

7. Canteen /Cafeteria - Cantine/Caf  t  ria: Adja Awa Sissoko

Canteen / Cafeteria Activity Report 2021-2022: Adja Awa SISSOKO

Food & Beverage Activity report 2021-2022

1. Overview

The 2021-2022 school year was the first year post the COVID-19 outbreak. During the COVID-19 crisis (about 18 months), the procedures of the APEEE's Food & Beverage (F&B) activities were fundamentally reviewed and adapted (at heavy costs) in order to limit as much as possible the circulation of the virus in the school's premises in general and in the canteen in particular. The ultimate aim was to ensure safe lunchtimes for the school's pupils. As of September 2021, the progressive removal of COVID-19 protection measurements in the school has helped the Food & Beverage department returning to its normal business and reaching in early 2022 its full working speed, while at the same time including in the Canteen rooms more pupils than previously (*i.e.* the *tartinists*).

In late February 2022, the war in Ukraine created additional challenges for the APEEE F&B department mainly due to increasing difficulties with respect to supplies provisions and price inflation across the board. The Canteen department has also actively contributed to the support of the Ukrainian pupils that the school has enrolled and who used the service.

Mid April 2022, F&B activities welcome a new manager, Mr. Evangelos PILATOS, who took over the department and replaced Mr. Renan MINOCHE who has occupied the position for about four years.

Overall for the 2021-2022 school year, the number of subscriptions to the canteen were clearly below the ones of the 2019-2020 school year (about 1799 subscriptions over the three instalments). The subscriptions (per instalment and in order of payment) were as follows:

- T1 : 1638
- T2 : 1612
- T3 : 1569

This drop in the subscriptions can be explained by the fact that in 2021-2022 there were still some uncertainty regarding the health situation and the related measures. For the current school year, the first figures show encouraging signs of some recovery of the number of subscriptions to the Canteen service after the difficult COVID-19 years.

In September 2022, 49 Canteen subscriptions remained unpaid from the 2021-2022 and previous school years. This situation has unfortunately occurred repeatedly over the last years. To remedy to such situations, a number of preventive measures have been taken by the Canteen department, which can be summarised by the following points:

- Enhancing the communication around the launch of the instalment payment both via the APEEE Newsletter and personalised emails to parents;
- Closer and direct contacts between the APEEE F&B manager and parents;
- Launch of legal procedures of recovery by the mean of the APEEE lawyer.

As a result, 9 subscriptions are still unpaid. This is, of course, a significant improvement compared to past years and the Canteen department will pursue its effort to reduce this number to the minimum.

As regards the financial balance, the F&B department is still in deficit (160 048 euros) over the 2021-22 school year (for comparison 2020-2021 deficit was about 315 000 euros). The 2021-2022 deficit is mostly driven by a decline in the Canteen's revenues (still affected by the uncertainty due to the health situation) and a still high level of Canteen's costs. Nevertheless, and amid the economic situation, it is worth noting that at odds to the two last previous years the financial situation has significantly improved thanks to the improved health situation as well as the series of changes and measures taken over the recent months.

2. Initiatives and strategy for the F&B service

In view of recovering the pre- COVID-19 crisis activity level of F&B and being fully aware of the past changes in the services, their impacts and the challenges ahead to provide an inclusive, sustainable and quality service to the school's pupils, the Canteen department has launched after the 2022 Easter holidays two big satisfaction surveys to the attention of the pupils and

their parents (<https://www.bru4.eu/en/canteen-satisfaction-surveys/>). The aims of these surveys were manifold:

- Evaluate the degree of satisfaction with the APEEE canteen services
- Measure the effectiveness of the communication (menus, actions, ...)
- Identify the eating habits of the pupils
- Define the expectations and priorities to be given to the APEEE canteen services

The surveys were a success as shown by the large participation rate (about 665 responses on a voluntary basis). Overall, the parents' perception of the Canteen services appears to be more critical than the students' evaluation (*i.e.* 47% of the parent respondents gave it an "excellent" or "good" rating against 56% for the pupil respondents). Three main takeaways came out of the surveys' responses:

- The expectations seem to be high regarding the consumption of fresh, seasonal products, made from quality products cooked on the spot. However, although the initiatives carried out around taste education and limiting waste are understood and generally encouraged, these attempts often fall short and miss their target, and can even sometimes be perceived as counter-productive.
- The APEEE-Canteen Service needs to work on the nature and quality of the meals (*i.e.* more diversity and simplicity) in order to achieve the nutritional objectives without, however, neglecting the pleasure aspect of the meals.
- The APEEE-Service Canteen must also, while taking into account the multicultural context of the school, improve its communication regarding the content of the meals offered and their preparation. It is also the mission of the Canteen to provide the most accurate information possible on the food offered to its users to avoid that misconceptions govern the food choices of the pupils.

In order to achieve our mission (*i.e.* serving in-house preparation of healthy, balanced and tasty meals, for all school pupil within the dedicated, secure and convivial school's premises) and our goals (*i.e.* diverse, sustainable and high quality service at a reasonable price), the **APEEE-**

Canteen Service has initiated a series of changes in the management of the Canteen and the different services under its responsibility during the school year 2021-2022. This includes in particular:

- First, a **complete review of the hot meal menus of the canteen**, in collaboration with a nutritionist and the Belgian national standards. They now offer more diversity in the menus. Particular emphasis has been placed on seasonal and short-distance products. Whenever possible, organic or vegan products are also promoted.
- Second, the **alternative offer to the traditional canteen and hot meals for lunch** (*i.e.* cafeteria and Snack Shack) has been reviewed and new products are continuously proposed in order to offer a wider choice while maintaining the ambitious objective of proposing as much healthy and tasty food as possible. As clearly expressed in the last spring satisfaction survey, pupils are requesting more in-house made products rather than ready-to-eat bought from suppliers.
- Third, actions have been initiated and continuous discussions have taken place to **avoid stock-outs during lunch hours and food waste** (*i.e.* reinforcement of pre-orders and depending on the availability of Chef's Boxes with cold buffet items from the teachers' restaurant). In addition, following contacts with the company Aqualex, the water plastic bottles in the Canteen were replaced by filtered water from the Canteen taps for the pupils using the refectories. This project will trigger a reduction of more than 500kg of plastic per year and an annual cost reduction for the Canteen of 19k euros.
- Fourth, an **enhanced communication about the Canteen services**. The APEEE Canteen's website, which is currently being reviewed, will progressively include more complete information on the different options available to pupils for lunch. It is also planned to integrate educational content on nutrition, based on the Belgian national standards and in collaboration with a nutritionist. The APEEE's website and the Newsletters will also

contribute to the improved communication effort by referring and reporting to all the events organised by Canteen services for the pupils. This ranges from the introduction of the new items in the cafeteria and Snack Shack or new Canteen menus for the period to the animations and decorations for Halloween, Christmas and Easter seasons. On the later point about the feast decorations, it is worth mentioning that (i) as a rule no extra costs is spent the F&B department in these decorations. They are part of the agreement with the Sub Contractor 'European Services Company SRL', so that the provisions of these decorations do not have any impact on the prices of the Canteen subscriptions; (ii) In order to manage any sensitivity, these decorations are now be subject to the school's and the APEEE Board's approval. The decorations are much appreciated by a vast majority of school's pupils, who are looking forward to seeing them at each season and the Canteen services are happy to offer them.

- Last but not least, an **intensive work is done, on a daily basis, with all the F&B suppliers to obtain the best products at the best prices**. This is an acute and relevant exercise given the period of high monetary inflation that we are currently experiencing with the aim to buffer as much as possible the inflation increase on F&B department under a non-price increase assumption of the canteen subscriptions (see Table 1). This crucial work is performed by the stock manager (that we had hired a year ago) under the supervision of the F&B manager with the help of the Chef of the kitchen. As an illustration in spring 2022, a part of the APEEE budget was used to increase preventively our F&B stock before major increases hit the local market. For the future, increasing of the stock area will give the opportunity to achieve better deals for primary products/ingredients. First contacts have been already taken with the school to discuss the possibility of adding a second walk-in freezer. A second freezer would allow us to increase the stock of frozen supplies and reduce the cost.

Moreover, the purchase of '*Easyliis*' software has helped the F&B department to digitalize all the recipes, products/ingredients and suppliers with the aim to improve the cost efficiency and improve the level of durability F&B department.

Table 1 - Progression of price increase in selected food items for the Canteen.

Food items	Annual Quantity 2021	Unity price (€) Jun 2021	Unity price (€) Jan 2022	Unity price (€) Jun 2022	Total cost (€) Jun 2021	Total cost (€) Jan 2022	Increase (%) Jun '21 - Jan '22	Total cost (€) Jun 2022	Increase (%) Jan '22 - Jun '22
Creme 40% (1l)	1660	3.5	4.2	4.5	5876.4	6972.0	18.6%	7387.0	6.0%
Pate grecque 5 kg	384	5.6	6.8	8.9	2146.6	2592.0	20.8%	3406.1	31.4%
Couscous 5kg	576	5.6	6.9	9.2	3242.9	3957.1	22.0%	5293.4	33.8%
Riz blanc 20 kg	116	38.8	40.2	47.3	4496.2	4659.7	3.6%	5485.6	17.7%
Riz basmati 3kg	185	10.1	10.7	12.5	1874.1	1986.9	6.0%	2319.9	16.8%
Farine 1 kg	350	0.7	0.9	1.3	245.0	315.0	28.6%	441.0	40.0%
Napolitana 3kg	288	8.0	8.6	8.8	2298.2	2488.3	8.3%	2543.0	2.2%
Lait entier (1l)	5604	0.7	1.0	1.2	3889.2	5604.0	44.1%	6444.6	15.0%
Pesto vert 700gr	800	16.1	17.1	17.6	12880.0	13672.0	6.1%	14048.0	2.8%
Penne (1kg)	8000	1.7	1.9	2.1	13840.0	15120.0	9.2%	16880.0	11.6%
Cabillaud portionné (1kg)	1575	8.8	9.4	14.5	13781.3	14805.0	7.4%	22758.8	53.7%
Emince porc spiringue (1kg)	2300	7.5	7.9	8.6	17296.0	18078.0	4.5%	19688.0	8.9%
Huile olive cuisson 5l	374	11.3	12.6	21.4	4241.2	4697.4	10.8%	7988.6	70.1%
Yaourt nature (1 pot)	40000	0.1	0.1	0.2	4400.0	5480.0	24.5%	6320.0	15.3%
Mayonnaise 2.5l	138	9.5	12.3	13.7	1316.5	1691.9	28.5%	1890.6	11.7%
					Total = 91823	Total = 102119		Total = 122895	

Furthermore, an important reorganisation of the Canteen service procedures has been implemented to the **costs' reduction in terms of staff of the Sub contractor** 'European Services Company SRL', while still keeping the high quality of service (see Table 2).¹ To recall, over the past years and during the COVID-19 crisis in particular, the Sub Contractor's cost had continuously and significantly increased. Currently, 33% reduction of the Sub Contractor's cost has been achieved. Several in house trainings have also increased staff's productivity since more costs' reduction in this regards is foreseen in the coming months.

Table 2 – Evolution of the Sub-contractor's costs for the Canteen over years 2021 and 2022

European Services Company SRL'	2021	2022	Change over 2022-2021	Percentage
September	130 263€	83 205€	47 058€	-36%
October	119 863€	80 056€	39 807€	-33%
November	96 843€	65 520€	31 323€	-32%
December	74 268€	54 002€	20 266€	-27%
Total T1 2022-23	421 237€	282 783€	138 454€	-33%

3. Canteen subscription prices evolutions and policy

A. Overview in 2021-22

¹ The the Sub contractor 'European Services Company SRL' is the company providing the staff in charge of welcoming and serving the pupils in the canteen rooms.

Table 3 compares the prices per meal for the different canteen schemes in three APEEE in Brussels for the second period (T2) for the 2021-22 school year. It also shows that irrespectively of the cost structure of the different APEEE F&B department and the impact of the meal price of the financial balance, our school does obviously not offer the most expensive meals.

Table 3 - 2021-22 Canteen price list: comparing EEBI, EEBII and EEBIV

Days	2nd term (price/meal)								
	Laeken			Ixelles			Uccle		
	M	P	S	M	P	S	M	P	S
5			6.96 €	7.22 €	7.60 €	7.86 €			
4	6.96 €	6.96 €	6.96 €	7.25 €	7.64 €	7.89 €	8.37 €	8.16 €	7.78 €
3	8.68 €	8.68 €	8.68 €	7.31 €	7.70 €	7.96 €	9.53 €	9.22 €	8.88 €
2			9.09 €	9.33 €	9.33 €	9.33 €			9.85 €
1				8.91 €	8.91 €	8.91 €			

B. Canteen price in 2022-23

Table 4 - 2022-23 Canteen in EEBIV: subscription prices (per instalment)

	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days
T1	€ 258.30	€ 368.55	€ 387.19	€ 492.19
T2	€ 188.38	€ 248.66	€ 301.40	€ 376.75
T3	€ 162.69	€ 226.05	€ 280.85	€ 356.20
S1-S6 T3	€ 128.44	€ 180.84	€ 226.05	€ 287.70
Daily Meal Price	8.56 €	7.54 €	6.85 €	6.85 €

The first instalment (T1) has 72 days. The second (T2) has 55 days and the third (T3) 52 days. For classes S1-S6 third instalment has 42 days. This year we have calculated two different prices for T3 since classes S1-S6 are finishing the school year earlier and avoid possible reimbursements at the end of the school year.

As of the start of the 2022-23 school year, some changes the subscription policy occurred as follows:

- More consistency in the Canteen subscription prices: The target was to keep the Canteen subscription prices constant as much as possible with an assumption of **6.85€** price per meal for the enrolment of 5 days per week and an increase 5% progressively as days decrease.
- The policy for **family discount** was also amended to be aligned with the others APEEE in Brussels, i.e. the discount is only given to the 3rd member of the family and not at all the children of that family as before.
- The full amount of each period subscribed was required to ensure the same start and end dates for the period for every pupils (except in cases of reimbursement apply).

Table 5 a presents the numbers of subscriptions for the current school year up to now. Year to date for the 1st instalment, 1711 subscriptions have been already recorder, which is 73 more than 2021-2022. As regards the 2nd period, 1723 subscriptions have been recorded the instalment so far. The figures for the second instalment might still evolve over the coming weeks. Table 5b complements Table 5a with the subscriptions for which a family discount was granted.

Table 5a - 2022-23 Canteen in EEBIV: Numbers of subscriptions (T1 – T2)

2022-2023	Normal prices					Total Revenue (per subscription scheme)
	Trimester	Nursery	Primary	S1-S6	S7	
T1	116	682	836	77	1711	
2 days	0	0	124	18	142	€ 36,678.60
3 days	6	41	110	24	181	€ 66,707.55
4 days	87	550	441	19	1097	€ 424,747.43
5 days	0	0	62	8	70	€ 34,453.30
T2	117	683	846	77	1723	
2 days	0	0	146	22	168	€ 31,647.00
3 days	8	44	141	24	217	€ 53,958.14
4 days	103	596	463	22	1184	€ 356,857.60
5 days	0	0	60	8	68	€ 25,619.00

* The number total of subscriptions in Table 5a also include the number of discounted subscriptions in Table 5b.

Table 5b - 2022-23 Canteen in EEBIV: numbers of subscriptions (T1 – T2)

2022-2023	Family Discount					Total Revenue (per Subscription scheme)
	Trimester	Nursery	Primary	S1-S6	S7	
T1	23	91	99	8	221	
2 days	0	0	17	3	20	€ 4,649.40
3 days	1	7	24	1	33	€ 10,946.10
4 days	22	82	52	3	159	€ 55,406.73
5 days	0	2	6	1	9	€ 3,986.73
T2	6	43	36	1	86	
2 days	0	0	3	0	3	€ 508.61
3 days	0	4	4	0	8	€ 1,790.32
4 days	6	37	24	0	67	€ 18,174.42
5 days	0	2	5	1	8	€ 2,712.60

C. Way forward: the Canteen price in 2023-24

Overall amid a very challenging context on many respects, it seems clear that the **financial situation of the APEEE F&B department is recovering after years of budgetary troubles**. The economic outlook for the coming months remains highly uncertain and the prospects are not the more favourable ones even if some signs point to certain deceleration of the price inflation. Considering all the fruitful efforts and changes brought by the department (both in terms of the variety of the Canteen offer and the costs reduction), it would be definitely warranted to pursue these efforts.

This being said, there is no guarantee at this stage that these efforts, as important as they should be and currently are, would suffice to bring back the financial situation of the F&B department on track for the next school year or the following ones. It is a matter of fact that **running continuous deficits pose a real risk to the sustainability of our F&B department**. To achieve a sustainable financial situation of the service, the efforts should focus on the three main following levers:

1. Improving the quality of the service in order to attract more subscriptions and improve the profitability of the service;
2. Reduce the costs. This is the corollary of the previous point and also aims to improve the profitability of the service;

3. Adapting the price policy by considering a price increase of the subscriptions.

The F&B department have been working on the first two above-mentioned points over the past months with success and will keep working on them (as explained earlier in the activity report). **For the time being, the focus and the priority should remain on these points (*i.e.* the quality of the service and the cost reduction) and no recommendation should be made regarding any price increase of the subscriptions for the next school year.** However, the situation might evolve quickly and one cannot exclude adverse developments that would dramatically change the picture at the moment and require a raise in canteen prices this year or next year. The F&B department will keep monitoring closely the situation and keep you inform as appropriate.