



Brussels, 30 May 2021

Subject: Community spirit

Dear Ms Sciberras,

As you know, parents expressed their wish to improve the community spirit in our school at the APEEE General Assembly earlier this year. A similar wish was also articulated in a motion adopted at the General Assembly the year before. We would like an opportunity to explain what we mean by this and seek your views on community spirit, in order to understand all stakeholders' positions and consider areas where there could be room for improvement.

At the heart of this matter is the shared belief that working towards improving the community spirit in our school would be beneficial for everybody. Students would benefit from interactions with the broader community that are not purely rooted in curriculum-based activities. This would improve well-being as well as general motivation. Parents would be able to get more involved in school life by participating in complementary activities and as a result, there would be greater opportunity for interaction between teachers, parents and pupils, thus increasing the opportunities for informal exchanges and improved mutual understanding. This is supported by recent academic [research](#) which concludes that while „parents value highly the existence of the European Schools,“ they „feel that more authentic participation and greater transparency is needed to transform the tendency toward bureaucratization and centralization in the system.“

To avoid any misunderstanding, we would like to emphasise that we appreciate the effort the school has been making over the years to provide the best possible education for generations of students. We also appreciate the constraints within which the school has had to operate, in particular within recent years. However, we believe that as we gradually emerge from the pandemic, there is a real opportunity to reconnect as a school community and establish new ways of interacting and supporting each other.

It is in this spirit that we would like to propose three concrete actions that could contribute to the improvement of the community spirit in our school. These suggestions are made recognizing that any efforts would require the agreement and engagement of all parties in a cooperative spirit.

1. Organise a small joint task force with the participation of the key stakeholders of the school community: teachers, students and parents, whose purpose would be to brainstorm and propose projects to improve the community spirit at our school. The school management would be consulted on any initiatives proposed. Within the APEEE, we have already identified a number of ideas for such projects. However, for any such idea to work, the whole school community would need to find it worthwhile. That's why we propose this informal task force, to share, generate and test ideas and then draw up a list of the most promising ones to put into effect, once sanctioned by the school management.

2. Conclude a memorandum of understanding between the APEEE and the EEBIII direction outlining the responsibilities, mutual expectations and methods of cooperation of each party.

The purpose of this document would be less to codify rules of a legal value - the primary objectives is to set out clearly and explicitly the respective roles of the school as well as the parent community, recognizing our distinct mandates, in order to clarify expectations and working methods and to improve mutual understanding.

This memorandum could be concluded in the beginning of next school year and not wait until the conclusion of the inter-Schools / inter-APEEEs' discussions in Brussels on a basic Framework Agreement.

3. Invite the Director of the school and/or the Deputy Directors to exchange with the APEEE Board on specific topics that are not addressed within the School Bodies. Such exchanges could ideally take place at least once per term. We have observed over the years that often urgencies and emergencies dominate our exchanges and there is little opportunity for more in-depth exchanges on other topics and initiatives that would be mutually beneficial. We believe that creating a regular space for such an exchange in this format would be very helpful for all concerned.

We hope that you will recognize in these suggestions, the genuine interest of the APEEE to work with you to see how we can each contribute constructively to achieving a thriving community spirit within our school. We would be very pleased to discuss this with you further, in order to clarify any aspects of our concerns or proposals. I hope this will be possible before the end of this school year.

Yours sincerely

Tassos PAPADOPOULOS

on behalf of the APEEE Board

c.c.: Mr Verriest, Mr Garry