



Annex 4: Draft Resolution document suggested to be voted on at the General Assembly of January 31st 2012

A new European School in Brussels The experiences of Brussels IV

Five years after the opening of the European School Brussels IV (EEB IV), the Parents Association looks back at the experiences of the first years. For the evaluation, the following has to be taken into account:

The EEB IV was solely filled with pupils joining the European School System for the first time;

The EEB IV has 5 language sections (FR, EN, DE, IT, NL) and two categories of SWALS (RO and BG):

The EEB IV had to start in 2007 at the temporary site in Berkendael, 8 km away from the final site of the school in Laeken;

The Board of Governors endorsed the "Groupe de Suivi" (follow-up group) recommendation that the site in Berkendael can host up to 1,000 pupils;

The opening of Laeken was considerably delayed (from 2009 to 2012) resulting in the need for additional space in Berkendael that was created firstly by adding the Berkendael 66 building in 2010 for secondary and in 2011 by installing prefabs for about 100 additional pupils in the car park;

In 2007 and 2008 all pupils enrolling for the first time in the European School system in Brussels in the sections open in EEB IV were sent to Berkendael;

EEB IV had about 200 pupils for the first year, 400 in the second, 600 in the third year, 850 in the fourth and 1050 in the fifth year¹;

This management of enrolments did not reduce considerably the number of pupils in the other European Schools in Brussels with the result that in 2009, 2010 and also in 2011 many pupils were sent to EEB IV despite the parents preference for another school;

More than 50% of EEB IV pupils are in the Francophone section;

¹ For comparison: Ixelles started with about 1000 pupils

The Dutch section is so small that the "Board of Appeals" ruled that a pupil from P4 could be transferred to the corresponding class in Brussels III as she was, at that time, the only pupil in her class which, according to the Court, went against the social function of a school; whereas furthermore the "Board of Appeals" allowed two transfers for pupils in P4NL to Brussels III P5NL because of uncertainty as to whether a Dutch secondary would be opened in Brussels IV;

Since 2007, the enrolment policy for Brussels IV was highly unpredictable for parents entering the European School system in Brussels combined with the fact that the final destination of the school in Laeken is further away from the homes of the parents²;

The Parents Association of the Brussels IV (APEEE IV) was set up on June 7th 2007 with the financial support of the Parents Associations of the other three Brussels European Schools who lent the APEEE IV more than €100.000 to be paid back starting in 2012 to set up the services transport, canteen and extra curricular activities;

The Board of Governors recognised the need of support for the APEEE IV in relation to the special conditions for enrolment to EEB IV and decided to grant a subsidy compensating for the higher transport costs for self-paying parents for the school years from 2007/2008 until 2010/2011;

These circumstances caused some difficulties for the APEEE IV:

a) Difficulties of a general nature:

- The high number of parents having a preference for another European School in Brussels³;
- a constant management of change due to the fast and high increase in numbers of pupils for which the services had to be offered;
- a majority of inexperienced parents regarding the functioning of the European School system and the efforts needed to provide services and pedagogical support to parents and pupils of EEB IV;
- a lack of financial means resulting in a high workload for the voluntary parents that were willing to assume the task to set up and run the services for the pupils of EEB IV;
- problems with the Belgian "Board of Works" (Régie des bâtiments) as their willingness to invest in the temporary Berkendael site was low⁴;

b) Difficulties for the transport services struggling for a balance between efficiency and a pupil friendly transport service with regard to reasonable time for itineraries because of:

- a much larger catchment area than the other European Schools in Brussels based on the above mentioned enrolment policy;
- a smaller number of pupils than the other European Schools spread over the whole area of Brussels and (far) outside the ring⁵;
- a higher share of small children using the transport service as EEB IV started in 2007 only with MAT 1 to P 3;

² see result of the survey on APEEE homepage

³ since the enrolment phase for the school year 2008, ... parents have asked for a transfer to another school or even turned to the "Board of Appeals" to enforce this demand;

⁴ In 2007, it was not even clear if a kitchen in line with modern hygiene standards would be installed to allow for the preparation of food at school;

⁵ longest distances: Kortenberg (? km), Braine l'Alleud (km ?), Waterloo (? km) while in the other schools the farrest distances are about 20 km;

- the consequent need to work solely with monitors on the buses on the basis of ALE cheques⁶;

c) Difficulties regarding the canteen service having to deal with a number of shortcomings of the kitchen and the canteen in Berkendael as it had been designed to cook for 650 pupils maximum and the responsible "Board of Works" were not willing to improve the conditions as it was only a temporary site:

- small rooms for storage with the result that it was not possible to buy a higher quantity of food at a better price;
- frequent breakdown of machines⁷;
- high noise level in the canteen;

d) Difficulties for the extra-curricular activities that were hampered by several unfavourable conditions:

- extra-curricular activities on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays could only be attended by pupils living near the school or who were enrolled in the "garderie" on site as there was only one bus service after school due to the small number of pupils;
- For the same reason, the APEEE was forced to concentrate on a large number of activities on Fridays to provide a sort of "garderie" for the younger pupils not enrolled in garderie services but waiting for the departure of the buses⁸;
- the lack of sports facilities at the school;

Based on these considerations, the APEEE IV:

- 1) Strongly recommends that the planned 5th school is not set up in this way.
- 2) Draws attention to the fact that it caused serious imbalances in the distribution of sections over the 4 existing schools in Brussels and within EEB IV without, however, preventing the other 3 schools from aggravated overcrowding.
- 3) Asks therefore the Board of Governors provide for an in-depth evaluation of the management for the setting up of EEB IV and to provide for lessons to learn for the new school.
- 4) Requests that the Secretary General integrates the work of the Central Enrolment Authority (CEA) and of the "Groupe de Suivi" better as decisions on enrolments in Brussels are very much dependant on the available infrastructure; takes the view that the separation of these issues in the past seems technically necessary but has not proven efficient in terms of results;
- 5) Proposes therefore that the Board of Governors asks the Secretary General to set up a Round Table that will provide input to the CEA and the "Groupe de Suivi" on the future of the

⁶ The A.L.E. (Agences Locales pour l'Emploi) are Belgian organisms which help long term unemployed and people on low unemployment benefit to find small paid jobs while keeping their unemployment allowance. 25 ALE are employed by APEEE IV.

⁷ mainly the elevator for goods, the dishwasher and the boiler;

⁸ MAT 1- P2 finish school at 12.15 on Fridays, the buses leave at 15.30 after the lessons of the other pupils ended;

fifth school in Brussels by bringing together all relevant participants; asks that this Round Table for the 5th should in any case include representatives of the Parents Associations of the 4 European Schools in Brussels, the Future Parents Association but also a high-level representative of the Belgian Federal Ministry responsible for the infrastructure of the European Schools;

6) Requests that the 2nd task of the Round Table should be developing and recommending concrete steps on how the European Schools could be better integrated into the landscape of Belgian and International schools in Brussels by taking into account the large number of enrolments in the French section, the requests for joining the European Schools in Brussels, for example from children of UN staff and CAT III pupils, and the possibilities created by the recent reform of the European School system.

7) Underlines that this integration is particularly relevant for the acceptance and continuation of the European School system as a whole.

8) Requests furthermore that the Board of Governors asks the Secretary General to initiate in the CEA long term planning (until 2020) for the enrolment management of the European Schools in Brussels taking into account the estimated numbers of new pupils, the developments regarding the overcrowding of the Brussels' schools, the location of the fifth school and a possible preliminary site; asks that the yearly decisions on enrolments are made on the basis of this long-term planning that includes also a budgetary forecast.

9) Asks for impact assessments being foreseen in the budget of the European Schools to be carried out in line with European standards⁹ before decisions are taken that have a high impact on pupils schooling and the budget of a European School with a view to improved budgetary management by avoiding unnecessary costs for parents and schools and in favour of good governance as a whole.

The APEEE IV asks the President to forward this resolution to the Board of Governors, the Secretary General and the Commission.

⁹ In accordance with the recommendations of the Court of Auditors on Impact Assessments