

Brussels, 13 November, 2020

Joint Letter from all Staff Committees and Trade Unions of the EU Institutions in Brussels and from the Parent Associations

OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

Subject: Call to end the prolonged critical overcrowding of the Brussels European School

Dear President Von Der Leyen,
Dear President Sassoli,
Dear President Michel,
Dear President Schweng
Dear President Tzitzikostas
Dear Secretary-General Marcheggiano,

Staff Representatives of the European institutions located in Brussels, as well as parents of children attending European Schools in Brussels now or in the near future, appeal to you to take urgent actions in order to ensure adequate space and infrastructure for the European schools in this city.

The European schools, which provide quality education to the children of officials and other staff of the European institutions, contribute greatly to the attractiveness of the European civil service, which is in itself essential to the successful realization of the European project.

Beyond this important aspect, their educational and civic model, promoting, *inter-alia*, European integration and the development of a European identity, proved its attractiveness across the continent, as evidenced by the rapid increase in the number of accredited schools.

Currently, the four European schools in Brussels host more than 13,400 pupils and have already largely exceeded their official capacity with all the ensuing consequences in terms of safety, pedagogy and the ability to offer places. Despite a restrictive enrollment policy dictated by a lack of space and resources – that effectively banned Brussels European schools for other children than those of staff of European Institutions – the school population is expected to grow by nearly 2,000 new pupils by the end of the 2025-2026 school year. In addition, with two sites (Berkendael and the temporary Evere site) accommodating only nursery and primary-level pupils, the pressure on the secondary-level pupils is not solved and even further heightened in all Brussels Schools. It is therefore vital to resolve this problem of overpopulation without further delay.

We, the signatories of this letter, ask you to ensure that the institutions you preside openly take a stand in favor of the future of the European Schools. In addition, we ask you to take actions, develop inter-institutional synergies with a view to contacting the competent national and regional authorities in person to obtain official commitments and decisions as to:

- the finalization by 1st September 2021 of the construction of fully operational provisional facilities accommodating safely and adequately 1,500 nursery and primary-level pupils on the Evere site (ex-NATO) ;
- the official establishment of the 5th European School in Brussels without further delay; the rapid confirmation by the Belgian Council of Ministers of the decision to permanently allocate the Evere site for the European schools' system; the launch

of the construction of the permanent facilities that would accommodate at least 1,000 additional pupils by the start of the September 2026 school year;

- granting of the permanent status to the Berkendael site, in order to maintain the existing school there and allow for the long-term planning for the education of its nursery and primary-level population;
- ensuring that all sites used by European Schools in Brussels have adequate budgetary allocations (notably to cover pupils' and staff needs) and infrastructures (bus parking, canteens, sport facilities, laboratories, etc.) corresponding to the size of their populations and the requirements of quality of education as set out in the respective Board of Governors' decisions.

Moreover, taking into consideration the continuous increase in the overall number of pupils in the European Schools in all locations, we ask you to ensure the necessary increase in allocation of the EU contribution to these schools' budgets. This will allow them to cope with their population development, clearly reflecting the success of this model of education.

Finally, the expectations expressed in this letter do not cover all the existing concerns. Other issues have been frequently raised, such as the need (a) to start planning for the 6th school, (b) to find a suitable solution for the current overpopulation in the secondary cycle, and (c) to strengthen the safety in the European schools. This letter emphasizes therefore what is in our view the most urgent challenge today.

Yours sincerely,

Local Staff Committees:

*European Commission Staff Committee Brussels
Council of the European Union Staff Committee
European Parliament Staff Committee
CESE staff Committee
CDR staff Committee
EEAS staff Committee
EUROCONTROL staff Committee*

Trade Unions / Staff Associations

*Union Syndicale
Renouveau et Démocratie
U4U/RS
FFPE
TAO/AFI
SFE
Save Europe
Generation 2004
SFP-Europa*

Parents' Associations

*APEEE-EEB1
APEEE-EEB2
APEEE-EEB3
APEEE-EEB4
AdP - Crèches / Garderies in Brussels*