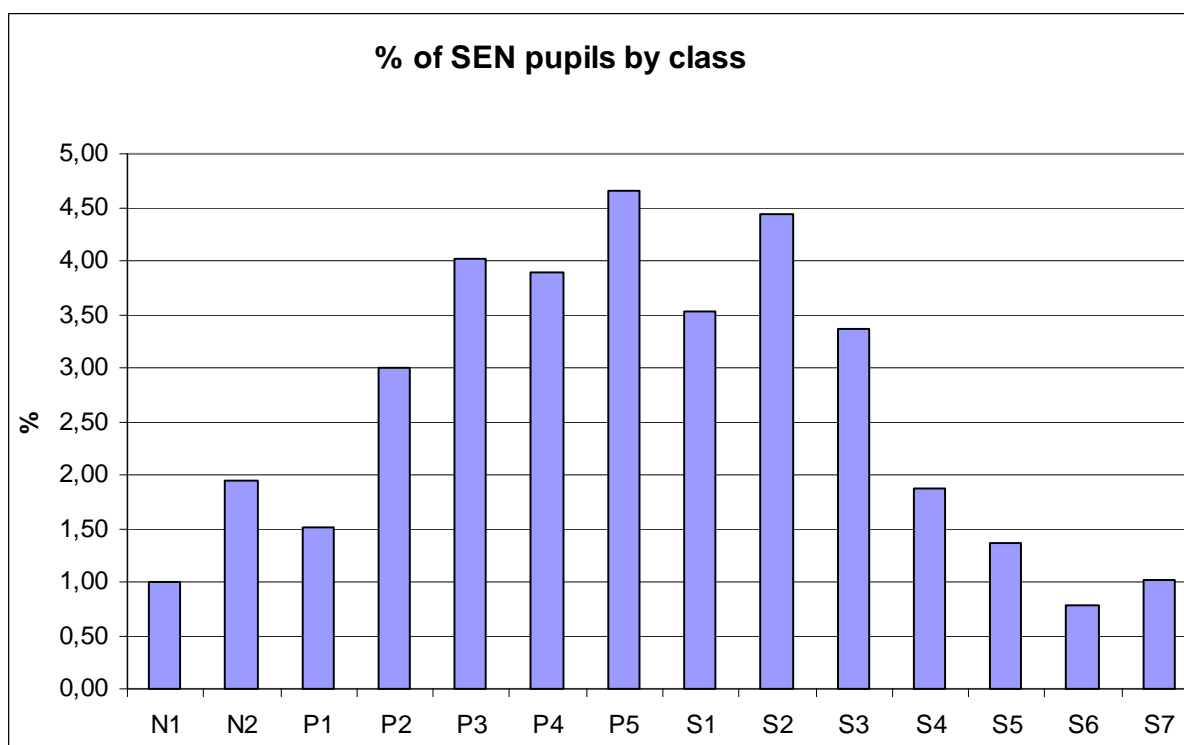
It seems that the Schools were able to slightly modify their planning for the school year 2010-2011 concerning the SEN expenditure.

THE PERCENTAGE OF SEN STUDENTS			
2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
1,96%	2,20%	2,57%	2,72%

The number of SEN conventions increased with 24 % in the School year 2009-2010 and with 7, 8 % in the first months of the school year 2010-2011. In spite of the important increase, the provisional expenditure for the budget 2010 increased only with 6%. This is a clear sign that the concrete measures already taken at the school level are starting to take effect. The total amount of the SEN pupils in the ES has reached a percentage of 2, 72. It is a much lower level than the European average (See below: The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, annual country statistics 2010).

Country	Number of compulsory school aged pupils (including those with SEN)	Number of compulsory school aged pupils who have SEN (in all educational settings)	%
Austria	802519	28525	3,55
Belgium	1559057	85329	5,47
Cyprus	97938	5445	5,56
Czech Republic	836372	71879	8,59
Denmark	719144	33733	4,69
Estonia	112738	10435	9,26
Finland	559379	45493	8,13
France	12542100	356803	2,84
Germany	8236221	479714	5,82
Greece	1146298	29954	2,61
Hungary	1275365	70747	5,55
Ireland	649166	33908	5,22
Latvia	185032	9057	4,89
Lithuania	440504	51881	11,78
Luxembourg	64337	1374	2,14
Malta	48594	2645	5,44
Netherlands	2411194	103821	4,31
Poland	4511123	127954	2,84
Portugal	1331050	35894	2,70
Slovenia	162902	10504	6,45
Spain	4437258	104343	2,35
Sweden	906189	13777	1,52
United Kingdom	9333390	296919	3,18
EU AVERAGE			5,00
European Schools	22788	619	2,72

The SEN policy group was astonished to note the development concerning the SEN teachers. There are at this moment more SEN teachers working in the secondary cycle (154) than in the nursery and primary cycles (107) with children with special needs. This rather new and surprising phenomena can be partly explained by the increase of the SEN conventions in the last years as well as for the primary school as for the first 3 years of the secondary school (see table below) and due to the fact that in the secondary cycle the SEN teachers are often subject teachers with a rather low number of periods per child.



According to our indicators, it seems to be evident, that the Schools are able to organise the SEN teaching in 2011 with less expenditure than foreseen in the original budget proposal for 2011. The SEN budget expenditure will not increase with 11 % as foreseen in April 2010.

2. Measures taken in the Schools after the Board of Governors' meeting

According to the decisions of Board of Governors, it is possible to INTEGRATE pupils with special needs in the European Schools. This Integration involves allowing pupils with learning difficulties or special educational needs (SEN) to develop and progress in the normal year groups to which they belong, with appropriate support, provided that their aptitudes allow them to do so, in the interest of their personal development.

The SEN inspectors have written a Vademecum on the document 2009-D-619-en-3 (Integration of pupils with special needs). The objective of the Vademecum is to clarify and highlight some unclear regulations of the SEN document. The aim is to harmonise the implementation of the integration policy in the European Schools.

The Vademecum has been discussed in the SEN policy group and it has been translated to the vehicular languages and sent to the schools.

It is evident that the initial SEN-document has to be revised in the near future.

The tripartite agreement concerning therapeutic interventions during school time has been further discussed and developed. The contract will be signed by the director and parents with a SEN Child and independent therapists in order to organise a therapy session on the school premises paid for directly by the parents.

The schools will receive a template contract in April 2011 and the new method will be used starting from 1.9.2011.

The Schools have been grouping the SEN pupils with similar needs (e.g. dyslexia) together for support lessons instead of providing individual assistance to them. The first echoes are positive.

It has proven to be far more difficult to find co-operation possibilities with local special educational needs centres. In many cases the lack of a common language of instruction is an obstacle.

3. Proposal to create a new occupational category – SEN assistant

Following discussions in the Board of Governors and in the SEN Policy Group meetings, a proposal to create the new occupational category of a "SEN Assistant" was launched . This proposal was supported by the Budgetary Committee at its meeting on 28 and 29 October 2010 and finally agreed by the Board of Governors at its meeting on 1 – 3 December 2010 (2010-D-199-en-4). The concrete "job description" and the required diploma(s) and knowledge were discussed and agreed upon by the "SEN Policy Group" at its meeting on 14 December 2010 (1712-D-2010-fr-1).

It is proposed:

- to foresee for the new occupational category "SEN Assistant" the same grading as for "Nursery Assistants" and
- to incorporate the new occupational category (see Annex 1) into the Service Regulations for the AAS:

Occupational Category	Job	Diploma and knowledge required
1.6 SEN Assistant	Assistance for SEN pupils.	Diploma required by the schools host country or its equivalent, and the necessary skills to render him/her suitable to deal with children. Languages: thorough knowledge of the language, or one of the languages of the SEN pupil and knowledge of a second language. One of these languages must be a vehicular language.

As a result of this addition, Annex 2 regarding the Service Regulations has to be amended accordingly.

The AAS Working Group will present the proposal in the Budgetary Committee in March 2011.

4. Conclusions

According to the view of the SEN policy group, the demand of the Board of Governors to bring the growth in the SEN budget under control will be achieved.

Several concrete measures have been taken at the school level, at the inspector level and in the SEN policy group to harmonise the SEN provision, to reduce the costs and to share good practise.

Starting from next September onwards, the tripartite agreement concerning therapeutic interventions will provide the possibility for SEN pupils to receive the therapy in the schools without increasing the European Schools' SEN budget.

If the proposal to create the new occupational category 'SEN assistant' will be approved by the Board of Governors, schools can avoid creating locally recruited teachers' contracts. The newly created post of 'SEN assistant' will be able to offer quality assistance to SEN children in each cycle while schools also can envisage paying the same amount of salary for this newly created post.

In general, the SEN Policy Group proposes putting an emphasis on early identification of learning difficulties and reinforcement of early intervention in the nursery and primary cycles.

Opinion of the Joint Teaching Committee

At its meeting of 9, 10 and 11 February 2011, the Joint Teaching Committee scrutinised and took note of the concrete measures aimed at cutting the cost of provision for SEN pupils in the European Schools.

The Joint Teaching Committee expressed a favourable opinion on the document, although it emphasised the need to maintain the current quality of provision for SEN pupils.

As regards the 'tripartite' agreement, the Joint Teaching Committee also expressed a favourable opinion, with the caveat that clear directives must be drawn up for the Directors on the steps to be taken with respect to the qualifications of the therapists whose services are to be used. It is also important for Directors and teachers to retain responsibility for pedagogical questions.

The Joint Teaching Committee is also in favour of the proposed amendment of Annex 1 and of Annex 2 to the Service Regulations for the Administrative and Ancillary Staff (AAS) of the European Schools and of the addition of a new occupational category of SEN Assistant.

The Joint Teaching Committee is bringing this document to the Budgetary Committee's attention and invites it to recommend adoption by the Board of Governors of the proposals made in point 2 and in point 3.