



ETOILE EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2004/5

Introduction

Etoile Education Association, 19, rue Grossmatt, 67800 Hoenheim, was registered on the 31.08.2004 by the *Tribunal d'Instance de Schiltigheim*, Volume 36. Folio n° 37 and published on the 09.09.2004 in the newspaper *Ami du Peuple Hebdo*.

The constitutive meeting was held by the founding members on the 27 July 2004, where the statutes were adopted and the members of the Bureau designated according to article 12. The members were as follows:

President: Leif BERG

Vice-Presidents: Madelena GROSSMAN and Valerie DU JARDIN

Secretary: Ana GOREY

Treasurer: Mark GOREY

Members: Gudrun THRASTARDOTTIR and Muriel RICHARDSON

At the first Etoile Education General Assembly on 25 February 2005, Stan NYSEN, who had attended all the Bureau meetings as an observer, was elected to the Bureau. The aim also being to ensure that the Bureau was representative of the various groups within Etoile Education: Permanent Representations, EuroCorps, Council of Europe, EU Ombudsman etc.

Etoile Education currently had 18 members for the academic year 2004/5 at an annual fee of 20 Euros per family. Membership is open to everyone who wishes to join, however, membership is compulsory for anyone being represented by Etoile Education in a contract either with the European School or with the Transport Committee.

Activities 2004/5

The association aims not only to provide a framework for activities by the Strasbourg group vis-à-vis the school on general issues but also to serve and assist members with practical matters. It also aims to act as a catalyst within the Strasbourg group and to raise awareness about educational issues.

The activity/financial reporting year will run from September to September following a decision by the General Assembly on 25 February 2005, which agreed to the Bureau's proposal to have the annual year correspond to the academic year 1st September to 31st August, as is the case for many other parent/teacher associations.

Main activities for 2004/5 were as follows.

Transport

Etoile Education, in cooperation with the Transport Committee of the European School, organised the school bus leaving from Strasbourg on a daily basis. A contract to this effect was signed on Monday 20th September 2004 by Etoile Education with the Transport Committee. The bus has 26 seats and we began with 21 children. By the end of 2004 there were 24 children and 1 teacher taking the bus on a daily basis. By the end of the school year there were 27 children.

The cost, route and bus times were fixed as of the beginning of the school year. Slight modifications were made to the stops in view of new students. The driver, and owner, of the bus has proved to be extremely reliable and has provided all around satisfaction. Due to increased demand we definitely required a larger bus for the year 2005/6, in fact before, and we thank Lise Meyer for investigating the matter. As of 1 April 2005, Rolf Weißenrieder bought a larger bus (50 seats) which has been in full time use as of September 2005. The start of the year has gone very smoothly with 39 children on the bus and the annual bus price is under 2000 Euros as compared to last year's 2,500€.

Behaviour on the bus was, and still is, an ongoing concern. Complete silence and perfect behaviour on the bus is not only unrealistic but unnatural. However, disruptive behaviour is dangerous and distracting for the bus driver and is unacceptable. Children need to be constantly reminded of the need to respect the rest of the group, the driver and the bus by being on time, behaving correctly and by keeping the bus clean. Bbus monitors are there to take care of our children if they are feeling unwell or there is a particular problem (such as non-compliance with the code of conduct, for example, failure to use the seat belt). If the same child or children fail(s) repeatedly to abide by those rules, the monitors have instructions to report the incident(s) to the school which could then take measures. Please understand that it is an unfair burden on young bus monitors to ask them to resolve these matters with the children themselves or with the parents.

European School Board

Etoile Education also signed an agreement with the European School Board on behalf of its members who are Council of Europe staff member's choosing to send their children to the European School i.e. Category II. The signing took place 20 September 2004 with the Secretary General of the European School Board, Mr. Michael Ryan in the presence of the whole Strasbourg Group. The children were to be congratulated for their excellent behaviour and good communication skills. What marked the occasion most, was how appreciative everyone at the school is of the efforts made by those traveling from Strasbourg and also how appreciative the children are of the new opportunities ESK has to offer them. This event can be seen on the ESK Website – <http://www.eskar.org/2004/newsitem/presscon.html>.

Etoile Education also attended various meetings at the school most importantly one of the two annual ESK Administrative Board meetings which Leif Berg was invited to attend and an information meeting Madelena Grossman attended with various Canadian representatives including NATO. Etoile Education feels it has established good relations with the school and has written to Mr. Michael Ryan and Mr. Hoyem on various occasions to express this.

In our letter to Mr. Ryan, 20 July 2005, we also requested a place on the ESK Administration Board on behalf of our membership, four of whom are holding Category 1 status and 20 holding Category 2 status, and in order to better serve not only the interest of our members but also those of the ESK and the European Schools more generally. Mr. Hoyem also referred to our request in his letter of support dated 19 September 2005 to Mr. Ryan.

This is essential as there are important discussions taking place within the European Parliament and Commission regarding the general direction being taken by the European School system. For example, Ms. Mary Honeyball's report on "Options for developing the European Schools system", (2004/2237(INI) and the resulting European Commission study to be released in the summer of 2006. Also a recent written question in the European Parliament (of June 2005), put by MEP Caspary (Germany) on the topic of European Schools in general and ESK in particular. Among other things, MEP Caspary is asking the Commission how it views future cooperation with the European institutions in Strasbourg (European Parliament, Council of Europe, the Ombudsman, Eurocorps, the European Court of Human Rights) on this topic.

Etoile Education feels that input from the international community in Strasbourg into these discussions is essential and we have asked to be associated/implicated in that process, being, as we are, at "ground zero". To this end, a series of letters were written at the end of last year to Mr. Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Ryan, Secretary General of the European School Board, Mme. Honeyball, European Parliamentarian working on the question of European Schools and the mayors of Strasbourg, Kehl and Karlsruhe.

The Council of Europe

Etoile Education wrote to Mr. Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, 23 September 2004, with copy to the Staff Committee and Amicale, informing him of the existence of our association and putting him in copy of our letter to the Secretary General of the European School Board, Mr. Michael Ryan.

Etoile Education was invited to a preliminary meeting, 8 October 2004, by Ambassador Frøysnes, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, regarding the creation of a European School or an annex in Strasbourg/Kehl initiated by the Council of Europe. It was an excellent meeting and Etoile Education is following developments closely and have stated its willingness to cooperate. The timing seemed to be right at the moment, with the current discussion within the European School Board due to the 10 new members of the European Union and the ongoing discussion on "Eurodistrict".

A follow-up meeting was held on 5 July 2005 where it was brought to the attention of the group that a Feasibility Study on European Schooling was to be undertaken by the City of Strasbourg before the end of the year. It was felt essential to get concrete figures on how many families would be interested in a real option of European Schooling being offered in the Strasbourg/Kehl area through associated schools, especially as it was now clear that a fully fledged European School was not possible. This was welcomed however although defining how many children would potentially qualify for such a school and how many parents would be interested in sending their children to such a school was of primary importance, the group also felt that it was important to identify possible schools, either in Strasbourg or Kehl, which best corresponded to the requirements.

The group felt that the prospect of this study should not prevent any immediate work being done with regard to the Permanent Representations and the Council of Europe Amicale agreed to conduct a questionnaire.

European School, Karlsruhe

Consecration of the European Peace Bell - Friday 10th June, Strasbourg Cathedral

On Friday 10th June, Strasbourg Cathedral received a new bell, the European Peace Bell. The Archbishop Joseph Doré consecrated the new bell and welcomed its bilingual inscription which reads: "Freude dieser Stadt bedeute, Friede sei ihr erst Geläute." from the last couplet from «Das Lied Von Der Glocke» (Song Of The Bell) by Friedrich von Schiller whose bicentenerie is this year.

It was a great honour that the Mr. Hoyem asked the European School children living in Strasbourg to represent the school at the consecration ceremony. Each child read out the above inscription in their own language and rang the bell for peace in Strasbourg and for the peace in Karlsruhe. The impressive swinging of the bell is an unforgettable experience that can hardly be described and which the children will always remember.

Bowling afternoon

Our thanks go to Marc Bigaignon for organising a bowling afternoon on Friday 18 March just before the school holidays. This was a great occasion for the children to see each other outside the school / bus context and was greatly enjoyed by all.

Etoile Education Website and logo

We would like to thank the school who agreed to host our website. The address is www.eskar.org/etoile/. The site was ready by the end of January and has been an extremely useful way of disseminating information about the Strasbourg group and the transport modalities. Information should also be made available in leaflet form and work on producing that is underway. Etoile Education now has a logo, headed paper and calling cards thanks to Inge Baken's efforts.

Practical Matters

Etoile Education also aimed to assist members with practical matters such as:

Bank transfers for various group payments.

After school care – Not all the children have school on Monday or Wednesday afternoons and therefore have to wait for the Bus until 3:30. On Wednesdays the school very kindly put the library at our disposition on the condition that we have adult supervision. Parents volunteered to do this during the first term, but it was not terribly satisfactory as they had to spend the whole day there, traveling up with the bus. An alternative solution was found with Etoile Education paying someone to supervise.

Canteen questions

ESK parent association – Etoile Education informed their General Assembly on 30 September 2004 of our existence and willingness to cooperate.

Translation of the School Newsletter from German into English. Etoile Education underlined the importance of this and tried, without success, to find volunteers to do so.

Test days – Etoile Education also aimed to assist prospective families by raising awareness about the European school system, the European School, Karlsruhe (ESK), as well as specifically facilitating travel to and from the school on test days when future students are able to experience the school first hand.

Open Day – 12 March 2005 – A bus left from in front of the Council of Europe at 8:30 returning at 4pm. Many families also drove up independently.

Media

Etoile Education realised the need for a proper media strategy and discussed a set of guidelines which were approved by the General Assembly. It is very important for our image to maintain a positive outlook (why we choose to send our children to ESK) rather than a negative one (what is wrong with the French system). Media activities so far were a TV report by FR3 on the 2 June 2004 when a news team followed the children traveling from Strasbourg to the European School, Karlsruhe. The ESK school website also covered this and other Strasbourg related events with photos and commentary and we thank them for their support.

Fun and Fundraising activities

Etoile Education, in cooperation with the European School, Karlsruhe, are looking to find sponsors, fundraise or whatever in order to find the means to buy a bus for the school. Various possibilities are under consideration such as getting a bus donated, buying a bus and leasing it back to a company etc. However, whatever might happen, the group decided was that the bus would belong to the school and that management should be in the hands of professionals. If successful, similar buses could also be foreseen for the groups coming from Heidelberg and Buhl or the funds would be used to help those whom otherwise the transport costs would prevent them from attending the school.

There have been several private donations to Etoile Education and we thank them for their support.

Main events were:

- **Bonfire night** – Saturday 13 November – where Etoile Education made Pancakes.
- **Cookies** – Etoile Education sold over 200 packets of cookies donated by Jet Air.
- **Open Day Easter Market** - 12 March 2005 – Etoile Education ran a bric-a-brac stall the proceeds of which went to the school Tsunami Fund.
- **Sponsored Bike Ride** –27 May 2005 where Etoile Education raised money for the Bike & Bus Fund
- **Summer Fete**– 19 June 2005 - where Etoile Education sold home made jam and ran a basket ball competition.

Etoile Education would like to thank everyone for their efforts and contributions into making every single one of these successful and fun.