Ref.: **2020-01-D-26-en-3**

Orig.: **EN**

Introduction of Language 3 in Primary 4

Board of Governors

Meeting on 15, 16 and 17 April 2020

# Description of the proposed change

The Pedagogical Reform Working Group proposes that the European Schools introduce the teaching of Language 3 in the Primary year 4. The timeframe for the teaching of L3 would be 2 hours per week. The change would result in the slight modification of the primary harmonised timetable as described later in this document.

The main pedagogical target of the two additional years would be to *raise language awareness* in Language 3, therefore more emphasis would be placed on oral skills in these years. Pupils would start doing written work at the end of Primary 4, but emphasis would remain on verbal activities.

# Why is this change required?

The pillars of the European Schools, as also explained in the new Language Policy, are multilingualism and learning via a language that is not the pupil’s L1. Strengthening the learning of L3 would support these principles in several ways.

This measure would be in line with the aim of “Mother tongue plus two” of the European Council[[1]](#footnote-2). The members of the Council agreed on the objective that “all young people should be able to communicate in two other languages, in addition to their mother tongue”.

The European Schools as a multilingual educational organisation (either for their locations or for the language sections in the schools) can offer in-school and out of school contact with the target language, fostering a positive learning attitude in pupils. This supportive environment is crucial to the success of foreign language learning.

Currently, our pupils are exposed to learning L3 as a mandatory subject for five years, with an output level of A2+ (if the pupil stops learning L3 after S5). If he or she continues learning L3 until S7, the level will be B1+. The earlier learning of the basic concepts of a language (e.g. the leaning of the phonetic basis, intonation, rhythm, simple vocabulary, everyday phrases etc.) could result in a more successful learning of the language in the secondary, where pupils encounter more complex grammatical concepts, lexical items, and different stylistic registers.

The role of L3 is changing in the European Schools. Since the implementation of the new Language Policy subjects such as Arts, Music, PE and ICT should be organised in a language that the pupil already understands/can use. The earlier introduction of L3 would ensure that these subjects can be offered also in L3, and pupils would be able to follow these courses more effectively.

If a school does not offer the HCL as a L2, pupils’ families could choose the HCL as L3 (with an earlier start) in order to integrate sooner in the host country.

# Intended outcomes and benefits

This measure would enhance European spirit and multilingualism. It would support mobility.

There would be better options for pupils in higher education institutions and on the labour market in a language which is not their L1 or L2.

The proficiency level in Language 3 reached in S5 would rise to B1, and B2 if studied until S7.

The development of proficiency in an L3 could proceed faster than development in an L2 (in spite of the fact that usually less time is devoted in the curriculum to the L3 than to the L2), because pupils can transfer linguistic and metalinguistic skills from the L2 to the L3. In other words, introducing an L3 at an early age could further promote the development of pupils’ metalinguistic awareness.

For the schools: there would be more flexibility in offering courses that are taught in a language that is not the pupil’s L1.

Easier access to extra-curricular activities organised in different languages.

Since during primary years there would be more focus on language awareness and oral skills (just like in the case of L2 in P1 and P2), pupils would be gradually exposed to the new language. This would give them a solid basis for a more successful learning of L3 in the secondary cycle. It would also help them learn other subjects in L3 (Music, Arts, PE, ICT etc.).

The higher competence in a second foreign language would also provide more opportunities for pupils to choose their options in their Language 3, since their proficiency level would be closer to that of Language 2.

This measure would contribute to the coherence of the Language Policy, by making the HCL measure more successful (as explained previously).

# Timetabling

The proposed timetable arrangement is based on the proposal made by a group of deputy directors of the primary section[[2]](#footnote-3).

**Table 1: Modified/proposed timetable, indicating the subjects where the number of hours would change**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **P1** | **P2** | **P3** | **P4** | **P5** | **Total** |
|  | **Curr** | **New** | **Curr**  | **New** | **Curr** | **New** | **Curr** | **New** | **Curr**  | **New** | **Curr** | **New** |
| **L1 (SWALS L1)** | 8 (2.5) | **7** (2.5) | 8 (2.5) | **7** (2.5) | 6.75 (3.75) | 6.75 (3.75) | 6.75 (3.75) | **5.5** (3.75) | 6.75 (3.75) | **5.5** (3.75) | 36.25 (16.25) | **31.75** (16.25) |
| **Math** | 4 | **5** | 4 | **5** | 5.25 | 5.25 | 5.25 | **4.5** | 5.25 | **4.5** | 23.75 | **24.25** |
| **L 2** | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 12.5 | 12.5 |
| **Music****Art****PE** | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 19 | 19 |
| **DOW** | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 12 |
| **EU Hours** | - | - | - | - | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 4,5 | 4.5 |
| **Rel/Eth** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 6.5 | 6.5 |
| **Recr** | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 14.5 | 14.5 |
| **L3** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **2** | 0 | **2** | 0 | **4** |
| **Total** | **25.5** | **25.5** | **25.5** | **25.5** | **27.25** | **27.25** | **27.25** | **27.25** | **27.25** | **27.25** | **132.75** | **132.75** |
| **ONL** | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 |

The number of SWALS L1 hours would remain the same as in the current timetable.

In this arrangement, the total number of L1 hours would slightly reduce. The number of mathematics hours would increase in P1 and P2, and would slightly decrease in P4 and P5. The reason for proposing a one-hour increase in the first two years is that in P1 and P2, learning is not so intensive as in P3-P5, and in P1-P2, more time can be dedicated to consolidate the foundations of mathematics and to develop the organisational skills of pupils (learning to learn, working methods etc.).

This arrangement would respect the fundamental principle of the dominant language, and it would not result in an increase in the total number of hours, which would be a pedagogically undesirable side effect of this measure. It should not be forgotten that the majority of subjects are taught in L1 (for most pupils).

# Potential adverse effects

Stakeholders have previously voiced the following concerns:

* **Concern:** the learning of a new language in the primary cycle could negatively affect the learning of L1 and L2.

**Answer:** According to experts, introducing a third language in primary does not negatively affect the learning of other languages if the teaching of L3 does not take away too much time from L1 or L2. The proposed change in the table is a slight one. A slight decrease in the teaching hours of a subject does not jeopardise the outcomes, especially as pupils are exposed to L1 in other situations and subjects throughout the primary years. Table 1 shows that SWALS pupils have a significantly lower number of the tuition of their SWALS L1 (16.25 vs. 36.25 for non-SWALS) and within this limited timeframe they finally succeed (very often excel) in their studies, including L1.

* **Concern:** A reduction of teaching hours of L1 and Math and would have an impact on the level of the pupils in these subjects at P5 and S1.

**Answer:** thecurrent distribution of subjects in Primary cycle in the European Schools is not always in line with OECD average. Namely, the percentage of L1 and Mathematics in the primary timetable is notably higher in the ES than in many other member states. In general, it is worth noting that the London Institute of Education (UCL) in their report invited not to make an immediate equivalence between the number of hours and curriculum coverage.

* **Concern:** Teachers of SWALS have concerns, as their teaching time for L1 is already reduced.

**Answer**: time for L1 SWALS would be left unchanged.

* **Concern:** When the pupils arrive in S1 or later in the secondary school, there is a danger that there will be a significant gap in level between those pupils who have followed their primary school education within the ES system and those who join the ES from other systems.

**Answer**: The ES have a wide range of support measures, with which it is possible to bridge the gap, which should not be too large, as the aim of L3 in P4 and P5 would be to lay down the *basics o*f the new language.

* **Concern:** During the pedagogical meetings it was mentioned that ONL students could face difficulties.

**Answer:** ONL students can choose their ONL as L3, therefore, they do not have to abandon this very important course.

* **Concern:** This change would necessitate the creation of synergies between language syllabuses (i.e. L1, L2, L3) and other subjects, e.g. DOW.

**Answer:** Recommendations on synergies between teaching and learning of L1, L2 and L3, further training opportunities on FL teaching for class teachers and reinforced use of L2 in European Hours were all welcome. They ought to be the subject of a separate proposal, when the Board deemed them necessary.

# Activities and timing

## Proposed amendment of documents

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Current text  | Proposed amendments(additions **in bold** and deletions **~~in bold and strikethrough~~**) |
| **2019-04-D-13** 1.3. b.In Language 2, classes/groups with more than 25 pupils shall be divided2.1 c.L3 is taught from secondary year 1; it may be any official language of the EU countries not being studied as L1 or L2. L3 in year 1 is a beginners’ course.Page 9 Primary school harmonised timetable**General Rules** 61.B.4The Class Council may disregard unsatisfactory results in Languages II, III or IV or in subjects taught through LII (EN, FR or DE) in the case of a new pupil at the end of his/her first year in the school. However, this derogation shall not apply to Language 3 in year 1 or to Language 4 in year 4 if the pupil has been attending the course in this subject since the beginning of the school year. | 1.3. b.In Language 2 **and Language 3**, classes/groups with more than 25 pupils shall be divided2.1 c.L3 is taught from **~~secondary year 1~~ primary year 4**; it may be any official language of the EU countries not being studied as L1 or L2. L3 in **~~year 1~~** **in the first year** is a beginners’ course.Page 9 Primary school harmonised timetableTo be changed as indicated above.The Class Council may disregard unsatisfactory results in Languages II, III or IV or in subjects taught through LII (EN, FR or DE) in the case of a new pupil at the end of his/her first year in the school. However, this derogation shall not apply **~~to Language 3 in year 1~~** to Language 4 in year 4 if the pupil has been attending the course in this subject since the beginning of the school year. |
| **Activity** | **Who?** | **Deadline** |
| Approval of this proposal and of the update of the documents 2019-04-D-13-en-1 *Revision of the Decisions of the Board of Governors concerning the organisation of studies and courses in the European Schools* and the *General Rules*. See above. | Board of Governors | April 2020 |
| Communication of the decision to the schools | OSG/PDU | May 2020 |
| Revision, modification of syllabuses and submission to quality assurance | OSG, Inspectorate and QA Working Group | 15 November 2021 |
| Decision on the syllabuses | JTC | February 2022 |
| Preparation for the implementation (Memo, Information events/training schools’ planning) | OSG, Inspectorate, School management | February-June 2022 |

Documents to change: organisation of studies (see above), General Rules (see above), Basic level of proficiency, Language policy, Syllabuses.

## Entry into force

First year: P4 in 2025-2026

The new timetable would start:

* P1 in 2022-2023
* P2 in 2023-2024
* P3 in 2024-2025

The members of the Working Group discussed the document, and basically agreed that it gives a balanced view of the advantages and possible adverse impact of the proposal, while answering most of the challenges. Although the document was deemed quite comprehensive (with only a few aspects to be further explored), the Working Group proposed that a discussion should take place within the Board of Inspectors Nursery and Primary on its meeting on 11 February 2020, as the BIP is the right forum for an in-depth discussion of the pedagogical details.

# Potential financial and human resources impact

## Syllabuses

In the case of the revision and amendment of the syllabuses, it is to be noted that the current L3 syllabus entered into force in September 2012, therefore its revision would be justified by 2022, according to the documents regulating the creation and revision of syllabuses and the Continuous Professional Development in the European Schools.[[3]](#footnote-4) Therefore, the revision of syllabuses does not generate extra costs.

As regards trainings, as stated in the framework for Continuous Professional Development[[4]](#footnote-5), the introduction of every new syllabus entails a ten-year cycle of central and decentralised trainings. In this respect, during the induction of the new, revised L3 syllabuses, trainers would also have to focus on the needs of young learners (pupils in P4 and P5).

During the discussions within the Working Group, the Boards of Inspectors and the Joint Teaching Committee, several delegations called for the need to organise training to teachers on teaching foreign languages. These trainings can be organised in the frame of the training budget; therefore, no extra resources need to be planned for the implementation period.

## Human resources and grouping

The **total number of periods in the proposed timetable would remain unchanged** with the introduction of L3.

According to the current proposal, the total number of hours in primary remains unchanged through all the primary cycle as the two hours of L3 in P4 and P5 are balanced with a reduction of hours in L1 and Mathematics (see table 1). It follows that the total number of groups in the future situation would correspond to the current number of groups in the primary school, which would also mean that the teachers teaching L3 would be largely found in among teachers already employed, redistributing the courses. Should this not be possible, new recruitments would be compensated by the reduction of teaching time for other teachers, as there is some flexibility in the course allocation in Primary, according to the PINCK Memorandum (Ref. 1998-M-31).

The following table shows the existing language sections in the schools to illustrate that additional costs may only emerge if a school does not dispose of a corresponding language section in primary. That is the case in table 2 (in red):

**Table 2: Language sections in Primary and choices of L3 in S1 in 2019-2020**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **LANGUAGE SECTIONS IN PRIMARY** | **L3 IN S1** |
| Alicante | DE | EN  | ES | FR |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | DE | EN | ES | FR | **IT** |   |
| Bergen | EN | FR | NL |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | DE | **ES** | NL |   |   |   |
| Brussels I | DA | DE | **EL\*** | EN | ES | FR | HU | IT | **LV\*** | PL | **SK\*** | DE | EN | ES | FR | IT | **NL** |
| Brussels II | DE | EN  | FI | FR | IT | LT | NL | PT | SV |   |   | DE | EN | **ES** | FR | IT | NL |
| Brussels III | CS | DE | EL | EN | ES | FR | NL |   |   |   |   | DE | EN | ES | FR | **IT** | NL |
| Brussels IV | BG | DE | EN | ET | FR | IT | NL | RO |   |   |   | DE | EN | **ES** | FR | IT | NL |
| Frankfurt | DE | EN  | ES | FR | IT |   |   |   |   |   |   | DE | EN | ES | FR | IT |   |
| Karlsruhe | DE | EN  | FR |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | DE | EN | **ES** | FR | **IT** |   |
| Lux I | DE | EN  | ES | FI | FR | NL | PL | PT | SV |   |   | DE | EN | ES | FR | **IT** |   |
| Lux II | CS | DA | DE | EL | EN | FR | HU | IT |   |   |   | DE | EN | **ES** | FR | IT |   |
| Mol | DE | EN  | FR | NL |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | EN | **ES** | FR | NL |   |   |
| München | DE | EL | EN | ES | FR | IT | NL |   |   |   |   | DE | EN | ES | FR | IT |   |
| Varese | DE | EN  | FR | IT | NL |   |   |   |   |   |   | DE | EN | **ES** | FR | IT |   |

\*Language sections specific to the site of Berkendael of the ES, Brussels I.

The table demonstrates that there could be only few cases where schools do not already dispose of a teacher teaching a L3 in the secondary school, and there is no language section in the school corresponding to the L3.

# Opinions and proposal

## Opinion of the Board of Inspectors Nursery and Primary

The BIP was in favour of introducing the teaching of Language 3 in the primary cycle even though some reservations were expressed as to how the primary cycle’s timetable would be changed. The BIP also wished that the level of synergy between the L1, L2 and L3 syllabuses would be improved and that more systematic trainings for teachers teaching foreign languages would be organised. The risk that an early introduction of L3 might have an impact on the ONL course offerings was also mentioned.

The proposal had been prepared in a way that it addressed the expressed reservations. Necessary actions would be undertaken in order to create a better synergy between the teaching and learning of different languages. Inspectors were invited to propose trainings addressing the needs of foreign language teachers. Once these actions are undertaken, the BIP would support theproposal.

## Opinion of the Joint Board of Inspectors

Broadly speaking, the Joint Board of Inspectors was favourably disposed towards the proposal from a multilingualism viewpoint. The concerns that emerged related to its implementation and its organisation, rather than to the earlier introduction of Language 3 in itself.

Those concerns focused mainly on the subjects for which the number of hours would need to be changed. The Inspectors responsible for mathematics feared that a reduction in the number of hours allocated to the subject in P4 and P5 would have an impact on pupils’ level when they moved up to the secondary cycle. On the other hand, several delegations shared the view that the quality of teaching did not depend on the total number of teaching hours, and in the case of mathematics, the number of teaching periods in P1-P5 would not decrease. Several Inspectors agreed that reducing the number of L1 hours would not have negative consequences for its learning. As indicated in the document, it would be necessary to adapt the syllabuses of the subjects affected by this reduction.

Delegations related to ONL courses offered were invited to reflect on the possibility of considering ONL as an alternative to L3. Finally, as was the case with L2 teaching, more teachers would need to be trained to teach a foreign language.

## Opinion of the Joint Teaching Committee

The members of the JTC were of differing opinions and the reactions were mixed. In the course of the discussion, two distinct groups of concerns were voiced, namely the reduction in Maths periods in P4 and P5 and the possible negative impact that the proposal might have on other languages already taught.

The Polish and UK Inspectors, ISTC, COSUP, Deputy Directors Primary had reservations about the proposed timetable and reasoned that P4 and P5 were essential years for preparing the mathematical skills needed in the Secondary cycle. Acquiring these skills would be hindered by reducing the number of periods of mathematics in those levels, even if the total number of hours of Mathematics would be slightly increased.

Although multilingualism was unanimously supported by all members, several of them expressed their concerns that early introduction of L3 would jeopardise the learning of L1 for those pupils who have difficulties with their mother tongue, also L2 and/or ONL. A sound dominant language (L1) is the foundation of the ES. The Statistical Report on Educational Support in 2018-2019 showed that the majority of Educational Support is provided in L1 and in Mathematics in all cycles, indicating that some pupils face difficulties in these subjects.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that students with ONL, as well as latecomers in the Secondary, would face a more challenging situation.

On the other hand, those who were in favour of the proposal stressed the importance of early introduction of a foreign language in achieving a higher proficiency level. Given that in primary the focus would be on oral skills, pupils would be given a sound basis for more successful learning of L3. Instead of thinking in terms of number of hours, as it had already been recommended by the Report of the London Institute of Education on ES curriculum revision, the emphasis should be placed on the content and the quality of the teaching and syllabuses. Several delegations proposed that enhanced synergies among different levels of language syllabuses should be sought for and relevant training to teachers on teaching foreign languages should be organised.

The EC requested information about the potential financial and human resources impact of the proposal to be put forward to the Budgetary Committee.

In the end, the JTC did not reach a consensus on the proposal Introduction of Language 3 in P4. Together with the reservations, remarks and proposals made in the course of the discussion within the BIP, JBI and JTC, the document would be presented to the Budgetary Committee and to the Board of Governors. In the event of approval, the following documents would be adapted accordingly: Point 2.1 (c) and the harmonised timetable for the Primary in document ‘Revision of the Decisions of the Board of Governors concerning the organisation of studies and courses in the European Schools’ (2019-04-D-13), Article 61.B.4 of the General Rules, Basic proficiency level (2013-08-D-11), Language Policy (2019-01-D-35) and relevant syllabuses.

## Opinion of the Budgetary Committee

Malta, Ireland, Germany, Poland and Interparents expressed reservations on the pedagogical aspects, while France expressed a reservation on the financial plan.

The Committee expressed its positive opinion, nevertheless requesting more clarity on the budgetary and human resources impact.

## Proposal to the Board of Governors

Together with the reservations, remarks and proposals made in the course of the discussion within the BIP, JBI, JTC and the Budgetary Committee, the document is presented to the Board of Governors for approval.

In the event of approval, the following documents would be adapted accordingly: Point 2.1 (c) and the harmonised timetable for the Primary School in the document ‘Revision of the Decisions of the Board of Governors concerning the organisation of studies and courses in the European Schools’ (2019-04-D-13), Article 61.B.4 of the General Rules, Basic proficiency level (2013-08-D-11), Language Policy (2019-01-D-35) and relevant syllabuses.

1. Following the Gothenburg summit in 2017, the Commission published a proposal for a *Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages* (COM(2018)0272) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The meeting took place in the OSG in December 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. 2014-01-D-41-en-14 and 2016-01-D-40-en-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. 2016-01-D-40 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)