**Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on the system of European Schools – state of play, challenges and perspectives**

1. **Rapporteur:** Ilana CICUREL, (Renew / FR)
2. **Reference number:** 2022/2149 (INI) / A9-0205/2023 / P9\_TA(2023)0306
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 12 September 2023
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)
5. **Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The current European Parliament’s resolution is a follow-up to the Cavada report and the resolution 2011/2036 (INI) of 27 September 2011 on the same subject. The current resolution reaffirms the qualities of the European Schools, highlighting its unique potential as a living laboratory and source of experience for educational reform across all national systems. It considers that an investment in the European Schools is an investment in the European Union as a whole and strongly recommends that the European Schools play a pivotal role in the establishment of the European Education Area.

In parallel, the resolution underscores that the current governance of the European Schools has reached its limits and is not fit for purpose anymore. Several recommendations are made in this respect, from punctual changes under the current legal framework to the adoption of a new governance model for the European Schools, possibly replacing the schools’ intergovernmental legal status with a supranational European model. In addition, it calls for a closer parliamentary scrutiny and control over the European Schools, which ranges from annual reports to be presented to the European Parliament to a wish that the Parliament be represented on the European Schools’ Board of Governors (BoG).

1. **Response to requests and overview of actions taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

The Commission welcomes the initiative of the European Parliament to issue an own-initiative resolution on the European Schools. The European Schools have much evolved since the Cavada report in 2011, and so has the context. More importantly, the Commission is grateful that the European Parliament is giving the European Schools the appropriate acknowledgement and recognition of their strengths and qualities.

The Commission is pleased to hear that the European Parliament considers that an investment in the European Schools is an investment in the European Union as a whole. The European Schools with their unique features can indeed play a role in the in the establishment of the European Education Area and the Commission is already assessing how this can be put in practice.

Even though the European Schools have an intergovernmental character, and the Commission is only one member of the Board of Governors of the schools, the Commission is proactive in many areas regarding supporting the European Schools System. More specifically, on the infrastructure of the schools and the creation of the 5th European School in Brussels, the Commission works very closely in a dedicated task force together with the Belgian authorities and the European Schools’ Secretary-General – with personal involvement of the Commissioner in charge of Budget and Administration. Furthermore, the Commission supports the European Schools in their financial management. To aid the Secretary General of the schools in enhancing and modernising its financial management system, the Commission seconded expert staff to the Office of the Secretary General (OSG). During the Covid-19 pandemic, all staff of the European Schools based in Brussels were vaccinated by the Commission’s medical service. In addition, the Commission supports further expansion of accredited schools, by liaising with the Member States interested in opening new schools, providing support, advice and expertise.

The Commission is committed to follow up on the recommendations of the European Parliament together with the other members of the Board of Governors. While the Commission welcomes the Parliament’s resolution, it recognises the role of the BoG to decide on the follow-up of the different recommendations put forward. An extraordinary meeting of the Board of Governors, entirely dedicated to this resolution, took place on 20 October 2023. Further to that, the OSG organised 2 additional meetings of the Enlarged Presidency Working Group in December 2023 and January 2024, to which the European Commission participated. In result of the discussions, the OSG formulated a detailed Action Plan, which identifies specific actions to respond to each of the Parliament’s recommendations, together with a detailed timeline. It is planned to submit the document for the endorsement of the Board of Governors in April 2024. The CULT Committee of the European Parliament organised on 13 February an exchange of views on the follow-up to the CULT own-initiative report, where the Commission participated and the Secretary General of the Schools presented key elements of the draft Action Plan.

More specifically, the draft Action Plan regroups actions in reply to the recommendations of the European Parliament (over 40 in total) into the following three different clusters: Pedagogy, Administration and Governance, and Resources. Examples of different actions include:

1. Pedagogy

Creation of the “Mission and Vision of the European Schools System”, which will articulate its core principles, values, characteristics, functions, and other pertinent aspects. The Commission supports clear definition of the distinctive features of the European Schools to ensure the system's unique identity and values, and differentiation from other educational systems.

Enhancing involvement of European Schools’ representatives in exchanges with national school system representatives and in the creation of the European Education Area. It proposes increased engagement from the Commission to facilitate better information exchange and sharing of best practices between European Schools and national stakeholders. The Commission supports this initiative, recognising the unique educational excellence offered by European Schools.

Enhancing Inclusivity of European Schools: The Action Plan calls for exploring options to broaden access to European Schools for more categories of students for inclusiveness and to improve the stability of small language sections. While the Commission endorses this initiative in principle, the problem of overcrowding in Brussels limits its feasibility currently. A concept of hybrid school in Brussels being explored by the Belgian government, supported by the Commission, is certainly an interesting project allowing for a European education with the social economic mix.

Promotional activities, such as organisation of an annual celebratory event and promotion and support of the European Schools’ alumni network will promote the European Schools and the European Baccalaureate, which the Commission supports. Increased recognition aligns with broader objectives such as enhancing the attractiveness of European Schools and positioning them as models of excellence within national systems.

2. Administration and governance

In response to the recommendation for an in-depth review of the governing structures of the European Schools, the Action Plan includes a commitment to review current structures and practices, notably the organization and follow-up of the Decision-making bodies, as well as other meetings and working practices. The Commission supports this commitment which will allow the European Schools system to seek improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.

The Action Plan addresses the attractiveness and career development of teaching staff at the European Schools by enhancing training and development opportunities, implementing regular appraisals for teaching staff and exploring the necessity of creating middle management posts. The Commission welcomes this initiative to address these important matters creating an attractive working environment in European Schools for teaching staff.

In efforts to improve communication with the European Parliament and the Council, the Action Plan outlines that the Secretary-General of the European Schools will share the Global Annual Activity Report of the European Schools with the European Parliament and the European Council. Similarly, the Secretary General will inform the European Parliament of the state of play of the Action Plan implementation. The Commission applauds the OSG's commitment to fostering greater cooperation with the Budgetary authority.

3. Resources

In reply to the applicability of primary and secondary EU legislation to the European School System, the competencies of the Complaints Board will be reviewed. Furthermore, an assessment of the creation of an independent ombudsperson function to address complaints about maladministration and mediate conflicts will be performed. The Commission supports these actions as it considers essential to have clarity in the system’s mechanisms to be called upon in case of outstanding issues.

The Action Plan aligns with the recommendation that Member States fulfil their obligations towards the European Schools System by providing adequate infrastructure and teaching staff including establishing a binding system of direct financial contributions and integrating European Schools infrastructure into national school infrastructure plans. The Commission welcomes this commitment as ongoing discussions regarding maintaining school infrastructure have proven challenging, particularly with certain Member States.