

# **Parent Action: Letter Writing Campaign: Let's ALL write!**

## **Campaign I : until Monday, 4 November**

For maximum effect, we are waging a “periodic” campaign. Emails will be sent over short periods in advance of landmark votes. **Letter Writing Campaign I targets the European School Budget Committee Meeting (5-6 November). Letters should be emailed by Monday, 4 November.**

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### **BRUSSELS SCHOOLS PARENT ASSOCIATIONS say** **“Stop run-away reform of Secondary Studies and focus instead on** **securing sustainable funding for our schools!”**

Staff members at the EU and Category II institutions draft a short letter to decision makers in your institution, highlighting your concern over proposed changes to the European School secondary curriculum.

The purpose of the internal mailing is to raise awareness within the institutions and agencies about the pending secondary studies reorganization, to demonstrate the potential effects on staff and recruitment and to urge the Commission to block the proposal at the upcoming meetings. Messages are sent to key decision makers in the institutions who may influence the vote in the room (see list below). The Commission represents the European Communities, which provide 60% of the European School budget, in this meeting.

**Commission Staff** please write to (or cc:) the following:

Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration, *Mr. Maroš Šefčovič*

Secretary General of the Commission, *Ms. Catherine Day*

Director General for Human Resources and Security, *Ms. Irene Souka*

Director, Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security, *Mr. Marco-Umberto Moricca*

Please use an introduction along the following lines:

I am writing concerning the European Schools Secondary Reform proposal recently submitted by the ES Secretary General's Office (Doc. 2013-9-D-17). I object, in no uncertain terms, to this reform which has not been properly prepared, which will damage the education of my children, and which is not justified by cost savings. I call upon the Commission to oppose the proposal (on S1-S7, or any part thereof) at the 5-6 November Budget Committee and 3-5 December Board of Governors Meetings and to halt the process of adoption until proper and impartial assessments have been carried out.

**Council Staff** please write to (or cc:) the following:

Secretary-General, *Mr. Uwe Corsepius*

Director General, Directorate-General A - Administration, *Mr. William Shapcott*

Director, Directorate 1 - Human Resources and Personnel Administration, *Ms. Cesira D'Aniello*

**Parliament Staff** please write to (or cc:) the following:

Secretary General, *Mr. Klaus Welle*

Director General for Personnel, *Mr. Yves Quitin*

Director for Administrative Management, *Ms. Suzanne Koenig*

Director for Management of Support and Social Services, *Ms. Olivia Ratti*

Director, Human Resource Strategy, *Mr. Karl-Peter Repplinger*

**Permanent Representations and other Cat. II Agencies** should write to your administrative head, director of human resources, and/or key liaison with the European Schools.

**Council, Parliament, Permanent Representation, and other Cat. II Agency staff** use an introduction along the following lines:

I am writing concerning the European Schools Secondary Reform proposal recently submitted by the ES Secretary General's Office (Doc. 2013-9-D-17). I object, in no uncertain terms, to this reform which has not been properly prepared, which will damage the education of my children, and which is not justified by cost savings. I call upon **[the Council / the Parliament / other agency]** to put pressure on the Commission to oppose the proposal (on S1-S7, or any part thereof) at the 5-6 November Budget Committee and 3-5 December Board of Governors Meetings and to halt the process of adoption until proper and impartial assessments have been carried out.

For maximum impact, messages should be compact and should include an **introduction resembling those presented above followed by 3-5 sentences and a short closing**. A list of potential issues you may highlight and example letters are provided below (See: **Annex I**).

See also :

**<http://bru4.eu/fr/sustain-our-schools>** for questions on the financing and governance of our schools. **Examples of a few letters already sent have been provided for guidance; it is important to draft a text that is personal to your situation in some way so that letters cannot be disregarded.**

## ANNEX I

### General Issues:

The proposal introduces a “modular” structure to the S4 mathematics course with the aim to increase group sizes. As envisioned, all students will be grouped together in a single basic maths course while advanced students will be encouraged to enroll in an additional 3-hour “plus” option. The idea has proved unpopular with European School teachers as well as the maths inspector, who fear that advanced and weak students alike will suffer.

The proposed filiere system in S6 and S7 is not harmonized with the national curricula in Member States. The system shows a number of discrepancies, for instance:

- Few Member States recognise upper-level generalist subjects like GENSCI or HUMSCI; there is a risk that the mark from this subject will not be considered in the students' overall Bac. mark. (The process of gaining formal recognition of new subjects and subject combinations is not considered in the proposed reform.)
- There is no provision for philosophy in S6 and S7 outside the "humanities filiere", which is an obstacle for students wishing to comply with French Bac. requirements.
- There is no provision for history in the “sciences filiere”, which is an obstacle for students wishing to comply with Bac. requirements in several Member States.
- Students taking part in the ONL program will have to choose in S6 and S7 between studying their mother tongue and the important Bac. courses history and chemistry.
- The introduction of a required and examined religious studies course in S6 and S7 has added hours to the time table that might have been used for more widely-recognised two-hour subjects, e.g. history or biology. The course has little relevance to university admission in most Member States.
- The filieres proposed discourage students with a broad range of interests and aptitudes. This will prove an obstacle for students seeking admission to universities and programmes that require a generalist profile.
- MISSED OPPORTUNITY: There is still no guarantee that all the options will be offered, or that they will be offered in continuity from S4 through S7.
- MISSED OPPORTUNITY: There is still no guarantee that all options from each filieres will be available in a given language.
- MISSED OPPORTUNITY: The two-period options currently available in S6 and S7 are highly popular with students and give the system a flexibility necessary for compliance with the various national systems. These options will no longer exist under the proposed system.
- The proposed changes in S6 and S7 would necessitate a further changes in the Baccalaureate exam, risking its hard-earned reputation.

The language regime proposed wields our language competence as a blunt instrument.

- The increase in options potentially taught in L2, L3 or host-country language will make the mastery of many core Bac. subjects contingent upon linguistic competence.
- The system will increase pressure on our most vulnerable categories of students (i.e. those in small language sections, SEN students, etc.). Many will be compelled to play linguistic roulette in order to meet university entrance requirements.
- The proposal to teach religion in L2 starting from S3 shows a disregard for questions of cultural identity.

The reform of secondary studies has been undertaken with an eye toward cost savings. Yet, there has been no analysis of cost drivers within the existing system nor has there been formal financial and social impact assessments of the proposed system as a whole.

- The Secretary General has promised to produce some numbers for the upcoming budget committee, but his ability to generate statistically reliable data has been compromised due to an extended IT system upgrade.
  - Though the mandate given at the April Board of Governors' Meeting required that the working group present a plan for the whole system, the Secretary General is now proposing to pass the proposal in two separate installments.
  - Interparents has submitted an alternative proposal developed based on an analysis of “clash tables”, which show options that students have historically requested together. The Secretary General's Office has thus far refused to consider the Interparents proposal or any other alternatives within the framework of an impact assessment.
  - **MISSED OPPORTUNITY:** The proposal does not confront problems specific to small language sections, nor does it confront high failure rates in certain classes and sections. Instead it offers one-size-fits-all measures, giving schools less autonomy to treat complex situations.
  - Cost savings targets remain unclear. Several other cost savings measures have already been implemented (e.g. a reduction in teachers' salaries, an increase in class sizes, a reform of the Baccalaureate exam), but we have yet to experience their full benefit. The Secretary General's Office has shown little inclination to analyse the impact of these measures.
  - Alternative cost savings measures (e.g. a lycee-style fifth school in Brussels), which promise comparatively large cost savings, are not being considered.
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## Example Letters:

### [EXAMPLE LETTER : COMMISSION INTRODUCTION ]

Dear [Ms. Day],

I am writing concerning the European Schools Secondary Reform proposal recently submitted by the ES Secretary General's Office (Doc. 2013-9-D-17). I object, in no uncertain terms, to this reform which has not been properly prepared, which will damage the education of my children, and which is not justified by cost savings. I call upon the Commission to oppose the proposal (on S1-S7, or any part thereof) at the 5-6 November Budget Committee and 3-5 December Board of Governors Meetings and to halt the process of adoption until proper and impartial assessments have been carried out.

As I understand, the reorganization of the secondary curriculum was instigated with the aim to save money. Thus, I am surprised to learn that an analysis was not made at the outset of the process to identify cost drivers. Now, the Secretary General seems to be asking for carte blanche to overhaul all aspects of the system in the name of “cost savings” without the full data on actual costs. Moreover, I have been surprised to learn that up to this point no proper impact assessment has been conducted on the social impact of the proposed reform. It is worrying that the Secretary General's Office is allowed to act with impunity in financial matters, especially when these matters also concern the well being and educational future of our children.

I ask that this proposal be delayed until a real assessment of the cost savings and impact on the lives and prospects of staff and their families has been carried out.

Yours faithfully,  
[your name]

### [EXAMPLE LETTER : COUNCIL/PARLIAMENT/OTHER AGENCY INTRODUCTION ]

Dear [Mr. Welle],

I am writing concerning the European Schools Secondary Reform proposal recently submitted by the ES Secretary General's Office (Doc. 2013-9-D-17). I object to this reform which has not been properly prepared, which will damage the education of my children, and which is not justified by cost savings. I call upon [the Council / the Parliament / other agency] to put pressure on the Commission to oppose the proposal (on S1-S7, or any part thereof) at the 5-6 November Budget Committee and 3-5 December Board of Governors Meetings and to halt the process of adoption until proper and impartial assessments have been carried out.

As a citizen of Ireland with children being educated in the Irish language ONL program, I am particularly concerned about the restrictive “filières” system proposed for S6-S7. According to the plan, my children will not be able to continue their education in their native tongue if they choose to study either chemistry or history. Thus far, there has been no justification for imposing such a false choice, one that risks my family's mobility and my children's future prospects.

I ask that this proposal be delayed until real analysis of the impact on families like mine have been considered and the results of the analysis translated into a workable curriculum for my children and others like them.

Sincerely,  
[your name]