

APEEE GENERAL MEETING

28 January 2019

Dear APEEE members, Dear parents in EEB3,

First of all, I wish you a very Happy New Year as well as health and prosperity for you and all your loved ones!

The clock ticks again towards our yearly 2019 Annual Meeting. As a member of a Board that has invested sincere and multiple efforts inside and outside our school, I am very glad for all the achievements which we delivered in 2018 with vision, perseverance, determination and commitment. We are very proud for the finished work and ready to complete outstanding matters. There is no way that we can reverse our path!

Our school and our internal organisation improve steadily in all areas, while parental satisfaction with our Association (APEEE) demonstrates the trust in our team work. An open, transparent, collaborative, socially-sensitive and interactive association has set definitely a different tone and operational culture within the EEB3 school environment since 2016. What no one can contest is that there is a strategy and a common determination to get things done!

In introducing our annual report, which I have the honour to share with you in view of our Meeting of 28 January 2019, I wish to recall some fundamental results and highlight the way forward.

I would like to thank you all for your confidence, patience and constructive criticism in 2018! The horizon is open and your involvement can be considered a key success factor!

I. General overview in 2018

A. Internal functioning

For a third year in a row, the harmonious internal decision-making processes profited from the clear provisions of the **Internal Rules of Operation**, thus enabling mature decisions to be taken and the preparatory process to develop in close co-operation between the Working Group members, staff and other stakeholders. Operational sectors and educational areas had the opportunity to debate sufficiently about the actions to be taken. **This grass-roots approach guided by efficiency and a result-orientated mode of working went hand-in-hand with a top-down monitoring and external auditing.**

In **educational matters**, parental positions appeared to be as harmonised as much as possible due to the good management of preparatory work performed at the level of the APEEE Education Advisory Committee as well as in the three preparatory Working Groups (WGs) in charge of Primary/Nursery, Secondary matters (thereby involving all Education Council members), as well as the new Well-being at School WG, whose remit includes addictions (see more analytic detail under the Educational Report). This all-inclusive and well-coordinated approach paid off in terms of bridging the interests across the departments and consolidating a common parental consensus.

For a second consecutive year, the APEEE organisation underwent an **extensive external auditing assessment**, which sought to follow up on the 2017 RSM recommendations on both financial as well as organisational aspects. Risk factors have been identified and corrective measures adopted. The positive global outlook in conjunction with the specific recommendations and action points for all areas ensures an objective and sound evaluation of our position and what must be further improved in the future.

The **APEEE staff** contributed significantly to all 2018 successes! Based on a structured organisational chart under the management of Ms di Perri (HR and Operations' Manager), the clear division of staff roles and responsibilities (job and workflow descriptions), clear priorities and ownership in the carrying out of tasks, team building and further training, regular quality evaluation and continuous co-operation with the competent Board members (in charge of APEEE representation, administration, treasury and the departmental Heads), staff members managed to meet key standards and expectations.

The **analysis of staff needs** was completed and APEEE was reinforced with a few temporary contracts (initially signed on a part-time basis) in the canteen and IT support areas, which provide essential services and cover permanent needs. Against this background, the General Assembly is called upon to transform them into permanent posts. As a socially-responsible employer, we have decided to reinforce staff insurance policies and support the staff in their personal and family concerns. The first-ever evaluation of APEEE service providers in 2017 was an important step in assessing their quality.

Our **IT tools and their functioning** were developed significantly, thus extending the scope of the initial 2016 EPAFOS contract for the provision of on-line services (enrolments and subscription fee payments). All small everyday problems were resolved thanks to the IT skills of Mr Tasho and his close relationship with the developer. Consultations for the development of an in-house back office, including most of the necessary Filemaker functionalities, were concluded successfully in 2018. While working on the future platform and assessing all future business needs, we recently took the decision to improve the tracking of our financial operations and reduce their costs by introducing Viva wallet services as from February 2019. In parallel, we are about to implement adaptations to our Xafax contract for the canteen cards.

Our **data protection policy** was worked out in a way to be fully compliant before the entry into force of the new EU General Data protection Regulation in May 2018. All information is available on the website as well as on the enrolment system.

B. Participation in the Secretariat-General (OSGES) activities and in European Schools' governance structures

Our involvement in the proceedings of the OSGES was continuous. Apart from our participation in the "Monitoring Group" for the "temporary site" (see below under C.), where we discussed also the terms and conditions for a call for tender for the launch of a study to analyse the crucial factors for the setting up of a fifth European School in Brussels by 2024, our APEEE followed the political dialogue for European Schools' concerns in several ways.

As it was promised during previous General Meetings, our **emphasis on “politicisation” at all levels and with all actors** (OSGES, European Commission, Belgian authorities (Minister in charge of the Régie des bâtiments-Building Authority, police and local municipalities) produced significant outcomes.

Two **Ministerial Meetings** in May and November 2018, which were organised by Commissioner Oettinger, put - for the first time in recent history – the European Schools and their challenges at the top of EU Education Ministerial agendas. The future of the cost-sharing model, raising awareness of the schools' needs for timely secondments of qualified and motivated staff, over-population in Brussels, the challenges for hiring and maintaining high-quality locally-hired staff were addressed in this context. We endeavoured also to bring closer Commission's DG EAC and the OSGES with a view to re-inforcing training opportunities and policy orientation between two paradoxically distinct worlds.

Within the **framework of the "Groupe d'accompagnement-Support Group"** chaired by the European Commission as well as in the Central Enrolment Authority, we represented strongly parental perspectives and suggested its consideration in the competent OSGES bodies (the Board of Governors as well as the Joint Teaching and Inspectors Committees). Meetings with the Chair of the **Board of Governors** and the **Commissioner in charge of European Schools** were organised on specific occasions. **Exchanges with the Secretary-General and his Deputy** were regular, while an APEEE delegation met twice with the **Head of the BAC Unit** and exchanged views on the quality assurance of the 2018 BAC examinations and on possible measures to improve the BAC examination's procedural quality assurance.

Our APEEE remained extremely active in **inter-APEEE dialogue in Brussels** and were pioneers in several common projects. **Sectoral meetings** on transport, financial and administrative issues as well as on educational support were organised on an ad-hoc basis, while the Presidents kept a close eye and co-ordinated actions in view of all meetings, where common issues were addressed. Results of their co-operation were the joint conference on the secondary marking reform and a piano recital for homeless people in early 2018.

As regards the co-operation with **Interparents**, the Association and official representative body of all APEEEs of European Schools in the Board of Governors, you can have a global overview of their activities under the specific part of the annual report (Interparents Report).

C. The question about the "temporary site" - the establishment of the 5th European School

Significant intellect, time and resources were spent in 2018 in discussions about the "temporary site" in the centre of Brussels, which is destined to receive upper Secondary students.

The first discussions were launched last June in the **Monitoring Group**, when EEB2 and EEB3 were spotted as potential "focus Schools". Our reaction was fast and opposed firmly these unofficial scenarios, which have been suspended since then. We qualified the governmental building as unsuitable for schooling and presented a long list of building-, security-, mobility- and education-related arguments against its consideration, as we fear a severe deterioration of transferred students' educational perspectives and of their well-being in the most crucial years of their secondary studies. It is noted that the office building is lacking internal courtyards and sport facilities, while security and mobility plans are of paramount importance before the Board of Governors adopts a final position. Already in June 2018, the result of our pressure ended up in the commitment and openness of the Secretary-General to consider all options, should the building remain as the sole available provision.

In the second half of 2018, the **location of the "temporary site" at Arts-Loi** was re-affirmed by the Secretary-General on behalf of the competent Belgian authorities (Minister of Interior - Régie des bâtiments-Buildings Authority) as the sole real option on the table. A restricted "Task Force" without parental involvement was examining throughout this period the technical aspects of the building (an informal feasibility study). Our appeals for timely consultation and examination of our arguments, including all alternative site options at federal, regional and municipal levels, was expressed in the form of two letters signed by all APEEE Presidents and sent to Minister Jan Jambon in October and to Commissioner Günther Oettinger in November 2018. Although the first never replied and the governmental crisis prolonged the silence on the part of the host country side, the Commission demonstrated an active listening approach to our concerns. The positive outcome of the last meeting with the Commissioner on 10 January 2019 was a manifest call to all stakeholders to allow parental participation in informal consultations and their prior hearing before any final decision was taken. We were given the chance to present to him a counter-proposal for a modular building at Evere in the NATO HQ area, where a 5th School is planned for construction by the school years 2024/2025. The advantage of that solution would be to avoid any transfer of students, while the vicinity of the place to the final location of the fifth School could accommodate

all major transportation and business continuity concerns. This proposal remains subject to further technical and financial analysis.

APEEE's call was supported also by the President of the Commission's Local Staff Committee, whom all Presidents met on 9 January 2019 as well as by Commission's Trade Unions and the President of the Staff Committees within the Council.

At the time of writing this report, **a visit of all Brussels APEEEs representatives to the temporary site** (at Rue du Commerce 96) was scheduled for Monday 21 January 2019. This visit will be followed by a new back-to-back meeting of the Monitoring Group to examine the state of play.

The Secretary-General of European Schools and the EEB3 Director are invited to attend our **General Meeting on 28 January 2019** to reply to all possible questions from sectoral representatives about this project.

D. Relations with the school

Relations with the school management produced a **common approach in many organisational and educational matters**. The emergence of a mutual respect (as it was the case during Antonio Pino's period), the focus on and quest for results, the demonstration of a (pro-)active and constructive mind-set at all times, the annual and long-term planning and finally a clear division of roles were key drivers in the drive for "win-win" (mutually-beneficial) solutions. **The "community spirit" has definitely returned to our School!** Having said that, our differences of views in some matters persist but the frank dialogue will not cease until mutually-satisfactory solutions are achieved.

In the first half of 2018, the APEEE took the lead in the identification and consolidation of parental positions, which were introduced into the school's **2018-9 Annual Plan and the updated 2018-20 Multi-Annual Plan**. In October 2018, we handed over to inspectors (during their November 2018 Whole School Inspection) a single written contribution (self-evaluation from parents) with all key positions and arguments.

Guided by the **principles** of highest educational quality along with the “eight key competencies” of European Schools, sound management, organisational efficiency, transparency, mutual respect across all sectors and harmonisation of policies across all Brussels European Schools, our APEEE encouraged and welcomed, *inter-alia*, language tests in our school, “Learning to Learn” training for teachers, students and parents, stronger participation in students’ competitions, the new STEM lab as a catalyst for technological knowledge and long-term excellence, the introduction of tablets in Nursery with our significant financial aid, free-hour lectures and lessons (for example, Chinese by the VUB Confucius Institute). All recent steps illustrate the bold qualitative boost in the organisation and content of school life.

The **co-operation with the Director, the Deputy-Directors and the Students Committee** was very productive. A list of pending issues is constantly being updated and ad-hoc meetings are organised, when the time for discussion in school bodies is not sufficient. The discussions in the Education Councils have been structured in a more efficient way through prior co-ordination of sections’ points in the APEEE WGs, while there is a noteworthy trend for more focused and in-depth debates on the most important agenda points (the new Secondary Rules of Procedure set clearly a division between information and discussion points). **New rules** on smartphone policy entered into force in April 2018. The dialogue on well-being produced a clear understanding of our expectations as to the way forward and the implementation of **novel policies**, like KIVA, raise parental expectations. The process for the review of the Secondary Rules (“Vivre ensemble-Live Together”, including a set of rules for drug addiction) and for Primary school trips were launched successfully.

Last but not least, for the first time in our 20-year history the school and APEEE will obtain a solid basis governing all their bilateral relations. Preparatory work on **the Framework Convention** has been almost completed and the first draft will be made available for consultation of the Board in February 2019. This text will include clear guidance about the **transfer of responsibilities** between the school staff, APEEE and the OIB (Ixelles After-school Childcare Centre), thus providing a useful reference for all stakeholders and members of the school community. Another advantage of this key document will be the listing of all **insurance policies of all in-house relevant bodies as well as a full inventory of all APEEE assets of a value higher than 100 euros**. The Convention must be signed by the end of March 2019 at the very latest.

E. Safety and security

The **appointment of the OSGES' and of the first-ever EEB3 Prevention Officers** (on a part-time basis) was achieved finally in 2018. They both have undoubtedly a crucial role in the implementation and mainstreaming of harmonised access, safety and security policies inside and across all European Schools. We raised in the respective Health and Security Committee numerous queries, expressed our sensitivity and received reassurances as regards the electromagnetic radiation levels, quality of air (both in the wider area and within classes), evacuation and emergency plans as well as hygiene of toilets.

In parallel, the APEEE sustained its efforts for involving all competent authorities who have an interface with the School (Brussels Region, the police authorities as well as the Auderghem and Ixelles municipalities) with a view to improving the **mobility plan in the Bd. du Triomphe area**, thus enabling parents to park safely and legally upon arrival and departure of students. A “Kiss and Ride” zone as well as possible modifications to the parking slots on the right side of the Boulevard du Triomphe was proposed as necessary measures to mitigate parental stress and residents' unrest and dissatisfaction about the current situation. The final state of **2015 Commission Directorate of Security guidelines** is a key question for the APEEE, as these were at the origin of all restrictive measures for parental access adopted since then. A meeting of all parties involved has been requested and is planned to be held in early 2019 following the election of the new Mayors.

The APEEE was also very active in all **consultations within the school and the police** in May/June 2018 about the real dimensions of worrying phenomena affecting Secondary student health (drug and alcohol addictions). The forthcoming review of the “Vivre ensemble-Live Together” Regulation and the co-operation with external associations could provide a useful basis for addressing adequately student behaviours while keeping parents duly informed.

F. Participation in and support to school and student projects

Working very closely with school coordinators, Secondary advisers and student representatives, we provided all necessary **impetus and financial support to various projects**. EEBGreen, TEDx, clothing projects, Coffee corner and art competitions were enriched with parental proposals, APEEE IT and financial support and funds, while entrusting students and teachers the management and the ownership of their own projects. Moreover, APEEE members took a very active role in coaching MEC simulations for Secondary students as well as in a genuine EU simulation game for P4 students from across all sections.

In the context of the **EEB3 Financial Committee**, we aim to ensure a regular follow-up of all internal activities (on the basis of an updated annual list of projects to be organised by all actors; amounting to more than 40 projects during 2018/9 school year) and will push for **more participation in and information-sharing about external events**, both academic (University Fairs) as well as social events ("Serve the City" and "March for the Climate" etc), thereby linking our school with external communities.

G. Financial matters

In the **financial area**, the Board managed revenues and expenditure in a sound and cautious manner as the Financial Report clearly shows. Furthermore, it executed fully the mandate given by the previous General Meeting for a more efficient management of APEEE assets in the medium- and long-term. The outcome of our analysis will be presented on 28 January 2019.

Internal sound financial management was based internally on both the improvement of internal workflows and the early planning of our budget. The work in these areas will continue and will be supported with the introduction of IT tools as set out above under section A.

The same **spirit of transparency** guided APEEE in their financial management of events, such as Springfest, school jumpers, S7 Student Ball and all BAC-related events, MUN trip and the European Schools - China exchange program for S6 students, which we took over – following the school's refusal to take action beyond its core tasks - with the aim of improving our school's representation and assisting the student and other ad-hoc organising committees in their planned work programmes.

In response to previous years' parental resolutions for transparency and financial accountability for the school's extra-budgetary accounts, the APEEE proposed and the school management agreed to the **establishment of a joint EEB3 Financial Committee**, whose task is to monitor all of the school's extra-budgetary accounts, including parental financial contributions for the organisation of school trips, school agendas and sport clothing etc. The new body, which has already met twice, complies perfectly with our common objective as regards internal financial operations.

H. Communication area

In terms of communication, the **APEEE website** is currently under a process of re-structuring content as well as its presentation and layout. The introduction of the **weekly newsletters** has been properly implemented in recent months and has contributed to improving the impact of our messages to our members (see in detail under the Communication Report).

The establishment of a **Primary WG on Communication** and the regular APEEE articles published in the **school's magazine, La Gazette** set the basis for a **common communication strategy**.

The APEEE Board and EC members was insistent that the school management should increasingly share information via its **tools (SMS, website and school calendar)** and focused their attention on communication gaps for parent-teacher meetings, access to information for (pre-)BAC students as well as for parents requiring SEN support (see in detail under the Educational Report).

G. Sectors (transport, canteen and extracurricular activities)

Sectoral operational reports provide a business perspective into their proceedings during last year. We suggest you examine their analytical assessments set out below. The **broad satisfaction from the quality of their services** must be regarded as a motive for further change and improvements, especially as regards the variety and user-friendliness of their electronic services, improved communication with parents and the sound consolidation of their rules (as demonstrated in particular with the adoption of 2018 Transport Internal Regulation).

II. Challenges and priorities in 2019

The actions below provide a taste of the challenges and priorities that the new Board must face in 2019. It is evident that some pending issues will impact on the final choices that APEEE must make in order to meet effectively all expectations.

“Lighthouse projects” for this year involve *inter-alia*:

- Following closely the developments as regards the “temporary site” location and participating actively in the elaboration of fair and sound long-term solutions for tackling overcrowding
- Following scrupulously the educational developments in the Joint Teaching Committee and the Board of Governors, especially in relation to BAC quality and recognition, marking reform at Secondary level, Educational Support, language policy as well as development of curricula in line with educational and professional challenges
- Improving achievements based on the Annual and Multi-Annual School Plans
- Concluding the examination of the School-APEEE Framework Convention and all its Annexes by end of March 2019
- Improving further the financial transparency and accountability through the APEEE chairing and active involvement in the EEB3 Financial Committee proceedings in all areas of action; adopting common rules for important financial matters, such as the School and APEEE social funds
- Concluding the review of the school’s internal regulation in Secondary, of the rules concerning school trips in Primary by June 2019 and following closely the implementation of the school’s plan on psychosocial risks
- Examining the application of APEEE Statutes since 2015 and proposing amendments for the next General Meeting in January 2020, as appropriate
- Amending the Board’s Internal Rules of Operation by ensuring further efficiency in the decision-making process
- Supporting all internal dynamics and educational projects promoting our school’s visibility and participation in social responsibility activities.
- Finalising the school’s mobility plan and ensuring a common access policy for all Brussels European Schools in September 2019

- Consolidating our internal financial framework while implementing all outstanding auditing recommendations, thereby ensuring sound financial and operational management
- Examining the possibility of introducing self-service in the canteen in 2021
- Implementing properly and extending the use of bus tablets in transport
- Reviewing the quality of extra-curricular program and introducing the necessary changes
- Finalising the digital and online transition to efficient and reliable software; modernising and updating the APEEE website and its communication impact
- Concluding the assessment of HR needs, inter-alia, by examining the necessity of recruiting a part-time Financial Assistant as well as a part-time Assistant in the extra-curricular sector
- Proceeding to a more efficient long-term management of APEEE assets
- Evaluating the need for adaptation of pricing policies in all APEEE sectors
- Celebrating the school's 20-year history and our joy of being part of it!

Anastassios PAPADOPOULOS

President of the APEEE Board