



Brussels, 15 February 2019

Dear Heads of Delegations in the Board of Governors,
Dear Secretary-General of European Schools,

We, the Association of parents for European Schools in Brussels are addressing you with regards to the Belgium Federal Authorities plan to open an overflow school at Arts-Loi for 2020 in a repurposed office building, for European School pupils.

This proposal is strongly opposed by parents.

We are writing to you to enlist your help in ensuring that, in keeping with the 'Convention for European Schools'¹, the European Schools in Brussels are given premises which are suitable for schooling. The Belgian Federal authorities are required to provide such suitable premises as a condition of hosting the many European institutions located here, from which they receive considerable financial benefits. Despite this obligation, the Belgian authorities have failed to do so over many years, resulting in a capacity squeeze in the current schools, which they are seeking to overcome with this temporary fix rather than a properly considered and genuinely suitable solution.

In overwhelming votes, the Parents Association of Woluwe EEB2 and Ixelles EEB3 schools at their Annual General Meetings in January 2019, passed by 100% and 94% respectively, resolutions stating that the proposed Arts-Loi site is unsuitable, that a proper impact assessment is needed and that other options must be considered. The full texts are attached.

Parents fully support additional school capacity in Brussels, and ask your help in ensuring that the European schools' authorities and European Commission ensure the Belgian Federal Authorities provide a list of alternative sites that comply with standard requirements for a suitable school, in keeping with established norms and which support the education, wellbeing and safety of pupils and teachers.

¹ *Convention defining the Statute of European Schools* <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A21994A0817%2801%29>

Key concerns of parents, pupils and teachers with respect to the Arts-Loi overflow site include:

- The limited number of stairs and very narrow stair corridors (1.2m) will impede student movement between classes and floors and potentially represent a safety hazard in the event of an emergency.
- Insufficient facilities to deliver the full curriculum of subjects
- Lack of facilities for exams, school events and the normal range of extra curricula activities that make up school life.
- Insufficient canteen facilities, also necessitating pupils leaving the school premises for lunch.
- No sports facilities exist at the school, therefore pupils will need to travel elsewhere for these compulsory lessons. No answers have been given as to how this can be arranged without losing many teaching periods per week in travel.
- The location is one of the most polluted, high traffic areas in Belgium² with illegal levels of NOX which is known to have serious and life long consequences on mental and physical development. Antwerp, Belgium's second city, specifically bans schools from being built or expanded in such locations³.
- The location is inaccessible for school buses which will impose extra long journey times on many pupils who live outside Brussels but currently within school bus distance from their current school.
- Very little outdoor school space, in breach of Belgium schools norms, which will mean pupils needing to roam the congested, high traffic local area during break time
- Requirement for teachers to give lessons at both their existing school and Arts-Loi, resulting in significant loss of teaching time during travel. No provisions have been made for recruiting additional teachers therefore the consequence must be fewer lessons and/or subjects available to pupils
- Finally, the proposal is for students in their last 2 years to move to Arts-Loi, which given the above issues, is believed will negatively impact on their studies and BAC results, with consequences for their university options and future careers.

The President of EEB2 APEEE Board

The President of EEB3 APEEE Board

Giles Houghton-Clarke

Anastassios Papadopoulos

² *Client Earth report 13 June 2017* <https://www.clientearth.org/shocking-levels-brussels-pollution-revealed/>

³ <https://www.hln.be/de-krant/ongezonde-lucht-geen-nieuwe-school-in-antwerpen~af5a20d2/>

**APEEE Bruxelles II – Woluwe
ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ANNUELLE 2018**

**Résolution votée au vote de
l'Assemblée Générale Ordinaire de l'Association des parents
d'Elèves Bxl II - Woluwe le 24 janvier 2019
Resolution approved at the Annual General Meeting of the
Parents' Association Bxl II - Woluwe on 24 January 2019**

Resolution voted unanimously

The parents of the European School Brussels II wish to express their position on a possible proposal to install a temporary site for upper grade secondary students. The proposed site is in a building currently occupied by the Belgian Finance Ministry, rue du Commerce, a few steps away from the Arts-Loi metro station.

Parents are concerned about their children's quality of education, health and wellbeing. The last years before the BAC are the most critical years for students. A safe, well-functioning and rich learning environment is key during this time. With this in mind,

EEB2 PARENTS

Consider the Arts-Loi site unsuitable and find the separation of S6-S7 pupils from the main school unacceptable.

Request to be involved fully and in a timely manner in the decision-making process, and that their questions be answered.

Demand a proper impact assessment of the current proposal, including the implications of splitting S6/S7 from the current sites, and the consideration of alternative sites and solutions.

Insist that any temporary solutions meet the standard norms for a Belgian school and equivalent to those at EEB1-4 for the relevant year groups, in terms of safety, well-being, facilities and educational breadth and quality.

Believe in solidarity. They ask for an adequate site for current and future children.

This motion is to be communicated to the Secretary General of the European Schools, all Heads of Delegations in the Board of Governors, the European Commission, Permanent Representations in the EU, Members of the European Parliament, national inspectors and representatives of teachers and students in all the Brussels European Schools.

Francesca Tudini
Présidente



**Motion approved at the
APEEE EEB3 General Meeting
of 28 January 2019**

Concerning the temporary site for European Schools' Higher Secondary students

CA 48/2018 REV 4

Parents' representatives of the European School Brussels III are seriously concerned by the on-going preparations for a temporary school site in the Arts-Loi area to host Higher Secondary students as of September 2020, and therefore wish to express today - also on behalf of their children - their clear position and demands.

The main concerns circle around the serious difficulties and the unavoidable deterioration of quality teaching and learning conditions as a result of a move into an ill-equipped school site. The forced move from their familiar and current well-functioning school environment will affect the students during the most critical years for their studies.

EEB3 PARENTS

DEMAND to be comprehensively and timely consulted at all stages during the course of the technical feasibility study as well as the planning of any new permanent or temporary sites; the consultation and involvement must take effect regularly and, more importantly, prior to any political decision being taken by the European Commission, the Ministry in charge of the file, the Belgian Council of Ministers and the Board of Governors of European Schools;

REGRET the fact that outline proposals for transfer of students from some Schools and justifications for that were disseminated in the past in random fashion and in an inconsistent manner;

WELCOME the Commission's support for the involvement of parents in this process, as it has been stressed on several occasions, both by the Commission and Member State delegations in the Board of Governors;

URGE the active and timely involvement of all sections' teachers and students, since the consequences on their psychological and physical well-being and the impact on their teaching and learning quality must be taken seriously into account;

INSIST that any options and possible future scenarios under examination must include all European Schools' students in Brussels on a non-discriminatory basis and not exclude some of them out of hand;

INSIST that the specificities of all linguistic sections and schools be adequately considered.

UNDERLINE the malign impact of any "quick-fix" solution on educational, operational, security and budgetary aspects of the functioning of the schools affected, including on the services provided by the Parents Associations. This context mandates involvement of all stakeholders at an early stage and that they should remain fully involved;

STRESS the serious environmental, security-related, educational issues (sufficient numbers of teachers, long commuting distances as well as other logistical constraints, *inter-alia*, with reference to internal courtyards, suitable examination rooms, sufficient canteen space, appropriate and sufficient teaching classes in all subjects, indoor study and relaxing spaces for students, internal and external mobility and prevention plans), which must be regarded as necessary requirements, in order to assess whether the proposed building/site could be appropriate for schooling purposes.

INSIST that any new temporary site proposed must be in conformity with all specifications, including environmental, prevention and security measures, corresponding to the minimum basic recommendations for a school reception building in Brussels;

STATE their vigorous opposition to any transfer of students during the mid-period of the S6/S7 cycle;

DECLARE their opposition to the current proposal for a temporary site at Arts-Loi for all the reasons expressed above.

IN THIS CONTEXT, THEY INVITE:

- **THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF EUROPEAN SCHOOLS** to continue involving parent representatives in the feasibility study, thereby ensuring transparency in the decision making process in line with the basic and fundamental principles of the EU;

- **THE BELGIAN AUTHORITIES, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF EUROPEAN SCHOOLS** to examine all available alternative sites (in Evere or elsewhere) and options enabling the enrolment of new students where all educational and safety standards as well as transportation facilities are guaranteed;

- **THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF EUROPEAN SCHOOLS** to analyse all educational and organisational parameters by setting up a Working Group involving all concerned parties such as parents, teachers and students alike;

- **THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION** to support parents' legitimate concerns and ensure a follow-up by March 2019 to the recent (on 10 January 2019) Commissioner's exchange of views with all APEEE representatives;

- **ALL DECISION MAKERS AND STAKEHOLDERS** to engage in a structured open dialogue with a view to discussing the future of enrolments in European Schools from 2020 until 2024/2025 in an objective, unbiased and efficient manner without expressing any prior commitment to any “pre-ordained” or “pre-conceived” solutions that may well prove inadequate or even dysfunctional.

PARENTS RESERVE ALL THEIR RIGHTS to further actions while taking into consideration all new developments.

This motion is to be communicated to all Heads of Delegations in the Board of Governors, Permanent Representations in the EU, Members of the European Parliament, national inspectors and representatives of teachers and students in all the Brussels European Schools.