



Mr. Michael Ryan
Secretary General
Board of Governors of the European Schools
European Commission
Building J11,30
1049 Brussels

u/c Mr. Tom Hoyem
Director
European School, Karlsruhe

Strasbourg, 23 January 2005

Subject:

Board of Governor's meeting 1-2 February 2005:

European School at primary level in the Strasbourg/Kehl area
School fees for officials of governmental and intergovernmental organisations other than EU

Dear Mr. Ryan,

I am writing you on behalf of *Etoile Education*, the French-registered association bringing together parents of children in the Strasbourg area being schooled at ESK in Karlsruhe. Our association is taking a keen interest in seeing either a new or an existing primary school in the Strasbourg/Kehl area become recognised by the Board of Governors of the European Schools.

I was indeed delighted to learn, at the Administrative Board meeting at ESK on 1 December 2004, that the European Commission encourages the Board of Governors and individual schools to cooperate towards widening the availability of the European school system. While new schools are not likely to be opened, branches of existing ones would not be wholly excluded. At the very least, consideration will be given to "associating" existing schools with the European school system.

With reference to the Board of Governors' draft agenda item "Request for the setting up a European School in Strasbourg" (2312-D-2004-en-1), our association should like to highlight the significant local interest in, and indeed the urgent need for a European School at primary level in Strasbourg - or in Kehl which seems to us to be a very valid alternative, only minutes from Strasbourg on the German side of the Rhine. Wherever

this primary school may be located, it would need only go up to the age of 10, after which the children could travel by bus to Karlsruhe.

A European School at primary level in our area would avoid having very young children travel to Karlsruhe on a daily basis and yet give these children the very best introduction to the European School system. There can be no doubt that this system corresponds to the needs of Council of Europe staff and attached permanent representations, staff of EuroCorps and a growing number of major international companies such as Dow and various individuals, including French and German parents who prefer the European School system to their national ones.

We therefore very much hope that, apart from the Strasbourg option being considered with the relevant French authorities, the option of a European School in Kehl will be thoroughly explored with the German government as well as with the regional and local authorities, bearing in mind that the cross-border "Eurodistrict" project enjoys Mr. Chirac and Mr. Schroder's strong support.

Another matter of great importance to *Etoile Education* is the question regarding fee categories, which I understand is also an item on the Board of Governors' meeting in February (1711-D-2004-en-2).

The majority of our members are currently paying Category II fees, despite the fact that they work for governmental or intergovernmental organizations (Council of Europe, permanent representation and EuroCorps), much like their European Union counterparts, who are considered Category I. These are exceptionally high fees for civil servants or military officials, to which should be added the significant costs incurred by the pupils' daily travel from the Strasbourg area and, for some, the additional costs of after-school care.

The fact that Category II fees are currently being calculated according to running costs divided by number of children means that there are also no guarantees as to how much these fees might be increasing from year to year.

Although some parents may receive an education allowance, the ceiling for this amount has been fixed (so far in the case of one of the employers concerned) at around 50% of the actual costs incurred. This becomes very burdensome indeed, particularly when parents have more than one child due to the fact that under Category II regulations no reductions are made for siblings.

If this situation is not addressed in the near future, we very much fear that costs will be prohibitive for all but higher paid administrators, which we feel would be unfair and discriminatory.

We understand that there is a Fees Working Group currently discussing these issues and we would like to draw your attention to a compromise solution which could be applied at least on an interim basis and for which there is already a precedent: the so-called category IIIa applies to NATO which is one of the coordinated organisations to which the Council of Europe also belongs. Whilst tuition is not free for pupils of this category, as is the case for Category I, the fees are a considerable reduction to those of Category II. As there are different fees for Nursery, Primary and Secondary school, families with more than one child can be offered the requisite financial flexibility.

I am copying this letter to Secretary General Terry Davis of the Council of Europe and would recall his letter to you of 17 November 2004. I am also copying this letter to General Jean-Louis Py of EuroCorps as well as to Secretary General Julian Priestley of the European Parliament as they were likewise addressed by Mr Davis on the topic of a European School in the Strasbourg area.

We look forward to being informed of the progress in these matters. Please do not hesitate to revert to us if we can be of further assistance.

Best wishes,

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President
Etoile Education

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cc: Mr. Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Ms. Catherine Mabileau, Director of Human Resources, Council of Europe
Mr. Jean-Louis Py, General of EuroCorps Headquarters
Mr. Julian Priestley, Secretary General of the European Parliament