

Brussels, 4 JAN. 2019
KG/tas Ares (2018) s-6646147

Mr Papadimoulis
Vice-President of the European Parliament

Per e-mail

Dear Vice-President, *voelker Hen Papadimoulis!*

Thank you for your letter with reference D 202332 of 23th of October 2018 concerning the inclusive education for pupils with special needs and disabilities in the European Schools.

The European Schools developed a comprehensive Policy on the Provision of Educational Support¹. Since its revision in 2013, the policy has no longer been disability-based but oriented towards catering for pupils' learning needs. The educational support is organized at three levels: general, moderate and intensive. The latter is foreseen for children showing special educational needs that can stem from various disabilities. All pupils receiving intensive support have an individual learning plan and a spectrum of measures put at their disposal, depending on their individual situation. In the 2016-2017 school year, 1017 pupils followed intensive support programs (3.86% of the whole pupil population in the European Schools). 104 pupils in need of special arrangements took the Baccalaureate exam in 2017 (out of 1993 candidates) with a pass rate of 96.9%.

Please note that the budget dedicated to educational support in the European Schools increased from 8,1 million EUR in 2014 to 11,1 million EUR in 2018 and 13,2 million EUR in 2019 (draft budget).

Recently, the implementation of the Policy on the Provision of Educational Support was subject to an evaluation by a team of European Schools' national inspectors. In parallel, the working group in charge of the implementation of the UNCRPD recommendations elaborated their own report on the issue of inclusive education in the European Schools.

The findings and recommendation of both reports are very similar. They notably stress the need to enhance training opportunities regarding inclusive education for teaching and non-teaching staff, They underline the need to seek more flexibility in the existing curricula and to elaborate additional certificates recognized by Member States for children with disabilities who solicit alternative curricula. Finally, both reports advise strengthening internal coordination of the provision of educational support between different European Schools, as well as close cooperation with national education systems to identify and provide the best possible educational pathways for children with disabilities.

¹ Ref. 2012-05-D-14-en-9.

Both reports were presented to the Board of Governors of the European Schools at its meeting early December. At the Commission's request, a single action plan including clearly identified priorities, timeline and the financial impact will be submitted to the Board in April 2019.


You may be aware that on 4 December 2018, the European Disability Forum and Human Rights Watch published a joint report on barriers for children with disabilities in the European School System. Their findings and recommendations are similar to those of the two above-mentioned reports.

It is worth mentioning that in addition to its role in the European Schools' decision-making bodies, the Commission has two means of reimbursing expenses linked to disabilities. Medical costs are covered by the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme, while non-medical costs (including enrolment of pupils in special schools) are supported by supplementary aid for people with disabilities under article 76 of the Staff Regulations. The current interinstitutional guidelines provide that the staff members concerned have to cover themselves a certain percentage of the eligible costs for non-medical needs.

The Commission is in favour of providing full coverage of the school fees for staff members who have children with disabilities attending a special school. It is going to initiate an exchange of views with all Institutions concerned with a view to revising the currently applied provisions. I count on your support in that respect.

I take note of Parliament's commitment to ensure that children with disabilities of EU staff can benefit from inclusive education and would like to assure you that the Commission shares this commitment.

Yours sincerely,


Günther H. Oettinger