

After the unanswered letters and mails to Mr. McGinley and several attempts to obtain a meeting with him, the Board of the Parents' Association was finally invited to a meeting with the EPO. Mr. McGinley himself did not attend, but he was represented by J-P. Robin who is in charge of the school matters for the EPO and Mr. Archambeau, PD of Human Resources. It should be noted that Mr. Robin as well as Mr. Archambeau made it very clear at the beginning of the meeting that this meeting was absolutely not wanted by them and their conduct during the meeting was accordingly.

The EPO informed the Association of its position on the matter of Category 3 pupils in the ESM:

1. The percentage of the cat. 3. pupils will be gradually reduced to 5% of the total number of the pupils in the school.
2. For the smaller sections, NL and GR, an intake of cat. 3 students in order to guarantee the minimum number necessary to avoid closing of classes (i.e. 7 according to the Guidelines of the European Schools).
3. No guarantee for admitting the siblings of pupils already in the school can be given for this year (September 2010) because it is illegal, according the European School guidelines, but a request for acceptance of siblings will be made to the Board of Governors for school year 2011/2012.
4. If there are more than 7 pupils in a class, no intake of cat. 3 pupils unless they have siblings in the school and only for the first year primary.
5. In any case no more than 22 pupils in total in a class.
6. The EPO would have in principle no problem for the school to admit more cat. 2 pupils - at reasonable numbers because there is a lack of space problem.

Should this position be adopted by the School, it will have the following consequences :

- The desired reduction of the percentage of cat. 3 pupils in the school to 5% is very radical, even if it is gradual.

As an indication only: in the year 2008-2009: 354 cat. 3 out of 1756 pupils (20.15%). Estimation for year 2009-2010: 327 out of 1913 pupils (17%).

At first, one can see that there is a natural reduction of cat. 3 pupils caused mainly by the increase of the cat. 1 pupils (EPO children). It is expected that this trend will continue in the future.

The 5% seems arbitrary and is not justified in any way. In order to have an idea what it means: with 2000 pupils in the school, 5% would be 100, less than one third of the present number.

Furthermore, the importance of cat. 3 is not the same in all sections, even in the smaller ones, where there are sections that need cat. 3 pupils for their survival (GR and NL) and sections that need cat. 3 pupils to ensure well attended, pedagogically functioning classes (IT and ES). In the bigger sections, cat. 3 children are added to already overcrowded classes. Hence, a blanket measure of reduction of the total number will have different impact to different sections.

- The limiting of the class size to 7 pupils in the NL and GR sections is problematic.

At first, it has always been the position of the Association, which was also shared by the School, that for a class to function under correct pedagogical and educational conditions, a minimum of 8-9 pupils was necessary. It is evident that with 7 pupils in the class these conditions will deteriorate.

For the NL secondary, 7 pupils per class will decrease the options for available courses for the pupils, creating thus a disadvantage to those pupils vis-à-vis the pupils of the other sections, especially when it is taken into account the fact that all the pupils have to take the same examination to obtain the baccalaureate at the end of the school.

Furthermore, this measure will jeopardise the survival of those sections. According to the Guidelines of the European Schools, when a section in the primary has less than 37 pupils for two consecutive years, closure of the section can be contemplated. For the secondary, the corresponding number is 42. With 7 pupils per class, the GR and NL sections in the primary will be de facto limited to 35 pupils, which is under that limit. Despite the present statement of the EPO, which is not official, that there is no intention to close a section, there is no guarantee that this position will be kept in the future and in a case of change in this position, there will be a legal reason to start the closing of the sections since they will have less than 37 pupils. These sections will be forced to a position where they will be at the mercy of the School and the EPO and under the constant threat of a possible closing. It is clear that a normal operation of those sections where the teachers, pupils and parents will be concentrated to the pedagogical and educational issues only will be out of the question.

According to the same guidelines, when two consecutive classes have less than 25 pupils they will be grouped. This is the case at present. In addition to that, when 3 consecutive classes have 20 or less pupils, these classes will be grouped together. This has not happened so far. But, with 21 pupils in 3 classes (3x7), it is evident that falling below that limit will not be very unlikely. Grouping 3 classes together will deteriorate further the educational and pedagogical conditions in these sections.

In essence, such a measure will kill the small sections, if not in the immediate future, in the medium-long term. Especially when parents that would normally send their children to those sections have the possibility to select another section of the school (eg. mixed nationality couples with children of double nationality) and there will be even less cat. 1 pupils in these sections.

- Concerning points 4 and 5, it is not clear what is meant. It appears that when there are more than 7 cat 1 & 2 children in a class, no cat. 3 pupils will be taken, unless they are siblings of pupils already in the school. The example of the ES section was given, where there are 13 cat 1 & 2 pupils registered for September 2010. There are applications from cat. 3 pupils but none of them has a sibling in the school, so no one will be admitted.

The upper limit of 22 seems to apply only when siblings of cat. 3 pupils are to be admitted. Hence, not all the siblings can be admitted in the school, with or without a test, under this position. The example of the IT section was given in this case: for September 2010 there are 19 cat 1 & 2 children registered for the first class and 10 applications from cat. 3 children who all have a sibling in the school. According to

the EPO's position, only 3 of them could be accepted. In addition, this applies only to the first class. No cat. 3 pupils will be admitted to the higher classes, irrespective of whether they have siblings in the school or not and irrespective of whether there are pupils who left the school or not.

- Finally, the position concerning new agreements for cat. 2 pupils is also not clear in view of the fact that various companies have tried to make such agreements with the school in the past (eg. Allianz, Unicredit) the school refused. Furthermore, since the school has always mentioned the lack of space problem, it is not at all clear how they could accept new agreements with big companies that could possibly bring dozens or hundreds of new pupils. On the other hand, it is questionable whether a small company would like to bare the expenses and make such an agreement for a small number of employees.