

ASSOCIATIONS DES PARENTS D'ÉLÈVES DES ÉCOLES EUROPÉENNES BRUXELLES I - II - III - IV
PARENTS ASSOCIATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS BRUSSELS I - II - III - IV
ELTERNVEREINIGUNGEN DER EUROPÄISCHEN SCHULE BRÜSSEL I - II - III - IV

Mr. Johannes Hahn
European Commissioner for Budget and Administration

CC: Ms Gertrud Ingestad,
Director-General for Human Resources

Giancarlo Marcheggiano
Secretary-General of European Schools

Marco-Umberto Moricca,
Director in DG HR, Chair of the CPQS

Giuseppe Scognamiglio
Director f.f. of the PMO

8 June 2020

Dear Commissioner,

On behalf of the four parents' associations of the Brussels European Schools, we wish to draw your attention to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent school closures on the organization of the bus transports for pupils of the four European Schools between 16/18 March and 3 July 2020.

Since the date of the school closure in March the four APEEEs/APEEE Service have not been providing any transport services. From a financial point of view, we have also not invoiced parents for the last trimester and therefore face a loss of income. Our transport providers have on their side not been able to invoice the third trimester as planned, and have approached us with a request for compensation as a percentage to their fixed costs. Negotiations have taken place between representatives of transport providers, the Belgian Federation of Transport Companies and the four APEEEs/APEEE Service of Brussels European Schools.

The transport companies who for the most part have a longstanding relationship with the APEEEs/APEEE Services are in a difficult financial situation due to the sudden lockdown and stopping of activity across the sector. They have presented us with a calculation of the fixed costs and requested a special solidarity compensation of between 28% and 38% of the amount that would have been invoiced for their services during the period between 16/18 March and the end of the closure of European schools and bus services. After careful analysis of their proposed calculation, the four APEEEs/APEEE Services consider a reasonable solidarity compensation of 15% to be appropriate to ensure that the transport companies will survive this turbulent period during the schools' closure.

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Contractually the APEEEs/APEEE Services are not obliged to pay compensation, excepting EEB2 who are required to pay 3% with a maximum ceiling of 5,000 euros per company, hence any such payment would be voluntary. However, it seems that the companies are not eligible yet for any significant state or regional aid, while their survival in these turbulent times is of utmost importance for the continuation of the transport service for European Schools provided daily to around 10000 students in our four European schools. The APEEEs/APEEE Services are non-profit organizations. Consequently, financing any compensation scheme ourselves without a clear support and firm commitment of European institutions would jeopardize our financial stability. Furthermore, we expect to face financial uncertainty and significant shortfalls in income in the next school year, if as expected, pupils only attend school for part of the week so cannot be charged the full bus fare, though our cost levels will remain the same or in case the social distancing rules will continue to apply which will then call for a higher number of buses in order to organize the school transport service.

On the other hand, without a solidarity gesture to compensate partly the loss of income to the transport companies we may face a lack of transport companies available in September.

When the European Commission deploys the greatest financial support scheme of European history to keep the economy afloat and launch recovery, we believe that it is also in the interest of the European Commission and of the European Schools to ensure the sustainability of the school transport sector. Against this background, we would appreciate if the existing rules covering the reimbursement of the EU transport allowance by the PMO could be applied in a flexible manner or amended (if necessary) in a way that an additional amount corresponding to a percentage of the companies' fixed costs during the lockdown period could be reimbursed to the Parents' Associations. This example should be followed by other EU institutions and bodies, who are obliged to reimburse to us relevant costs.

We invite all EU institutions to coordinate their positions with a view to agreeing upon a final settlement on this matter before the end of this school year.

We hope that you will be able to support our request and look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely yours,

APEEE BXL I Services - Uccle
Zoltan Krasznai,
President

APEEE BXL II – Woluwe
Giles Houghton-Clarke,
President

APEEE BXL III – Ixelles
Anastassios Papadopoulos,
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