

STUDY

Requested by the CULT Committee



The European Schools system: State of Play, Challenges and Perspectives



Culture and Education



Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies
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The European Schools system: State of Play, Challenges and Perspectives

Abstract

This study examines the progress that the European Schools System has made during the past decade and overviews its state of affairs as of 2022. The educational dimension of the study focuses on questions related to teaching and learning, while the operational one concentrates on the administrative and managerial sides of the system. The study pinpoints the key challenges that the system currently faces and provides tailored recommendations on how to overcome them.

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	Administrative and Ancillary Staff
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
AES	Accredited European Schools
APEEE	Parents of Pupils Association of the European Schools
BAC	Baccalaureate
BoG	Board of Governors
BYOD	Bring Your Own Device
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CULT	Culture and Education Committee
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEVES	Digital Education Vision for the European Schools
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
EB	European Baccalaureate
EC	European Commission
EC JRC	European Commission's Joint Research Centre
ECB	European Central Bank
EEA	European Education Area
EP	European Parliament
ES	European Schools
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESS	European Schools System
EU	European Union
HCL	Host Country Language
HR	Human Resources

HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISTC	Inter-School Teacher's Committee
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISA	Intensive Support A
IT	Information Technology
JBI	Joint Board of Inspectors
L1	Language 1 (dominant tongue)
L2/3/4	Language 2/3/4 (foreign languages)
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Others
LRT(s)	Locally Recruited Teacher(s)
(EU) MS(s)	Member State(s) (of the European Union)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
(ES) OSG	Office of the Secretary General (of the European Schools)
OSG PDU	Office of the Secretary General Pedagogical Development Unit
PC	Personal Computer
PE	Physical Education
PISA	OECD Programme for International Student Assessment
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SG	Secretary General
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SWALS	Students Without Language Section
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
UN	United Nations
VET	Vocational Education Training

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

- After introducing the competence-based approach, the ESS still needs to update its monitoring and evaluation indicators for pedagogical quality assurance and develop a continuous professional development (CPD) offer for teachers.
- Language learning is seen by many stakeholders as the strongest side of the ESS, especially the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method. However, it is heavily impacted by staff shortages and COVID-19 after-effects.
- While the current ESS mission and objectives are still seen as relevant today, they need to be broadened and include more explicit references to the values of diversity, inclusion, cooperation, and tolerance.
- The current ESS governance and funding setup limits the system's ability to respond to challenges. This can be alleviated by higher delegation and transparency standards, feasible cost-sharing alternatives and strengthened employment package for teachers.

This study focuses on the European Schools System (ESS), an inter-governmental system of educational establishments – both traditional and accredited European Schools – that offers multicultural and multilingual education to children across EU Member States. This study assesses the ESS progress since a comprehensive assessment by the European Parliament in 2011. Below is the summary of the study's findings and key recommendations for both educational and operational aspects of the ESS.

Educational aspects

The ESS educational system generally functions well. Nevertheless, it faces particular challenges in pedagogical quality assurance, language learning, and education for sustainable development.

In terms of **pedagogical quality assurance**, the ESS is finalising the implementation of a competence-based approach to learning. While there is already a solid institutional framework in place, it could further benefit from improvements in two areas: (1) updating relevant quality assurance indicators, as they are currently not fit for effective monitoring and evaluation; and (2) establishing a continuous professional development (CPD) offer for both seconded and locally recruited teachers.

Language learning was assessed positively by many stakeholders with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) often cited as a good practice example. However, both Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the existing shortage of teachers in the ESS. As a result, some Schools are forced to mix age groups and language levels, potentially causing learning problems. Proposed remedies include digitalising language learning for some languages, at least in the secondary cycle, mitigating staffing shortages, enriching connections between both traditional and accredited Schools, and better reflecting the needs of multi-lingual pupils. This can also increase the flexibility of language learning in the ESS.

Sustainability topics have recently received more attention, both from the central administration as well as from the management of individual Schools. This has led to improved practice. However, topics relating to environmental sustainability are not yet fully reflected in the competence-based approach.

This makes coverage of these topics too fragmented and incoherent within the secondary cycle of education. They therefore need to be properly integrated via a central document.

The idea of a **European dimension** to the education offered also represents one of the strongest aspects of the ESS. It is based not only on the curriculum but also via extracurricular activities such as study trips, EU models, and inter-Schools competitions as well as the multicultural educational environment. There is evidence of high-quality educational resources developed across several Schools. However, these resources are not always sufficiently well distributed. Better inter-school exchange systems could enhance resource sharing to the benefit of all.

Despite a rapid response across the system to the **COVID-19 pandemic**, teaching and administrative processes have still been undermined. Some Schools were underprepared for digital transitioning. Nevertheless, overall, there was an increase in the pace of digitalisation. This trend needs to continue and be coupled with mental and physical health support measures to ensure effective learning and student well-being.

Operational aspects

Many operational aspects of the ESS need to be reassessed considering the rapid expansion of the system and the drastically changing reality in which it operates.

The **ESS identity**, as formulated in its mission and objectives, needs to be at the heart of the system. The mission of the ESS, first defined in 1957, continues to be perceived by stakeholders as relevant and reflective of the Schools' identity today. However, many of them also argue that the mission statement needs to be broadened and include more explicit references to values such as diversity, inclusion, cooperation, and tolerance. This includes more emphasis on the accommodation of multilingual pupils and social diversity, reduction of exclusivity of the ESS and better integration with the AES and more diversified educational offer, especially for pupils with special educational needs, and pupils who do not necessarily wish to follow an academic education path.

ESS **governance** is perceived to be overly complex, bureaucratic, and inefficient, with insufficiently defined roles and responsibilities amongst a number of entities. This compromises the system's ability to respond to challenges. A new, comprehensive scheme of delegation needs to be developed, which guards against conflicts of interest, for example through the use of information barriers where appropriate. This is likely to raise educational standards across the system. Furthermore, there is a clear need for more transparency. Parents and teachers still feel insufficiently involved in the ESS decision-making process, while conflict resolution processes were reported to be lengthy and complex. Governance transparency can be increased by establishing clear channels of communication together with guidance/support that enables effective stakeholder involvement. There should also be a focus on enabling effective mediation to avoid formal legal procedures.

The **funding** mechanism of the ESS, its governance and, consequently, the Schools' HR policies, are closely intertwined. The current cost-sharing mechanism was reported to be highly problematic. It has led to two major issues the traditional ES face – teacher shortages and a poor infrastructure. Many MSs continuously fail to meet their obligations for secondments, while host MSs are not always willing to allocate funds for infrastructure maintenance and upgrades. Teacher shortages are a major challenge across all Schools, resulting in a decreased quality of education. Exploring alternatives to the current cost-sharing mechanism (e.g. contribution-per-student) and strengthening the employment package for teachers (e.g. via the introduction of equal employment conditions, appropriate teacher support structures and better training opportunities) could be plausible avenues for development.

This study identified significant disparities within the daily **management** of individual Schools: some Schools are perceived to be managed relatively well, while others tend to struggle; likewise, the infrastructure in certain Schools is satisfactory, while in others it is much less so. Such heterogeneity does not ensure pedagogical consistency across the ESS. For example, a lack of physical space negatively affects the quality of education and a pupil's readiness to learn. However, an overall key issue for most parents, teachers, and pupils across the ESS is communication – they feel that their complaints are not being heard and/or solved effectively. In addition to the above-mentioned scheme of delegation, clear channels of communication and the more frequent use of mediation, a more decentralised approach to School management should be introduced. This needs to be coupled with stronger management competences in Schools and increased financial autonomy to make necessary changes, particularly in the area of infrastructure development, as well as an investment into the educational and psychological support of pupils.

Finally, when it comes to the **growth and expansion** of the ES, expanding and promoting the system through the AES should be adapted as a policy priority. The number of pupils is growing faster than can be supported by the current model, and the AES offers an attractive alternative. However, stronger, and more consistent pedagogical quality assurance processes need to be put in place centrally, as well as embedded within individual Schools, to ensure that the ESS can grow sustainably.

1. INTRODUCTION

This introductory section outlines the background of the study, its scope and focus, methodological framework as well as structure.

1.1. Background of the study

The European Schools System (ESS) is a unique educational system, the main function of which is to provide high-quality multilingual and multicultural education with a European dimension to its students. Due to its multicultural and intergovernmental nature as well as the involvement of a great variety of stakeholders, the ESS is constantly evolving and adapting to both educational and operational challenges. This study aims to assess the most recent developments in the ESS since the publication of the 2011 EP Report on the ES¹, to identify existing and emerging challenges as well as to provide targeted recommendations to address these issues.

The topic of the ESS belongs to one of the core competences of the EP CULT Committee relating to 'the Union's education policy, including the European higher education area, the promotion of the system of European Schools and lifelong learning'.² At the beginning of 2021, an official exchange of views took place between the Secretary General's Office (OSG) of the ESS, the ESS Parents' Association (Interparents) and the CULT Committee in the EP regarding relevant challenges to the ESS. As a result, the EP took the initiative to draft a new own-initiative report on the current situation in the ESS in a fashion similar to the 2011 report. Since the EP is a budgetary authority with responsibility for the ESS budget, it can exert a significant influence on the ESS at the operational level. However, before proceeding with the report, the EP concluded that the report should be based on an independent evidence-based study assessing the current situation of the ESS. This is the major purpose of this document. Most importantly, this assessment study will show where the ESS currently stands and how it can be further improved so that it serves as a potential good practice model for the European Education Area (EEA). The study focused on two types of good practices – primarily those within the system (exchange of practices between various ES), as well as other practices that could be applied by other Schools in the forthcoming European Education Area. Due to its limited scope, the study did not consider good practices outside the ESS.

1.2. Focus and scope of the study

The focus and scope of the study are driven by questions relating to the identification of the main challenges in both the educational and operational areas of the ESS as well as to the drafting of relevant recommendations on how to address these challenges. The term 'educational' refers to ways in which the ESS provides education for its students. Meanwhile, the term 'operational' refers to ways in which the ESS, including its central and individual School levels, operates on a day-to-day basis.

Methodologically, the study focuses on the challenges and problems that the system faces rather than on the concept of the ESS itself (i.e. adopting an analytical approach; not a descriptive one). Thematically, the study covers all eight objectives as was required by the technical specifications developed by the EP as well as some additional areas. These are summarised in Table 1 below. Importantly, the study also considers cross-cutting issues such as digitalisation. An in-depth analysis of

¹ Also available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011IP0402>

² Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament - Annex VI: Powers and responsibilities of standing committees - XV: Committee on Culture and Education.

these cross-cutting issues serves as a foundation for the general recommendations that can be found in the final chapter of the study.

Table 1: Constituent parts of the study.

Operational aspects	Educational aspects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Schools' identity: Mission and objectives • Governance • Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding & HR ○ School administration ○ Infrastructure ○ Student well-being • Growth of the ESS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical quality assurance • European dimension of education • Language learning • Inclusive education³ • Education for sustainable development • Sports & physical education • Impact of COVID-19

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021)

1.3. Methodology

The study triangulates evidence from desk research, an online survey, semi-structured interviews, and a statistical analysis of sources provided by the ES Office of the Secretary General (OSG) and other stakeholders. The findings from the triangulation were further validated during a dedicated online multi-stakeholder workshop. The assessment study was conducted without relying on a single normative framework primarily due to the uniqueness of the ESS when compared to national systems. Below, we briefly outline each of the data collection and analysis methods employed in the study.

Desk research

Desk research took stock of already existing information and knowledge with two main objectives. Firstly, it demonstrated existing research gaps and contributed to the survey and interview questionnaires. Secondly, the desk research identified some relevant trends and challenges in the ESS, to be triangulated with the insights gained from the survey and interviews.

Desk research was based on a simplified version of Petticrew and Roberts' approach (Petticrew and Roberts, 2008). It covered both academic and "grey" literature (incl. legal documents, ESS and external policy reports, syllabi, internal School documentation, data, other sources such as articles and conference presentations), both openly available, and confidential sources provided by stakeholders. A comprehensive list of sources can be found in the bibliography.

Online survey

The main purpose of the online survey was to collect data from key stakeholders in the ESS to complement the information gathered through interviews and desk research. It was carried out between 25 October and 25 November 2021. The survey was disseminated to the following eight major stakeholder groups covering both traditional European Schools (ES) and Accredited European Schools (AES) – students, alumni, parents, teachers, members of the Schools' administrations, members of the Central Administration Office of the Secretary-General, inspectors, and policy officials. In total, 3,538

³ The issue of inclusive education is separately and specifically covered by the evaluation study of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Thus, this study only summarises the collected evidence and does not analyse it in-depth.

complete and 1,854 partial responses to the survey were received, covering a representative sample from different ES and AES as well as representatives of all key stakeholders involved in the ESS governance⁴. The survey results were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively (categorical open answers analysis). Survey results can be found in Annex I and the survey questionnaire – in Annex 3.

Semi-structured interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews, combined with the survey’s results, provided in-depth insights into both good practices and challenges faced by the ESS. The interviews presented a detailed picture of the stakeholders’ views, allowing us to clarify any ambiguities and collect more in-depth information on good practices. We conducted two types of interviews: exploratory interviews and fully-fledged interviews. The former helped us to pilot questionnaires and to scan the scope of the study, while the latter provided in-depth evidence for the study’s findings. In total, we conducted 39 interviews with a diverse group of stakeholders (see the table below). The number of representatives of parents’ associations interviewed was slightly higher due to their swift and immediate consent to interviews. Institutionally, 24 interviews covered ES, 6 interviews covered AES, while 9 more were not affiliated with School types (e.g., representatives of the EC, alumni, governments). In total, the interviews were conducted across 10 ES and 4 AES.

Table 2: Summary of interview statistics.

Stakeholder type	Total interviews
Representatives of parents’ associations	13
Directors	6
OSG	3
Student Union representatives	5
Seconded teachers	4
Locally recruited teachers	1
Inspectors	2
EC	1
Alumni	1
National governments’ representatives	3
Total	39

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021).

Statistical analysis

A statistical analysis was mainly used to further substantiate the collected evidence. The study largely relied on statistical data sources generated by the OSG⁵. However, a more detailed statistical analysis of this data was significantly limited by the fact that the data was not available in its original (numerical or text) format, but was mostly provided in a pdf format and/or scanned images. Comparisons with AES were significantly limited by a lack of statistical data for the AES.

⁴ Specifically, 3.1% of students (the survey targeted only the secondary cycle students); 9.7% of parents; 26.4% of teachers; 22% of members of the Central Administration Office; 42.6% of inspectors were covered within the survey. The sample for other stakeholders is unavailable due to unknown population numbers.

⁵ Most, if not all, of these sources are available here: <https://www.eurisc.eu/en/Office/reports-statistics>.

Online validation workshop

After the preliminary version of the main findings and recommendations was finalised, we conducted a multistakeholder workshop with the two-fold aim of both validating the findings and recommendations and, importantly, receiving additional feedback from stakeholders. The workshop took place online, on January 12, 2022, and was attended by 22 different stakeholders (incl. OSG representatives, representatives from the EP and the EC, student and parent representatives, School Directors, staff representatives, and external experts). The workshop's organisation mirrored the structure of the study, with participants being separated into two working groups on educational and operational aspects. The workshop's results confirmed the internal validity of the study's findings and provided extensive further feedback for ensuring the robustness of the findings and greater specificity and feasibility for recommendations.

1.4. Structure of the study

Apart from this introduction, the study consists of four main parts supplemented by multiple annexes. The main parts of the study include the second chapter that provides necessary contextual knowledge about the ESS; the third chapter is on educational aspects of the ESS; the fourth chapter is on operational aspects of the ESS, and the final chapter contains the main conclusions and recommendations of the study. In addition to a bibliography, the study contains the following annexes:

1. A detailed breakdown of the descriptive quantitative analysis of the survey's responses
2. Interview questionnaires
3. Survey questionnaire

2. CONTEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS SYSTEM: CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

KEY FINDINGS

- The ESS includes ES, which are jointly controlled by all EU Member States, and AES, which are schools that lie in a national jurisdiction, but meet the ES pedagogical requirements.
- All Schools follow a specialised curriculum and offer the European Baccalaureate (EB) diploma to their pupils upon graduation.
- The ESS pays particularly close attention to the multilingual and multicultural aspects of education both in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. It also follows a competence-based approach to learning.
- Operationally, both the EU and national institutions play a crucial role in fostering and supporting the ESS across different EU Member States (MSs).
- The ESS' budget is composed of contributions by the EC, individual MSs, various EU agencies and organisations as well as parents.

This chapter provides a detailed contextual description of the European Schools System (ESS), which may be necessary to understand the subsequent analytical chapters. Specifically, it covers the most important definitions, outlines the broad context of the educational and operational aspects of the ESS, and summarises relevant descriptive statistics. Thematically, the first section of the chapter covers basic concepts and definitions, the second section covers operational aspects, and the third one covers educational aspects.

2.1. European Schools: Introduction and key definitions

ES and AES⁶ are official educational establishments set up in the EU MSs. The two types of schools offer multicultural and multilingual education at the nursery, primary, and secondary levels and are united within the ESS. However, while sharing the same values and pedagogic approach, the ES and AES have some distinctive features, including some operational aspects and the legal status they hold both within the ESS framework and the frameworks of the national schools' systems:

- **ES** are sometimes also referred to as 'traditional European Schools'. They are official educational establishments which are jointly run by the governments of the MSs and are legally regarded as public institutions in all these countries (ES 2021a). These schools are funded by a specially allocated budget largely composed of contributions by various EU institutions. Each of the Schools also has its own governance structure. There are currently 13 ES⁷ in six countries with a total of about 28,000 pupils on roll (ES 2020).

⁶ "Schools" with a capital letter usually refers to European Schools and/or Accredited European Schools, while "schools" with a small letter refers to the concept/institution of schools in general (e.g., national schools in individual EU Member States). Quotes, however, maintain their original spelling.

⁷ Alicante; Brussels I (Uccle); Brussels I (Berkendael); Brussels II (Woluwé); Brussels III (Ixelles); Brussels IV (Laeken); Mol; Bergen; Frankfurt am Main; Karlsruhe; Munich; Varese; Luxembourg I; Luxembourg II.

- **AES** offer a European education that meets the pedagogical requirements laid down for the ES within the framework of the national school networks of the MSs. AES are, thus, outside the legal, administrative, and financial framework to which the ES are compulsorily subject (ES 2021b). The AES began to emerge in 2007 with the first two Schools opening in Ireland and Italy. There are currently 20 AES⁸ across 13 EU MSs with a total of about 11,000 pupils on roll (ES 2020a). According to the official OSG website, five national schools were in the process of accreditation to become AES at the end of 2021⁹.

The ESS was established in 1953¹⁰ and was legally framed by the Statute of the European Schools¹¹ (further – the Statute) in 1957 as well as through the Convention Defining the Statute of 1994 (further – the Convention) as well as subsequent Protocols on the setting up of ES with reference to the Statute (Pukallus 2019, Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018). The aim of establishing the ESS was to address the educational needs of the children of employees working in European institutions. The first European School was founded in Luxembourg with the first European Baccalaureate (EB) being awarded in 1959 (see [section 2.2.1](#) for more details). After its first successful years of operation, ES were gradually established in other central locations of EU institutions, including Belgium (first school opened in 1958), Italy (1960), Germany (1962) and the Netherlands (1963).

The most significant changes in the ESS came in 2009 with the ES Reform. It initiated the “opening up” process of the EB system, i.e., the Reform introduced an accreditation system for the AES, simultaneously granting more freedom to the existing ES by reforming the governance system (ES 2009). The accreditation process of the AES has been set up to provide European schooling not only for the children of staff working in European institutions, but also to a wider population of Europe, serving as a significant step in the development of the ESS and the spread of ES across the MS.

While both ES and AES follow the same pedagogical requirements and share the same school ethos (ES 2006), they differ in terms of admission requirements, funding, and legal status (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b). As Table 3 shows, several types of schools have been further distinguished within the ESS. For Type I Schools, at least two-thirds of funding is provided by EU institutions (Ibid). Meanwhile, Type II AES receive funding from the EU in proportion to the number of children of EU civil servants who attend the school. Type III educational institutions operate with complete financial independence from European institutions. It is worth noting that, since 2022 the distinctions between Type II and Type III are no longer made and they are both referred as simply AES (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b).

⁸ European School of Bruxelles-Argenteuil; European School Brindisi; School for Europe of Parma; European School Copenhagen; European School The Hague; Centre for European Schooling; European School Ljubljana; Europa School UK; European School of Helsinki; School of European Education of Heraklion; International School Junglinster; Mondorf-les-Bains International School; International School of Differdange and Esch-sur-Alzette; International School Edward Steichen; European School RheinMain; European School of Paris-La Défense; International School Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur; European School Lille Métropole; European School of Strasbourg; Tallinn European School.

⁹ European School Templin (Germany); European School, Saarland (Germany); Ecole internationale Mersch Anne Beffort (Luxembourg); Accredited European School Luxembourg-City (Luxembourg); European School, Lisbon (Portugal).

¹⁰ Until 1957, the European Schools were run by the Parents' Association.

¹¹ EU (1994), Convention defining the statute of the European Schools, https://www.eursc.eu/BasicTexts/SW1_21994A0817-en.pdf

Table 3: Types of schools within the ESS.

Schools within the ESS	Type	Target group	Funding	Location
ES	Type I	Attended mainly by the children of civil servants of EU institutions	- EU institutions (two thirds of the funding) - MS - Parents' contributions - Other	Close to the main administrative bodies of the EU such as the European Parliament (EP), the Council, the European Commission (EC), and the European Central Bank. ¹²
AES Accredited (National) European Schools	Type II	-Established to spread European schooling to the general population of Europe -Presence of children of staff of EU institutions, agencies, and other such organisations (a distinguishing factor from Type III AES).	Funding from EU institutions in proportion to the number of children of officials and staff attending the school.	Can be in any MS, but with possible proximity to EU institutions.
	Type III (no longer relevant as of 2022 ¹³)	Established to spread European schooling to the general population of Europe	Financially independent from EU institutions.	Can be located in any MS.

Follow the same pedagogical framework

Source: Visionary Analytics (2022). Based on Reform of the European Schools System (2009) and OSG documentation.

Traditional ES or Type I schools serve as the most important support within the ESS for the operation of EU institutions located in the MS, as they provide the children of staff working in these institutions with a general education following a single curriculum. The 1994 Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools outlines the obligations of each MS (EU 1994). Respectively, there are also three categories of pupils (ES 2022):

- Category I: Pupils who need to be admitted to the European Schools because their parents work for a European Union institution. These pupils are exempt from school fees.
- Category II: Pupils covered by individual agreements or decisions, each entailing specific rights and obligations for the pupils concerned, particularly as regards school fees. Fees vary significantly and range from EUR 10,169.91 in Brussels to EUR 18,904.70 in Bergen annually (ES 2022a).
- Category III: Pupils who do not belong to Categories I and II. These pupils are admitted to the European Schools in so far as places are available. Ordinary school fees, fixed by the Board of Governors, are payable for these pupils. These annual fees depend on the cycle and are ca. EUR 3,950-4,120 for the nursery, ca. EUR 5,430-5,660 for the primary, and ca. EUR 7,220-7,410 for the secondary cycle.

ES, operating in accordance with the Convention, are subject to the control executed by the **Board of Governors** (BoG). The BoG is composed of the following representatives:

¹² A full list of the Community institutions and organisations can be found here: <https://www.eursc.eu/en/European-Schools/enrolments/admission>. Children with parents on staff and in service to these institutions must be admitted by the ES and are exempt from school fees.

¹³ A distinction is no longer made between Type II and Type III as of 2022.

- Ministers of Education of each MS, represented by senior civil servants from the Ministries of Education or Foreign Affairs, giving one vote to each MS;
- A member of the EC;
- A representative designated by the Staff Committee (teaching staff);
- A representative from Parents' associations (EU 1994);
- Representatives of other European institutions (incl. the European Patent Office, European Central Bank, European Investment Bank and the European Union Intellectual Property Office) (ES 2021v).

The BoG works on matters related to administration, education, and funding. In educational matters, the opinion of the BoG impacts such aspects as the adoption of harmonised curricula, the provision of the supervision of teaching by the Boards of Inspectors, the laying down of rules for examinations, etc. (EU 1994). Moreover, the BoG also considers proposals for opening new ES and evaluates possible conditions that might lead to the closure of existing ones (ES 2015). The composition of the BoG reflects an important pillar of the ESS: cooperation between the MSs and the EU.

The ESS can be distinguished from other school systems not only by its enrolment and management procedures but also by its curricula. Regardless of the ES Type, the multilingual and multicultural education and multinational environment are major factors in fostering the European identity of pupils across different countries where the schools are situated (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b). The focus on European identity is achieved by referring to the European dimension in the ES curriculum and throughout the study process of different subjects. Take for example the history classes in the secondary cycle (see Table 5 for information on study cycles) which offer teachers some different ways that they can incorporate and emphasize a European dimension throughout the subject, such as:

- Europe from Dictatorship to Democracy;
- Europe and Europeans in WWII;
- Post-War Europe: 1945-49 (ES 2013c).

Furthermore, to reflect the European climate of the ES, materials showing various aspects of European identity are displayed in the physical environment within school facilities¹⁴ (Ibid).

European Schools are also represented in the Europeana Teacher Ambassador network which was created by the European Schoolnet¹⁵. The key task of the ambassadors is to develop and test pedagogical scenarios, state-of-the-art examples of the integration of the digital cultural heritage in the classroom and various materials covering topics that are linked to the European dimension such as migration and the European identity (Pocze et al. 2019).

Offering a wide range of courses in European languages is another important aspect that is tied to the idea of the European dimension (ES 2006). This leads to one of the major benefits of the ESS, which is the offered possibility for students coming from different European countries to acquire school subjects in L1 (a pupil's dominant language). However, the number of language sections does not cover all European languages in any ES due to financial and human resource constraints, students in such cases are referred to as Students Without a Language Section (SWALS) and follow a specific curriculum. SWALS attend one of the language sections available at their specific schools while receiving a separate programme in their dominant language that consists of a certain number of language lessons, depending on the study cycle and year (ES 2019i, ES 2009). Meanwhile, SWALS take the language of

¹⁴ Example: European hours and the European dimension represented in the hallways of the European School of Alicante: <https://www.escuelaeuropea.org/en/infantil-y-primaria/european-hours>

¹⁵ European Schoolnet <http://www.eun.org/>

their section at L2 (first foreign language) level. They are also entitled to learning support in the language of the section in which they enrol (ES 2012b).

The ESS has also been granted a special legal status since the ESS involves cooperation between MSs and European institutions for the successful operation of the Schools. The Convention defines that each School has a legal personality and should be treated in each MS according to the specific provisions of the Convention as an educational establishment that is governed by public law (ES 1994). The Convention also defines the organs and their rights and duties that are common to all the Schools. The organs' roles have been further updated according to changes that took place after the 2009 Reform (ES 2009) and the newest amendments. They are outlined below in Table 4.

Table 4: Administrative bodies of the ESS

Administrative bodies in the ESS	Role, rights, and duties
BoG	The governing body of the ESS, composed of representatives of the involved parties (see Figure 1 as well) and covering administrative, educational, and financial matters.
Secretary-General (SG)	<p>The main defined role is “to encourage and enable the schools to fulfil their purpose in facilitating the proper functioning of the European community institutions” (ES 2010a).</p> <p>The two main duties are defined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing the Board of Governors internally and externally. • Managing and ensuring the performance of the European school system and promoting and supporting the development of European schooling, planning, setting objectives, implementing policies, evaluating the effectiveness of policies and activities (Ibid).
Deputy Secretary-General	<p>Assists the SG and performs the following duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deals with all matters in the educational and pedagogical area, in liaison with the Boards of Inspectors. • Is the Authorising officer for the section of the budget relating to the Office of the Secretary-General. • Assists the Secretary-General in their duties and may be called upon to perform the same duties as the Secretary-General by delegation.
Preparatory Committees	Before a matter reaches the BoG for final decision-making, it is approached and studied by preparatory committees that include the Joint Teaching Committee, the Joint Board of Inspectors and the Budgetary Committee (ES 2016a, ES 2021f).
<p>Joint Board of Inspectors, consisting of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board of Inspectors for the Nursery and Primary level - Board of Inspectors for the Secondary level 	<p>The Joint Board of Inspectors consists of two inspectors per MS – one for each Board of Inspectors. The inspectors provide a link with the national educational systems of the MSs.</p> <p>The Joint Board of Inspectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the pedagogical objectives as part of the autonomy of Type I schools. • Conducts audits of Type II and Type III schools. • Ensures the system’s pedagogical development. • Conducts an individual inspection of teachers. • Is responsible for the provision of teachers’ in-service training (ES 2021w).

Administrative bodies in the ESS	Role, rights, and duties
Complaints Board	<p>Is responsible for ruling, in the first and last instances, on disputes relating to the application of the Convention and of the regulatory texts which govern the system of the European Schools. Has a recognised 'court status' from the European Court of Justice.</p> <p>Teachers, parents, and pupils of the traditional ES can turn to the Complaints Board to challenge decisions of the Administrative Bodies of the ES.</p> <p>The Complaints Board ensures uniform legal protection within its specified areas of jurisdiction (Complaints Board 2013).</p>
Directors (also referred to as Headteachers in the Convention)	<p>Each School's legal representative in dealings with parents and public authorities. The Directors are responsible for teaching and education at an ES/AES; staff management; budget and administration (ES 2014d).</p>
School's Administrative Board	<p>The Administrative Boards of traditional ES are comprised of a Chairman of the Board; a Director; representatives of the EC, the teachers' community, the Parents' Association; the Administrative and Ancillary Staff (AAS) and other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Administrative Boards are responsible for ensuring the schools' efficient functioning; they deal with management and administration aspects, as well as draw up schools' budgets and overlook the spending of allocations. (ES 2021x).</p>

Source: Own elaboration based on ESS documents.

Apart from the administrative bodies listed in the table above, the Staff Committee, the Parents' Association, the Pupils' Committee, and CoSup (Conseil Supérieur des Elèves) represent the interests of, respectively, the teachers, parents, and pupils of traditional ES.

2.2. Educational aspects of the system of the European Schools

This section describes the existing educational approach of the ESS. Specifically, the section details out the educational cycle of the ESS, the approach to language teaching and learning, physical education, pedagogical quality assurance, and progress towards teaching sustainability principles.

2.2.1. Educational cycle of the ESS

There are three cycles in European Schools, these consist of:

- two years of early education (nursery cycle)
- five years of primary education
- seven years of secondary education

Classes and age groups corresponding to each study cycle are outlined in Table 5. All European Schools follow a European Schools' Curriculum and offer the EB diploma to their pupils upon graduation. The EB diploma aims to be a standard of high-quality education and grant universal access to further (higher) education across EU MSs. It is the only diploma offered by the ESS.

Table 5: Study cycles of the ESS.

Cycle		Classes	Age
Nursery		M1-M2	4-5
Primary		P1-P5	6-10
Secondary	<p><u>The secondary school curriculum is a comprehensive one including a combination of STEM, humanities, languages, and artistic subjects.</u></p> <p><u>Observation cycle:</u> a common course for all students; most of the subjects taught in the language corresponding to the pupil’s language section.</p>	S1-S3	11-13
	<p><u>Pre-orientation cycle:</u> compulsory courses in sciences, including chemistry, biology, physics, and mathematics for either 4 or 6 periods. Optional courses: economics, L4, Latin, ancient Greek (for Greek nationality students).</p>	S4-S5	14-15
	<p><u>Orientation cycle:</u> leads to the EB and includes compulsory, optional, and complementary subjects. Compulsory subjects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least two language subjects (L1 and L2) • Mathematics, either 3 periods/week or 5 periods/week • At least one scientific subject, either Biology 2 periods/week or any other 4-period scientific subject in either Biology, Chemistry or Physics • History and Geography, either 2 periods/week or 4 periods/week, which are taught in L2, a different language from the dominant one, either in French, English or German • Philosophy, either 2 periods/week or 4 periods/week • Physical Education • Ethics or Religion <p>Optional and complementary subjects are chosen to complete the subject package and amount to a minimum of 31 periods per week to a maximum of 35. The four period optional subjects form an important part of the EB and are taken as written examinations. A candidate usually takes three of these options and chooses two for written papers. They include History, Geography and Philosophy (4 periods), Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, L3, L4, Latin, Greek, Art, Music, and Economics. A candidate chooses these with a view to their future university course.</p> <p>Complementary subjects can vary from school to school, but some common examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biology, Chemistry or Physics Lab • ICT • Sociology • Film Studies • Drama • Classical Studies <p>Compulsory L1, L2 and Maths courses can be selected at an advanced level.</p>	S6-S7	16-18

Sources: ES (2021d), Organisation of studies. Leaton Gray, S. Scott, D. & Mehisto, P. (2018b), Curriculum Reform in the European Schools. ES (2021t) The European Baccalaureate

The goals of providing multicultural and multilingual education are already incorporated within the **nursery** and **primary cycles** of education. The nursery cycle teaches pupils from age 4 to 5 who are taught in mixed groups. Among its other goals, it is stated that the Early Education (Nursery) is designed to “respect and appreciate children’s own cultural and social identity, its values and those of others” (2021d).

The primary education timetable includes an extensive number of language lessons in a pupil’s mother tongue (L1); SWALS pupils can choose another language if there is no language section available in

their native language and on condition that there is a teacher who is duly qualified to offer such lessons (ES 2021d). If a pupil's knowledge of the language required to continue with their education is insufficient or non-existent, Education Support provisions contain compensation mechanisms to make a curriculum accessible to them. The legal representatives of pupils may also undertake arrangements for additional language classes for their children. An important aspect of the schools' enrolment policy is the determination of the pupil's dominant language (L1) by the school's Director. In the cases of multilingual children, it shall be the language of which the student has the best command. Another important principle allows students to enrol in an L1 different than their mother tongue with the pre-condition that they have been educated in this language for a minimum of two years in primary or secondary school prior to enrolment in the ES (ES 2014d).

Other core subjects apart from the lessons in L1 during the primary cycle include mathematics and the chosen L2. The choice of L2 is compulsory at this stage and should not be changed afterwards. The same rule also applies to L1. Meanwhile, music, art, physical education, religion/ethics are also an integral part of the curriculum. Besides, during years P3, P4, and P5 "European Hours" are organised to bring even more of a European dimension to the classroom.

Pupils enter **the secondary cycle** in the calendar year when they turn 11. At the beginning of the secondary cycle there is a requirement to choose a second foreign language (L3). The first three years of secondary school are called the "observation cycle" with a common curriculum and most of the subjects taught in the pupils' chosen L1 or other L2, in the case of SWALS. However, the L2 (first foreign language) is slowly incorporated as the working language for everyone, and L2 is used to study human sciences (and sometimes also religion and ethics) already in S3. Gradually, in subsequent cycles, there are also more options for students to choose some of their courses (e.g. Latin or Ancient Greek; ICT courses; advanced courses in mathematics, etc.).

Different **assessment types** are an integral part of all educational cycles of the ESS. During the primary cycle, an on-going assessment method is used, with a report comprising both formative and summative assessments of the processes and results presented at the end of each semester (2018i). Formative assessment focuses on the process of learning, while summative assessment reflects the performance of a pupil at the end of a given period of instruction (e.g. unit, term or study year). A summative assessment in the primary cycle is expressed in mid-term and end-term reports by using a system of 4 pluses where they are used to mark the level of achievement of specific learning objectives (Ibid).

A student's assessment during the secondary cycle is made up of both coursework and, during the pre-orientation and orientation cycles, also from examinations. Assessment criteria are provided by the BoG (ES 2012a). Again, the two types of assessment (formative, including diagnostic assessment and self-assessment, and summative) are used (Ibid).

The current marking system for the secondary cycle was introduced in 2018 (ES 2018). It includes seven grades: letters are used in S1-S3, while numerical marks are used from S4-S6 and decimal numerical marks are used in S7 (Ibid, see [the relevant sub-section](#) for a more detailed description of the new marking system). Also, according to the new marking system, letters are used in S1-S3 to provide a more gradual transition from the primary cycle and are only later replaced with numerical marks.

During the secondary cycle, a student's assessment is also displayed in regular reports that are issued three or four times a year, and the decision as to whether a student has passed the year and can move up to the next year is taken according to the criteria established by the BoG (ES 2021d). Finally, a successful graduation from years S6 and S7 leads to the award of an EB diploma.

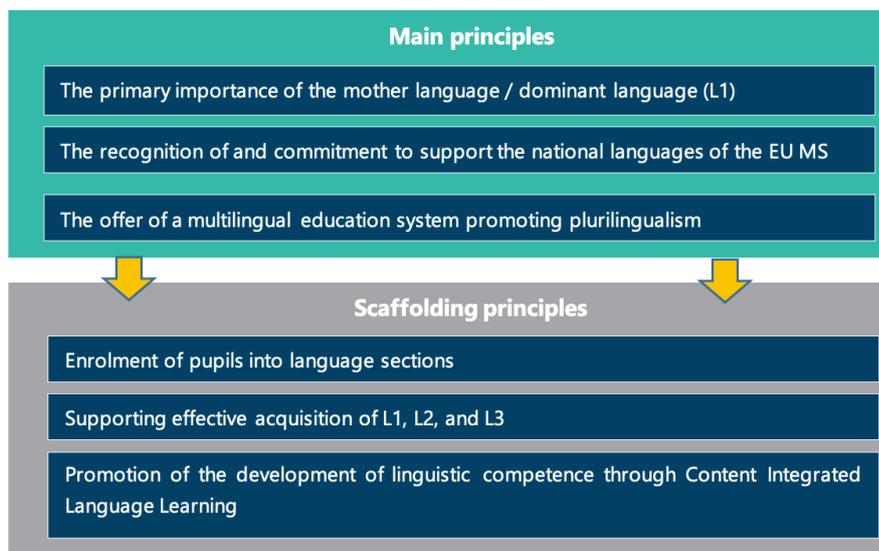
The **EB diploma** is a unique degree offered in the ESS framework for pupils who have taken no less than two years within the EB programme (ES 2014b). The overall pass mark for the EB is 5 out of 10 (that would constitute 50% out of 100%) which is comprised of two parts (ES 2021t). The first half is a formative and summative assessment that reflects a pupil’s performance before examination. Formative assessment is reflected in the so called “A marks”. The A marks represent a pupil’s daily work in a subject, which consists of a variety of tasks and aspects such as focus and attention in class, active participation and quality of interventions in class, a positive attitude towards the subject, etc. Summative assessments are reflected in the so called “B marks”, which are obtained from term or semester examinations (Ibid).

The EB diploma is officially recognised as an entry qualification for higher education in all MSs and several other countries (ES 2014a, ES2014b, ES 2021t). Nevertheless, there have been some issues with the recognition of the EB diploma in some of the MSs which will be examined further in the analytical part of this study. To achieve that EB diploma, holders can qualify for admission in the higher education institutions of all Member States; specific guidelines¹⁶ set out equivalences between the EB diploma and the upper secondary leaving certificates of the National Schools. For this purpose, it is important that the minimum requirements of all MSs have been met. Therefore, the syllabuses (i.e. the subjects in a course of study) are designed after detailed comparisons to the national syllabuses and negotiations between the national experts who are members of the two Boards of Inspectors (one for the nursery and primary cycle and one for the secondary cycle).

2.2.2. Language learning

The ESS pays close attention to language learning during all of the study cycles. In 2019, a new Language Policy of the ES was approved by the BoG (ES 2019i). The policy describes six main principles of language learning in the ESS that correspondingly include **three basic and three scaffolding principles**, as represented in the figure below.

Figure 1: Main principles of language learning in the ESS.



Source: ES (2019i), Language Policy of the European Schools.

¹⁶ Equivalences Between the European Baccalaureate and the Upper Secondary Leaving Certificate of National Schools and Admission of European Baccalaureate-holders to Universities of Member Countries: <https://www.eursec.eu/Documents/2014-03-D-25-en-12.pdf>

Following the above outlined principles, the ESS offers language classes in all national EU languages (ES 2021d). Apart from an extensive cycle in their mother tongue that starts with P1 (prior to that, L1 is also a part of the Early Education cycle), all students gradually start to learn foreign languages during the primary and secondary cycles of studies: L2 in the 1st primary year (the choice of L2 in the 2020-2022 school years by percentage of pupils: English 56.8%, French 24.7%, German 17.9%), L3 in the 1st secondary year (compulsory until the 5th year of secondary and optional in year 6 and 7); optionally L4 in the 4th year and L5 in the secondary years 6 and 7. It is possible to choose any official European language as L3, L4, and L5, **provided that the School is able to offer a course in this language** and there is a minimum number of pupils that request it. The expected proficiency level in languages across the study cycles is displayed in

Table 6. The table shows that students reach their highest proficiency level in L2. Besides language lessons, L2 is also mastered by following Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) principles, i.e., there are some courses that are taught in this language (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b).

Table 6: Basic language proficiency levels across different study cycles according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

	Primary	Secondary year 3	Secondary year 7
L2	A2	B1	C1
L3	0	A1+	B1+
L4 advanced (4h)/ L4 basic (2h)	0/0	0/0	A2+/A2
ONL (Other National Language)	A1.2.	A2	B2

Source: ES (2021d). Organisation of studies

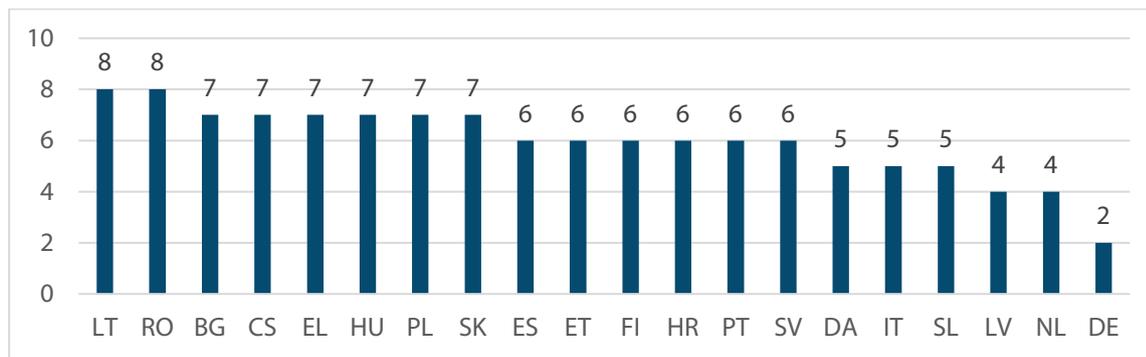
Table 6 also shows that the teaching system is now closely aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning (ES 2021d), as was recommended by the University of Cambridge (University of Cambridge 2009).

The number of language sections of schools varies from 3 to 16, which means that full study cycles of some languages may not be offered, especially in the case of SWALS. The largest language sections across all traditional ES in 2020-2021 were:

- French (with a total of 8,213 pupils enrolled in this section across all ES);
- English (with a total of 5,364);
- German (with 4,469 pupils);
- Dutch (with 1,644 pupils) (ES 2020a).

Languages that do not have corresponding language sections vary from school to school. However, Figure 2 represents the EU languages for which language sections were missing in the largest number of ES at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

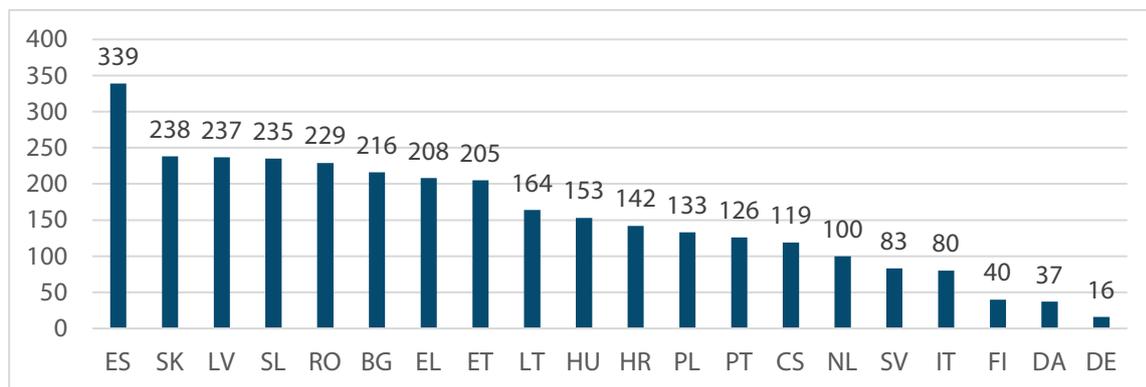
Figure 2: Number of traditional ES that have SWALS for the marked EU languages.



Source: ES (2020a), Facts and figures on the beginning of the 2020- 2021 school year in European Schools.

Furthermore, Figure 3 lists the languages that had the largest number of SWALS across all traditional ES in the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

Figure 3: Number of SWALS per language in traditional ES on the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.



Source: ES (2020a), Facts and figures on the beginning of the 2020- 2021 school year in European Schools.

To address problems faced by SWALS, the ESS has also introduced special targeted educational guidelines and additional support measures (ES 2013e). For example, if one of the language sections of a Type I or Type II school for a pupil's mother tongue or dominant language (L1) is not open, this pupil is entitled to tuition in their L1. That said, the provision works on the assumption that the school has a duly qualified teacher at its disposal or can recruit one.

Academic resources indicate that a lack of teachers of national languages in smaller MSs continues to significantly curtail parents' and students' opportunities to choose schools, especially after the last EU enlargements (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b). A Lithuanian student, for example, will have a restricted choice in Brussels since the only school with a Lithuanian section is Brussels II (Ibid). Finally, on the administrative side, it becomes increasingly difficult for the ESS to attract seconded teachers with specific skills that would include both adequate linguistic as well as subject-specific expertise. This shortage has been aggravated by a lack of native speakers of English (as a result of Brexit) as well as L1 teachers (EP 2021).

Another prominent issue is related to the status of the language of the country where the School is situated. The local language is often referred to as the Host Country Language (HCL). Sometimes, the HCL overlaps with L2 such as German or French. By contrast, other HCLs such as Spanish, Dutch, and Italian were only offered as either L1 or, later on, as L3 across the system. The problematic aspect is that for students who cannot choose the HCL as their L1, the HCL courses may start too late and not offer

the necessary level for successful integration into the local environment. Thus, according to a decision of the BoG on 15-17 April 2020, from September 2023 the HCL may be included in the L2 group from P1 onwards (ES 2019x).

2.2.3. Pedagogical quality assurance

The 2006 Quality Assurance document that has been approved by the BoG (ES 2006) serves as a reference for a School's internal evaluation. Criteria and indications of their fulfilment are provided for such domains related to pedagogical work as **school ethos, school climate, curriculum organisation, teaching, and evaluation**. The document displays mostly general criteria, while there are more specific actions connected with each domain that are taken within the ESS. Alongside that, there is continuous work taking place in the field of pedagogical quality assurance. The Pedagogical Development Unit (PDU) of the OSG and Board of Inspectors are the guarantors of ESS pedagogical coherence. Each school year, matters of Quality Assurance in Pedagogy are reviewed in the Annual Activity Report of the OSG. Its task is to "facilitate and monitor the proper operation of decision-making and follow-up on the decisions taken by the competent organs, namely the Boards of Inspectors, the Joint Teaching Committee, the Budgetary Committee and the Board of Governors, in related areas" (ES OSG PDU 2020).

Meanwhile, the Presidency of the BoG sets priorities for each school year¹⁷. Thus, the PDU, under the auspices of the Presidency, assists the Boards of Inspectors in "the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions and the actions taken as a result of decisions" (ES OSG PDU 2020). Moreover, Boards of Inspectors set pedagogical objectives and are responsible for quality assurance in traditional ES (Ibid). Quality assurance of the AES from the System's perspective is assured through a regular audit process that is also carried out by inspectors within the framework of the accreditation procedure laid down by the BoG (ES 2021w).

The **Boards of Inspectors** not only help to identify pedagogical needs for each coming school year, but also offer activities to be organised for the satisfaction of these needs and responsibilities. The following Working Groups (WG) of Boards of Inspectors address different pedagogical needs:

- Long-term planning WG to tackle ongoing or recurrent needs (e.g. pedagogical objectives of the ESS, quality assurance of the BAC, careers guidance, audit of AES);
- Short-term planning WG for max. 2–3-year initiatives (e.g. revising examination terminology, evaluation of the new assessment system);
- Reference groups to give a mandate (e.g. organisation of student exchanges, organisation of educational support) for discussions with different partners of the ESS;
- Syllabuses WG to develop, approve, and follow the implementation of the syllabuses (ES OSG PDU 2020).

The activities of the Boards of Inspectors are coordinated and supported by the PDU of the Office of the Secretary General of the ES. One project lasts for a maximum of 2-3 years, and after that it is either integrated into a larger target or finished, depending on whether the issue has been resolved or whether it persists. The presidency of each school year can submit new priorities to the Joint Board of Inspectors, depending on current needs and resources (ES OSG PDU 2020: 29).

¹⁷ The President convenes meetings of the BoG twice a year. The Presidency passes to representatives of a different MS in alphabetical order (ES 2016e).

The ESS has been recently working on improving pedagogical quality, mainly in the areas of marking and curriculum design. First, the ESS is successfully moving away **from a content-based to competence-based approach** in learning – specifically through the embedding of the eight key competences in the school syllabi¹⁸ (ES 2018e, EP 2021).

Figure 4: Eight key competences.



Source: ES (2021f), New marking system in the Secondary cycle.

Secondly, **a new marking system** in the secondary cycle was introduced starting from 2018. The new marking system contains 7 rather than 10 levels. During the primary cycle as well as the first three years of the secondary cycle, letters are still used for marking to have a more holistic approach. From S4 onwards, whole and half-numerical marks are used while the overall final mark of year 7 is expressed with whole numbers and two decimals (ES 2018). The grades as well as performance indicators are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of the performance indicators of the new marking system of the ES.

Grade (S1-S3)	Numerical Mark (S4-S6)	Numerical mark	Numerical mark	Performance Indicator
		1 decimal S7 Preliminary Mark	2 decimals S7 Final Mark	
A	10, 9.0-9.5	9.0-10	9.00-10	Excellent
B	8.0-8.5	8.0-8.9	8.00-8.99	Very good
C	7.0-7.5	7.0-7.9	7.00-7.99	Good
D	6.0-6.5	6.0-6.9	6.00-6.99	Satisfactory
E	5.0-5.5	5.0-5.9	5.00-5.99	Sufficient
F	3.0-4.5	3.0-4.9	3.00-4.99	Failed (Weak)
FX	0-2.5	0-2.9	0.00-2.99	Failed (Very weak)

Source: ES (2018), Marking system of the European Schools.

At the same time, a Pedagogical Reform WG of the PDU had been working on changing and improving other educational aspects. This included continuous work on a reform of the ESS Curriculum and

¹⁸ The eight key competences include: literacy competence; multilingual competence; mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering; digital competence; personal, social and learning to learn competence; civic competence; entrepreneurship competence; cultural awareness and expression competence (ES 2018e).

developing actions and guidelines for shifting towards a competence-based approach. Overall, the Pedagogical Reform WG focused on the following priorities in the 2020/2021 school year:

- Implementation of common harmonised planning as part of the Reform of the ES Curriculum.
- Developing proposals for strengthening the eight key competences including the civic competence and the European values.
- Introducing the Host Country Language in the L2 group and Introducing L3 in primary cycle years 4-5 (the first proposal was approved while the second proposal has not been approved and will be revisited) (ES 2020c).

In addition, some of the ES participated in the PISA assessments, with the 2015 and 2018 PISA Feedback being available as of the moment of drafting this study. The feedback is based on a selection of 15-year-old students and their abilities “to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges” (OECD 2021). The PISA assessments are administered by the OECD. The 2015 and 2018 assessments in the context of the ESS, however, were broader in scope and were not limited to a measurement of specific subject knowledge. Specifically, the 2018 PISA Feedback gave individual Schools an overview of the competences and learning-related attitudes of the students, including:

- Distribution of students across PISA proficiency levels in Reading, Mathematics and Science.
- Sense of belonging to the school.
- Students’ perceptions of teaching in PISA test language lessons (English, French, German).
- Experiences with bullying (PISA 2018).

The PISA for Schools data has been regarded and used by the ESS to offer an additional source of “objective external data” that has been collected by an external programme rather than by ESS internal inspectors (Lewis 2019). Thus, this tool provides an international perspective by supplying evidence on the level of the ESS education quality within a broader international picture (Ibid), and could also help to benchmark individual Schools in the internal ESS context.

2.2.4. European dimension of the curriculum

Apart from general educational objectives (such as the provision of high-quality education), the ESS aims to foster the spirit of European citizenship (ES 2021). Therefore, one of the most special and distinguishable characteristics that reverberates through school activities, the curricula, and the ES ethos is **the focus on the European dimension and identity**. The term “European dimension”, as cited by Savvides, appeared for one of the first times in the 1973 Janne report “For a Community Policy in Education”, stating that there should be a European dimension in education wherever possible (Savvides 2008). However, the report did not mention a particular definition of the concept. The definition appeared in 1988 in a Council of Ministers of Education resolution stating that the European dimension should:

“(…)strengthen in young people a sense of European identity and make clear to them the value of European civilization and of the foundations on which the European peoples intend to base their development today, that is, in particular, the safe-guarding of the principles of democracy, social justice, and human rights. (Council of Ministers of Education, 1988).”

The goal is also relevant through the prism of the European Education Area (EEA)¹⁹ goals and involves defining corresponding European values and pursuing relevant activities. An awareness among pupils of their European citizenship is fostered by teaching Europe-specific knowledge (e.g., common European history).

These and similar topics are taught through “European Hours” where students from different national sections are taught together as Europeans (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018, ES 2021d). “European Hours” take place during the primary cycle of studies. Their syllabus aims to “develop knowledge and to foster in pupils an awareness of their national and European heritage (present and past) and identity, together with a global awareness and a respect and care for the rights and beliefs of others in order to create tolerant and caring members of society” (ES 2016g). Furthermore, visible signs and the displays of different countries are placed in school facilities (ES 2006).

The European dimension is not always very explicit in the schools' programme and day-to-day work due to its soft and more abstract nature, but it is extremely important. While teachers might not necessarily think about it all too regularly when delivering their courses, it still works in unseen ways. The most prominent example of this approach that merges the European dimension and cultural identities is presented via **language acquisition since an early age**. The ES aim to develop high linguistic standards by providing basic instruction in all official EU languages as well as extensive foreign language courses. Subjects such as history and geography are acquired in a foreign language.

Furthermore, the language approach foresees that “pupils work across language sections and form friendships across language sections” (ES 2006). For example, children from different sections are put into one class for music or art. In addition, L2 and L3 classes (including CLIL classes) are composed of pupils from several different language sections.

The focus on European identity should not be misinterpreted as losing a pupil's unique cultural identity. On the contrary, one of the objectives of the ES is to cultivate all pupils' **sense of their own cultural identities and their uniqueness** (ES 2021). It is stated that “the European Schools is committed to giving pupils confidence in their own cultural identity as an integral part of their development as European citizens” (ES 2019i). Thus, the European dimension and pupils' own cultural identities can be viewed as two interlinked pillars of the school ethos, and different school activities are connected to either one of them or, in an ideal situation, these core values have been merged.

2.2.5. Integration of sustainability concepts

The ESS has begun to integrate various sustainability concepts in its teaching and educational objectives (ES 2021c). In 2016, the Joint Teaching Committee granted a new mandate and set up a WG to analyse how sustainable development has already been implemented in the curricula and how education for sustainable development could be further fostered (ES OSG PDU, 2020). Efforts made in this area are also driven by the students themselves (e.g. there was an initiative by the Student Union of the European Schools to develop a programme on sustainability in cooperation with a Swedish expert) (CoSup 2021).

The current objectives in relation to the education for sustainable development have been defined as follows:

- Make sustainable development visible in primary and secondary pedagogical content.
- Make initiatives taken at the local level visible in all cycles.

¹⁹ For more information, please see: https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en.

- Develop proposals concerning the strengthening of civic competences and the European dimension.
- Envisage an event that showcases sustainable development.
- Draw up a sustainable development charter for the involvement of new schools.
- Develop a training offer for teachers (ES 2021p).

Proposals for actions include the spread of information, sharing of good practice examples, and providing in-service training and European networking (Ibid).

Despite a general understanding of the importance of the topic and fragmented efforts to implement the sustainability topic into the curricula of Primary and Secondary cycles, there is a clear need for developing systemic practices and principles for achieving the successful integration of sustainability concepts in a broader scope.

2.2.6. Physical education curriculum

Apart from academic and general knowledge subjects, Physical Education is a part of the compulsory core curriculum both in the primary and secondary education cycles. It is also one of the subjects, together with Art, ICT, and Music, where mixed language groups occur: in the secondary cycle, Physical Education is taught either in L2 (DE, EN, FR) or in the language of the host country (ES 2021d). In general, Physical Education is seen as an integral part of a pupil's overall development, promoting "a wide range of sports activities within a safe and structured environment" (ES 2018h). The lessons take place in gym halls, swimming pools and/or outdoor areas.

The development of social skills (like fair play, cooperation, tolerance, respect etc.) and cognitive skills (e.g. tactics, rules, body control, health and security aspects) are considered and highlighted in Physical Education teaching at the Primary level (ES 2016b). The contents of Primary Cycle Physical Education are:

- Individual activities: actions to develop different skills such as jumping, bending, throwing etc.;
- Team activities: territorial games, net games, striking and fielding games, dance;
- Swimming (Ibid).

Both formative and summative assessments are provided, based on the overall ES assessment guidelines for the Primary Cycle (Ibid).

The Physical Education syllabus of the Secondary Cycle is built upon the following elements:

- Team sports (basketball, floorball/hockey, volleyball, handball);
- Individual sports (e.g., athletics, gymnastics, a racket sport);
- Complementary activities (may be introduced depending on each school's facilities and include tennis, squash, fitness, rope skipping, beach volleyball, climbing, Nordic walking, orienteering, circus skills etc.) (ES 2018h).

The Secondary cycle syllabus consists of three cycles (S1-S3 constituting Cycle 1, S4-S5 constituting Cycle 2, and S6-S7 constituting Cycle 3). Each cycle is built upon competences gained during previous years. During Cycle 1, an assessment focuses on: participation, effort, progress, performance, and social behaviour (ES 2018h). The assessment during Cycle 2 is composed of two A and B marks. The A mark focuses on participation, effort, progress, and social behaviour. The B mark focuses on a student's performance in all activities linked to the learning objectives. During S7, the preliminary mark (C mark) for the European Baccalaureate is automatically calculated based on the A mark (40%) and the B mark (60%).

Physical education is one of the subjects that has been successfully integrated into the competence-based learning approach in the ESS framework. The primary cycle and the secondary cycle each have a separate syllabus for Physical Education, with the secondary cycle syllabus building on the skills and competences acquired during the primary cycle (Ibid). In competence evaluation, the ESS pays attention not only to complex motor skills, the health and fitness of pupils, but also to their social and civic competences, playing competence, competitive competence, and culture awareness expression. The level of the competences is gradually built over the previous cycles of physical education.

Besides the main sports curriculum, the ESS also offers extracurricular activities such as the Eurosport competition, where athletes from all ES participate (ES 2016i). The competition is hosted by different Schools biannually. Since 2017, participants from AES are also invited to the Eurosport events. Each team consists of a total of 15 boys and 15 girls who are accompanied by a maximum of 4 teachers. The competition takes place in different disciplines such as, among others, basketball, football, table tennis and aquathlon (Ibid). Finally, each school has its own Sports Day organised on a yearly basis, with these activities encouraging not only physical movement and development, but also cultural interaction. Other sports activities depend on the individual initiatives of each school and its Physical Education teachers.

2.3. Operational aspects of the system of the European schools

This section aims to provide an overview of operational aspects related to the ESS that play a significant role at different levels of the system, both impacting and simultaneously involving the governance level, parents, and students, as well as EU institutions that are partners within the ESS. The section includes a review of ESS identity, as well as an outline of the most relevant horizontal operational aspects that have a direct impact on the functioning of the ESS. These factors include the chosen governance model, staff hiring procedures, funding, as well as students' well-being. These aspects, when examined as part of one system, must provide a broad overview of how the ESS operates, highlighting its strengths, as well as revealing areas for improvement.

2.3.1. Identity of the ESS: Mission and objectives

The mission of the schools and relevant legal framework of the ESS have remained largely unchanged ever since the first days of the ESS foundation – despite the ever-changing external environment of the system. The mission of the ES is “to provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils. They are aimed primarily at children of the staff of European institutions”. However, as demand for the education provided by the ESS has been growing, it has been expanded by the BoG to “provide all pupils with a multilingual broad education of high quality from early education to secondary school, and to equip upper secondary students for adult life and to form a basis for further learning²⁰” (ES 2020c).

In line with this mission, ES have two main **objectives**: (1) to provide a formal education, involving the acquisition of competences, and (2) to encourage students' personal development in a wider social and cultural context (ES 2021c, ES 2018h). The operation of the ESS is defined by both its initial purpose and mission, as well as by the above-mentioned objectives. Eleven more detailed objectives have been also laid out in line with the overall identity of the ESS:

- Give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – the bedrock for their development as European citizens.

²⁰ The expanded mission stated can be found in the Annual Activity Report 2020 of the Office of the Secretary-General: <https://www.eurisc.eu/Documents/2021-02-D-5-en-3.pdf>

- Provide a broad education of high quality, from nursery level to university-entrance.
- Develop high standards in the mother tongue and in foreign languages.
- Develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout the whole period of schooling.
- Encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of the human sciences²¹.
- Encourage creativity in music and the plastic arts and an appreciation of all that is best in a common European artistic heritage.
- Develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities.
- Offer pupils professional guidance on their choice of subjects and on career/university decisions in the later years of secondary school.
- Foster tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond.
- Cultivate pupils' personal, social, and academic development and to prepare them for the next stage of education.
- Provide Education for Sustainable Development with a cross curriculum approach in line with European and international documents (ES 2021y).

It should also be noted that external changes in society outside of the immediate learning environment of ES are significantly impacting both the schools' identity and the European dimension of the curriculum taught there. The range of these developments is quite broad and includes the continuation and deepening of European integration; changes in and implementation of the EU's enlargement policy; a new digitalisation drive; an increased demand for sustainability, diversity, and inclusion; as well as transformations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3.2. Governance system of the ESS

EU institutions play a crucial role in fostering and supporting the ESS across MSs. Their involvement is more specifically related to matters of financing and supervision, while some institutions also undertake advisory functions. The direct involvement of all MSs is also a specific feature of the ESS governance model.

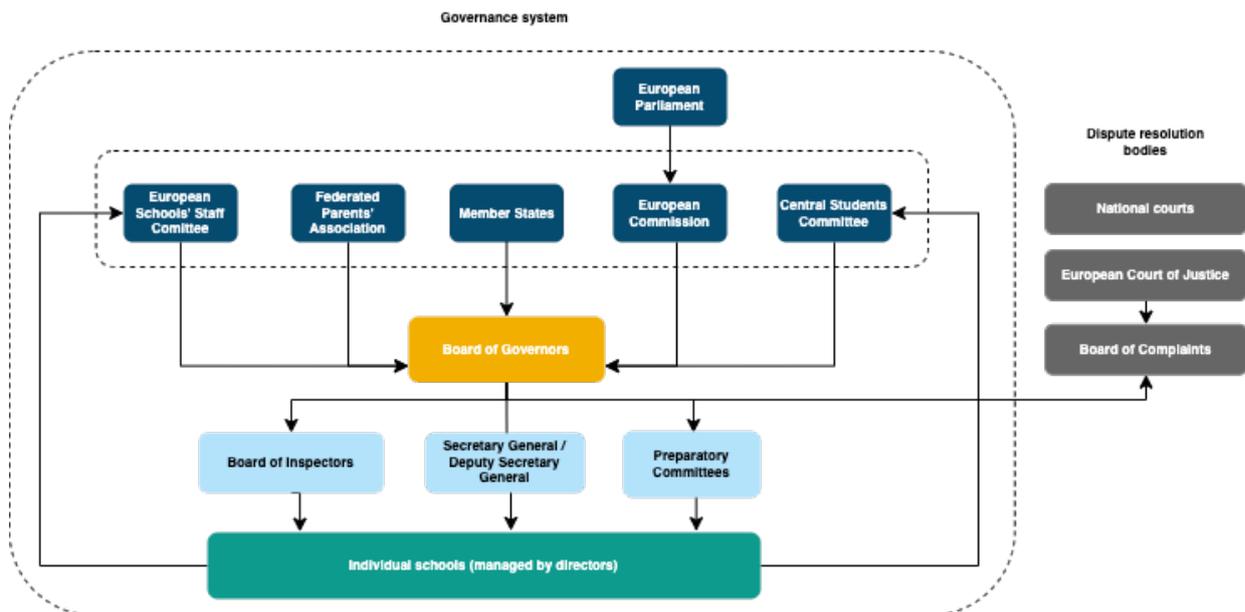
- **The European Parliament** (EP) and its CULT Committee are responsible for “the promotion of the system of European schools and lifelong learning” (EP 2021a). The EP also has supervisory and advisory functions in administering the ESS as evidenced by the 2011 EP Resolution (also known as the Cavada report) and exchange of views sessions regularly conducted with ESS stakeholders. One of the competences of the EP is to approve the EU budget after EU institutions have drafted their estimates (EP 2021b). Since the EC and other EU institutions are a significant contributor of the ES budget, the EP has the right to express its position on it before it is approved.
- In matters of financing, the key player is **the EC**. At the same time, other European institutions and agencies also provide financial support. EC financial contributions constitute more than half of the total ESS budget (ES 2020b, ES2021y) (see [section 2.3.4.](#) for more details on the financing model).
- **MS**, in turn, are responsible for key administrative and organisational aspects, such as seconding teachers according to the number of teaching posts each MS has been allocated to

²¹ Human Sciences is an integrated approach to the humanities, with the core subjects being Geography and History (ES 2017d). An example of a Syllabus for Human Sciences – Secondary cycle (S1-S3): <https://www.eursc.eu/Syllabuses/2017-04-D-1-en-2.pdf>

fill, and financing of ES by paying their teachers' national salaries. They also provide and maintain the infrastructures for schools on their territory.

- The ESS executive organ is **the BoG**, which represents a variety of European and national stakeholders (see Figure 5). The BoG meets twice a year (in December and in April). Meetings are also attended by the two Chairs of the Joint Board of Inspectors and the Chair of the Budgetary Committee, a representative of the Directors, and a representative of AAS (Administrative and Ancillary Staff). When the BoG is not in session, its powers are exercised by its officially appointed SG.

Figure 5: Governance system of ES.

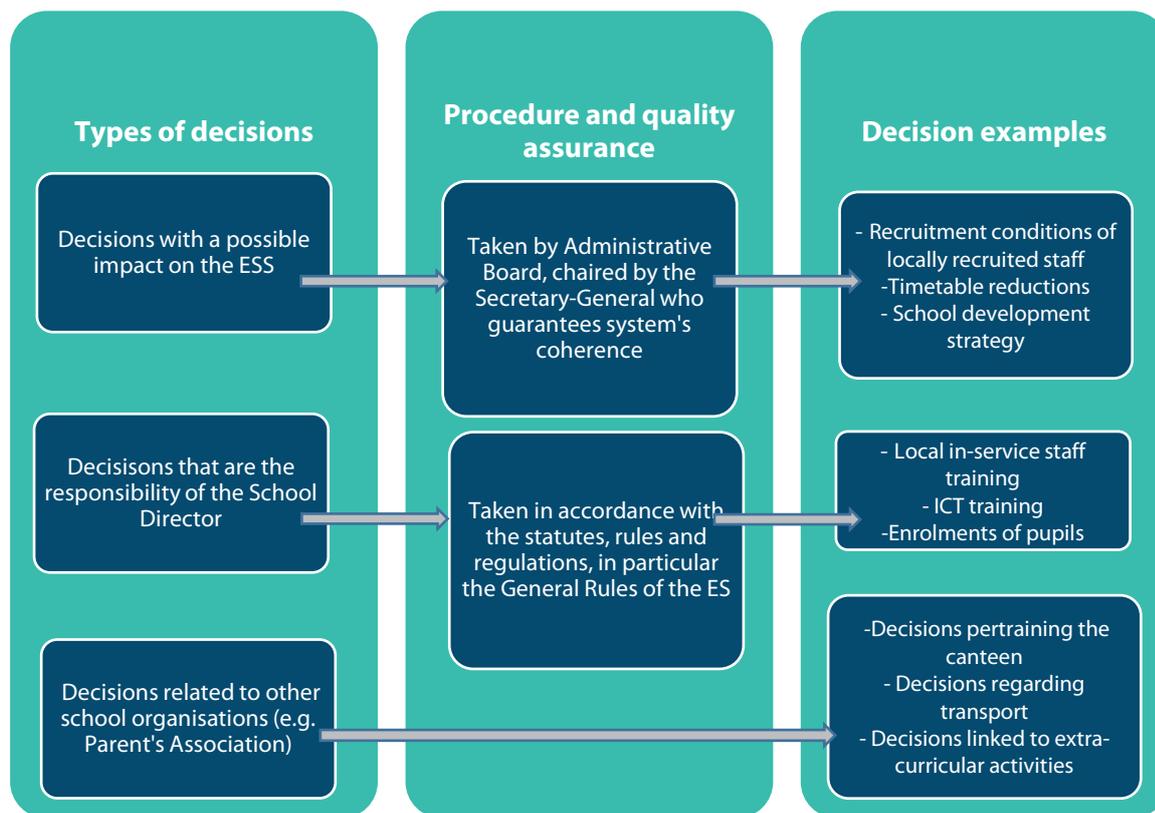


Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), based on: ES (2021) Administrative Bodies of the European School; EU (1994). Convention defining the statute of the European Schools.

The BoG is the central element of a rather complex governance model, which is depicted in Figure 5. The BoG deals with the overall pedagogical, strategic, and policy questions that are related to the ESS. The BoG decides on the statutes and regulations, policies regarding ES and the accreditations of AES (ES 2021h).

While the BoG is still the central element of the governance model of the ESS, its role changed after the 2009 Reform of the ESS. Decisions to be taken by the School Advisory Council and the Administrative Board were specified in the Reform. Therefore, if compared to the time prior to the reform, more autonomy has been granted to traditional ES in terms of governance (ES 2009). This autonomy impacts pedagogical, administrative, and financial aspects, where a wide range of decisions can be taken locally without a need to refer back to the BoG (Ibid).

Figure 6 shows that the ES governance autonomy refers to a wide range of questions from smaller decisions impacting day-to-day activities to broader ones that may have an effect within the whole ESS.

Figure 6: Examples representing ES autonomy in decision-making after the 2009 Reform.

Source: Reform of the European Schools System (2009).

Note: Decisions on enrolment in Brussels ES are not taken by the Director but the Central Enrolment Authority (CEA).

Governance at the central level (i.e., through the BoG and OSG) was transformed into a source of support and evaluation of results. Certain standards (e.g. introducing a child protection policy to be adopted in all ES or setting guidelines for the provision for educational support) are also adapted at the central level rather than in individual Schools, depending on the current issues and priorities of the ESS, while separate ES must ensure their fulfilment.

2.3.3 The role of EU institutions and MSs in the governance model of the ESS

While the governance system has been clearly set out and its functioning has even been adjusted over time, as in the 2009 Reform of the ESS, the *sui generis* character of the system has also been causing some challenges in the decision-making process. It has affected various aspects of the ESS ranging from grading standards to infrastructure (EP 2011).

While financially supported by EU institutions, the ESS is still dependent on MSs in both certain logistical and organisational matters and the financial support that comes with teacher secondment. A school's infrastructure is also an aspect that is largely impacted by the role of the MS where it is located: since school buildings are maintained by host countries, it is often impossible to solve the issue of overcrowding without the direct support of the hosting MS.

Another key aspect of decision-making that has been laid out in the Convention (EU 1994) is the unanimity requirement of the BoG regarding particular decisions, such as:

- Establishing new Schools in agreement with the hosting MS;
- Modification of the official status of teachers;
- Statute of the Complaints Board;

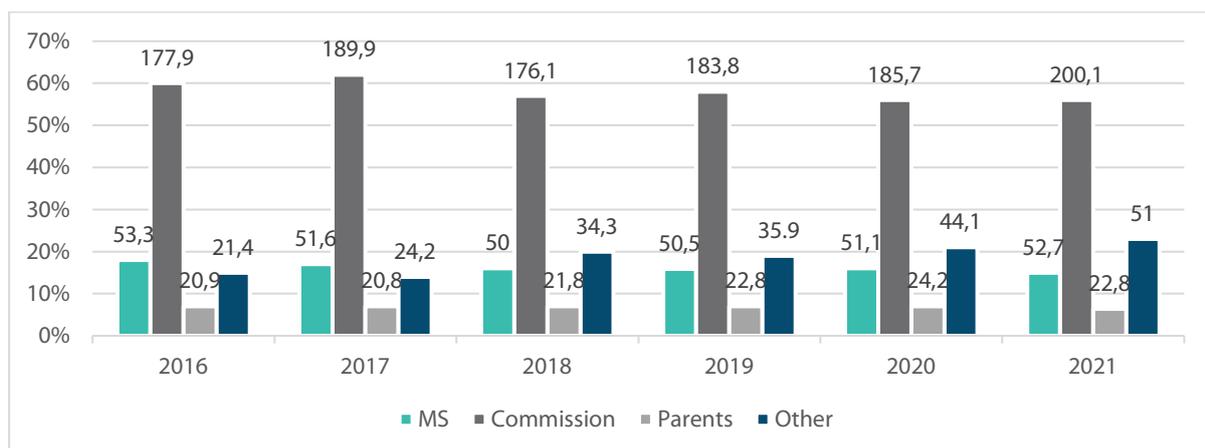
- Financial contribution to a School’s budget.

All partners who are represented in the BoG must reach complete agreement regarding each of these questions to be able to move forward with a decision. Thus, representatives of the MSs play a crucial role in the BoG structure, wielding veto power over some crucial matters (e.g. the opening of a new school). In that respect, the lack of more proactive EC involvement in the ESS policy agenda has been criticised ever since the publication of the Cavada report (EP 2011), raising the question of whether the BoG is indeed the best way of managing the ESS. The Cavada report itself noted that the EC is involved in financial issues only and should be more proactive in matters of management (Ibid). For example, in point 26, the EP “invites the Commission, before deciding on any budgetary changes, in cooperation with the schools and parent/teacher associations, to draw up an impact assessment of the various options for rationalisation of the system, including examining the educational aspects” (Ibid). Civil society organisations have also been calling upon the EC to lead the process of adopting a policy on inclusive education, developing teacher training, introducing flexibility in the curriculum and ensuring that its funding contributes to an inclusive system (HRW 2018).

2.3.4. Financing model of the ESS

The ES budget is composed of various contributions, the largest of which comes from the EC, followed by MSs and parents, as well as EU Agencies and Organisations (see Figure 7 for illustration). A recent trend is that the share of other contributors such as Agencies and Organisations has been growing since 2016. Thus, in 2021, these institutions contributed with EUR 62.5 million altogether, representing 17.5% of the total budget revenue (ES 2021u).

Figure 7: Changes in the budget contributions to the ES (in percentage and million €) 2016-2021.



Source: ES (2021e) (2021u), Data on Budget Implementation. Data exclude surplus carried forward and use of reserve fund.

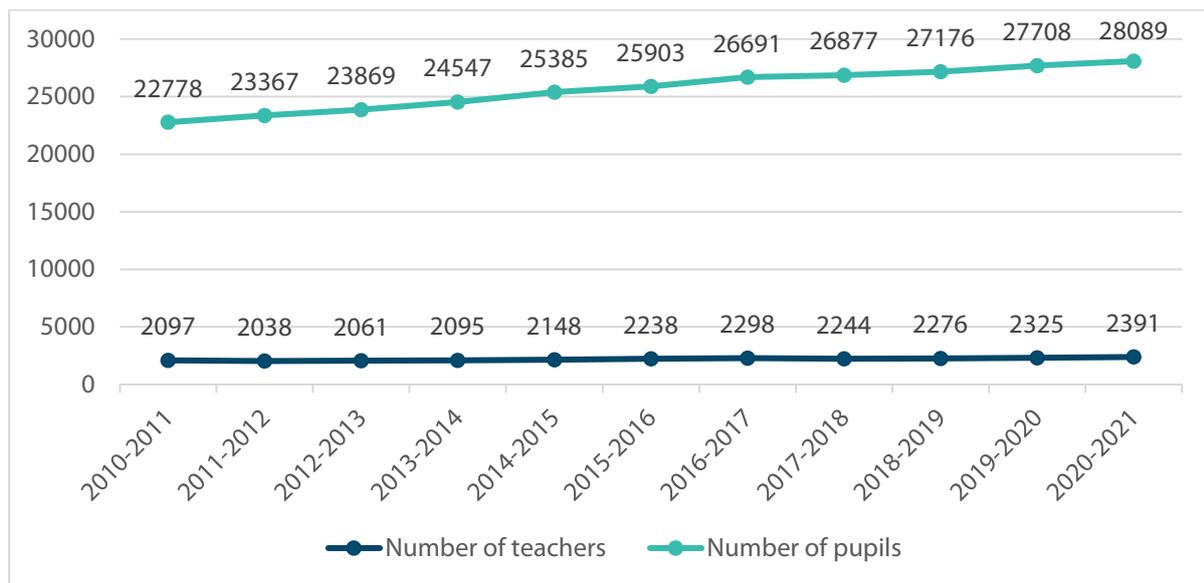
Figure 7 also reveals that parents’ contributions are still a significant source of revenue, since ES are open not only to children of officials who work for the EU institutions (Category I) but also the children of employees of other organisations (Category II) and children who do not belong to categories I and II (Category III). Overall, there has been a need to increase the budget by approximately 3-4% each year since 2018 due to the rise of staff expenditures (ES 2019a, ES 2020h). The contribution from the EU budget bridges the gap between expenditure needs and all available sources (ES 2021u).

Other sources of budget contributions include the ‘solidarity levy’ on salaries from members of seconded staff (EUR 2.1 million in 2021), contributions from Accredited European Schools (EUR 0.9 million in 2021) and from European School Munich (EUR 1.1 million in 2021) to the expenditures of the Office of the Secretary General (ES 2021u).

The described budget framework and its procedures refer only to ES, while the AES operates financially outside of this system. Moreover, in the beginning of 2020's financial year, a decision of cost neutrality came into force, according to which the accreditation costs of AES shall be covered by either the country that hosts AES or AES themselves, in accordance with the internal agreement between the country and AES (ES 2020f).

There are some issues of financing that are interrelated with the area of expansion of the ESS (see below). First, there is a chronic lack of staff resources in the ESS (EP 2021). Figure 8 represents the dynamics between the growth of the number of teachers and pupils. While both the number of pupils and the number of teachers has been growing during the last 10-year period, it can be observed that the student population grows much faster compared to the growth of the teacher and support staff population.

Figure 8: Growth of the number of pupils and seconded staff and locally recruited teachers (full-time equivalent) 2010-2021.



Source: ES (2010; 2011; 2012c; 2013d; 2014c; 2015b; 2016d; 2017b; 2018a; 2019a; 2020a). Facts and figures at the beginning of school years 2010/2011 – 2020/2021.

This results in a lack of resources for support in other key areas such as addressing the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) or pupils' safeguarding. One of the key underlying factors is that burden sharing between the EU and MSs has not achieved its goals set with the MSs to take over 65% of full-time teacher positions (ES 2019b, EP 2021). In the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year there were 1,208 seconded teachers in the ES, constituting 50,5% of the total teaching staff (ES 2020a). Thus, the ESS must spend more of the EC budget on locally recruited teachers, which decreases the budget available for teaching materials, facilities development, and other activities. The situation with the schools' ICT infrastructure is an illustrative example here since it has been underfunded for years (EP 2021).

2.2.5. Staff recruitment

The staff recruitment process can be broadly divided into two parts:

- Secondment of teaching staff by the governments of the MSs;
- Local recruitment of teaching staff (ES 2021a).

Secondment of the teaching staff refers to the assignment of a staff member from a national school to an ES/AES for a temporary period by the national government, with salary and other expenses covered by the seconding MS. It is carried out by unified regulations that determine the recruitment process, the rights and obligations of the staff, and further matters that are linked to human resources management (ES 2021c). The following steps are taken during the teacher secondment process:

- Each year the BoG, acting on a proposal from the Administration Boards, assesses current staff requirements and creates or eliminates posts for teaching staff (EU 1994).
- All MSs are then given a fair allocation of posts for which they need to second the staff. National authorities of the MSs are responsible for the recruitment process. Usually, the Inspectors of a MS are involved in the appointment process of the seconded teachers. MSs rely on their national methodologies to recruit and second teachers to the ES (ES 2001).
- After the candidates are nominated by the public authorities of MSs, implementation of the Regulations is ensured by School Directors and the Secretary-General. The performance of the seconded teachers is overseen directly by National Inspectors and School Directors (ES 2021).
- The seconded teachers can have contracts that are valid up to a nine-year period but can be extended up to a maximum of 12 years. The contract period is limited with an aim to ensure that teachers are up to date with developments in the national educational systems of their MSs (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b: 89).

Meanwhile, School Directors **ensure the local recruitment** of teachers in certain situations. That includes:

- Recruitment of school year(s) teachers, including:
 - teachers of religion
 - posts where MSs have not yet seconded teachers
 - part-time posts
- Recruitment of *ad interim* teachers for temporary teacher replacement positions in the course of a schooling period (ES 2021d).

Seconded and locally recruited teachers differ not only by their recruitment procedures but also by their status within the traditional ES. Regulations for locally recruited teachers state that in case a MS seconded a teacher for a post that is at that moment occupied by a locally recruited teacher, the School's Director shall first try to find another post for the locally recruited teacher within the school or verify the possibility of transfer to another school. However, if this is not possible or the teacher does not accept the offer, the Director shall terminate the contract of the locally recruited teacher by respecting a minimum period of notice of six months (ES 2016f) (even if such a practice is relatively rare and locally recruited teachers are considered stable). Differences in the positions of locally recruited and seconded teachers are further reflected in their salary scales. These tend to be lower for locally recruited teachers because they are not eligible for compensation bonuses and their working hours are often more limited than those of seconded teachers²². While the ES largely rely on the secondment of teachers from the MSs (with the current goal of 65% and actual indicator of 50.5%), this approach sometimes fails to provide the necessary cadres, particularly in the STEM area. Despite established recruitment steps and procedures, the ES staff turnover remains high.

Finally, the AES stand outside the common hiring system of the ES. Each of the AES is responsible for recruiting its own staff and, like ES, open positions are posted on the website of each AES separately

²² See regulations for the locally recruited and seconded staff with their latest amendments here: <https://www.eurisc.eu/BasicTexts/2016-05-D-11-en-8.pdf>;

(ES 2021b). The hiring situation in both types of schools is also impacted by ongoing competition between ES and AES for the best teachers (Prajs 2018). This issue is particularly germane in situations where both types of schools are located in the same city, such as in the case of Luxembourg and Brussels.

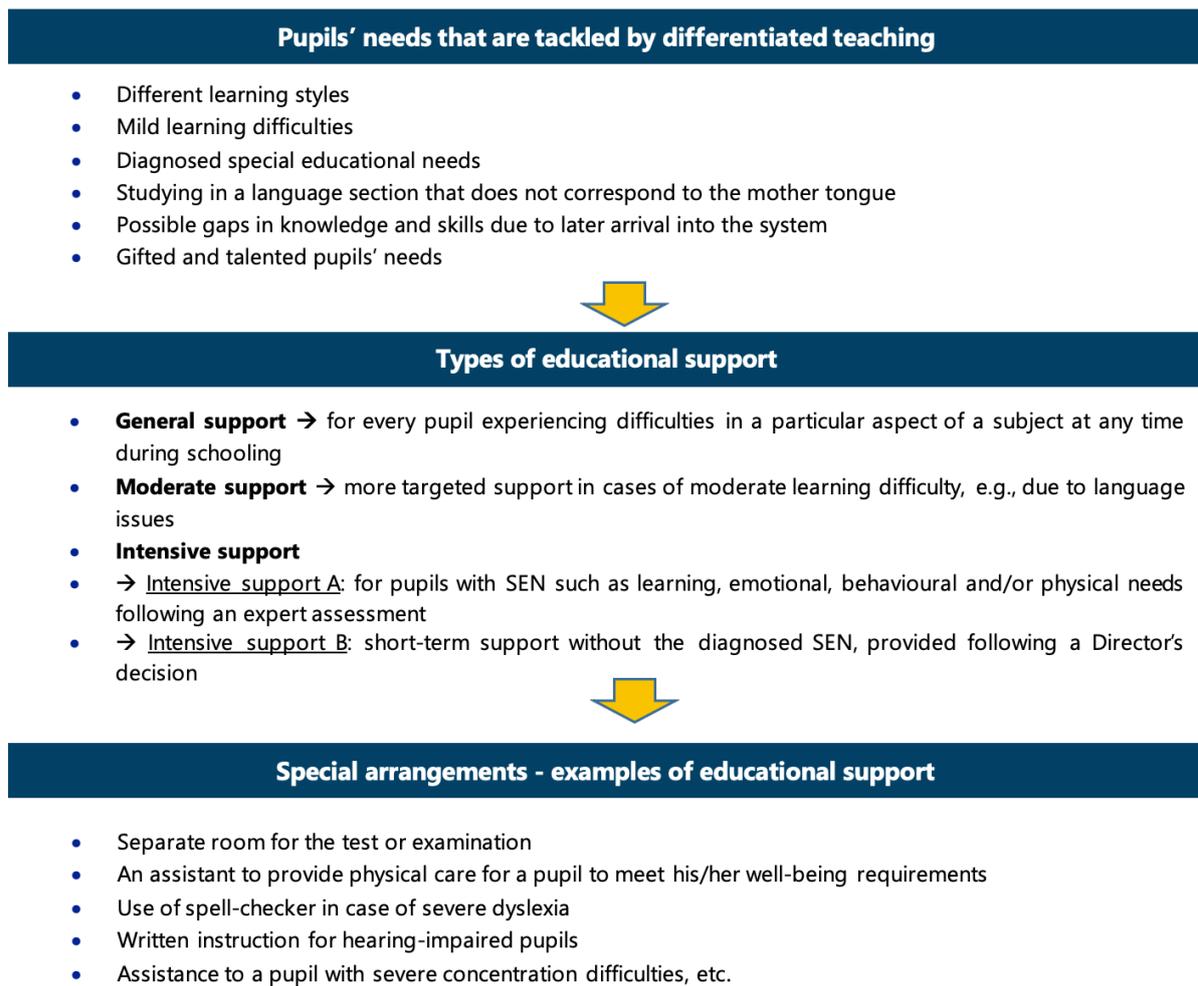
2.3.6. Student well-being

Since the ESS accommodates students from a large and diverse European community, detailed and coherent policies on inclusion and well-being are deemed to be crucial. There has been an especially persistent focus on inclusion policies in the domains of language and citizenship (Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b: 96). However, it is considered essential for an inclusive school to consider a far broader range of factors, such as its educational environment, learning needs, and intellectual and physical disabilities (Inclusion Europe 2019). This area is also a focus of attention by other European institutions. For example, in 2008, the Ombudsman identified that action was needed in the area of the ESSs' treatment of children with special learning needs and disabilities (EU Ombudsman 2008).

Thus, in response to the need to provide a more inclusive learning environment, new regulations were introduced in 2012 to be implemented for the provision of educational support in ES (ES 2012b)²³. These regulations aim to highlight steps and rules on how adequate educational support should be provided for different pupils. It is largely based on the framework of differentiated teaching. Target student groups who shall receive educational support, the types of support, and its examples are shown in Figure 9.

²³ Provision of Educational Support in the European Schools – Procedural document <https://www.eursec.eu/Documents/2012-05-D-15-en-12.pdf>

Figure 9: Educational support in the ES.



Source: ES (2012b). Educational Support in the European Schools.

Throughout 2018-2019, the Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education (ES 2019j) was discussed and adopted by the BoG. Since the start of its implementation in 2020, the Plan's results and impacts are not yet entirely clear²⁴. However, as stated above, the Agency of Inclusive Education is currently performing an external evaluation of the implementation of the afore-mentioned Action Plan which aims to make a thorough examination of the performance and effectiveness of the actions and measures detailed in the Action Plan (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education).

2.3.7. Growth and expansion of the ESS

The expansion of the ESS was intended to dynamically adapt to EU citizens' demand and needs. Initially, it was assumed that in the future more ES could be opened in other MSs (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b: 77). However, in practice, opening new ES has suffered a crisis due to the following major reasons:

- EU enlargements and new needs and requests from parents regarding language acquisition (e.g. opening new language sections for smaller languages), which makes the process of opening new Schools more complex.

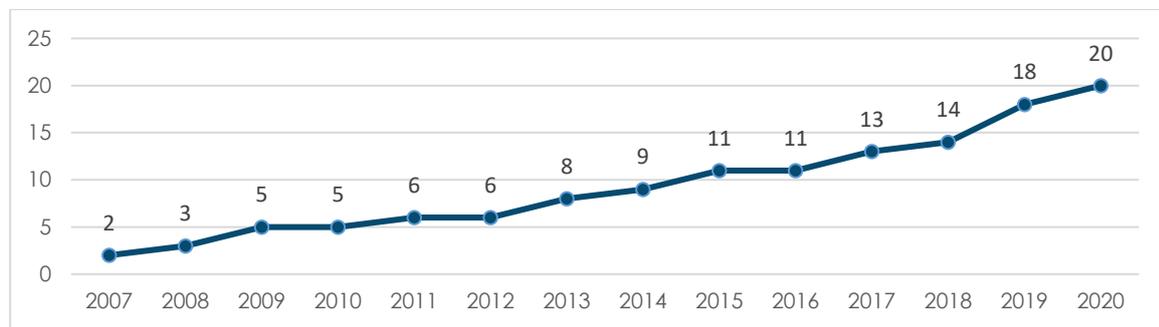
²⁴ According to the vice-SG, interim evaluation of the Plan's implementation is scheduled for 2021-2022.

- Parents from some countries wanting children to learn in English or French rather than in their mother tongue.
- Complications with the accreditation process (e.g., the slow process of accreditation and ensuring quality assurance procedures of the AES).

Therefore, wider availability of the EB and ES has been a long-standing problem with the 2005 and 2011 EP resolutions calling for wider access (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018). Moreover, parents across MSs have continuously expressed their desire to educate their children within the ESS, including parents who do not work for European institutions (Leaton Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018b: 77).

To increase the availability of the EB, the 2009 Reform of the ESS started the “opening up” of the ESS to other pupils of MS as one of the key points for future development (ES 2009). With that, the process of establishing AES and making EB more accessible to a wider public could begin. Thanks to the opening of new AES as well as new buildings being lent to some of the ES/AES, the problem was partially alleviated in several MS. The number of AES across MSs has grown from just 2 in 2007 to 20 in 2021 (for more specific dynamics see Figure 10). The growing number of students both within the ES and AES (ES 2020c) shows that the approach of the ESS strongly appeals to parents when choosing education paths for their children.

Figure 10: Number of open AES (either accredited or in the accreditation process).



Source: ES (2020), Accredited European Schools data.

Nevertheless, the process of opening new ES is slow. This is explained by several reasons including the complicated nature of the decision-making process at the governance level, the need to negotiate with the respective MSs, as well as administrative and financial issues (see [the section on growth](#) for more details). The number of ES has remained at 13 since 2007 despite a growing number of AES. The next ES opening is currently scheduled for 2028 (EP 2021).

2.3.8. Conclusions

While it is important to understand the individual significance of the horizontal and vertical aspects discussed in this chapter, it is also crucial to keep in mind that they are closely interlinked and symbiotic, each of them leaving an impact on other parts of the system. For example, improvements in such areas as inclusion and education on sustainability are closely impacted by both local school initiatives and the decisions and development of new regulations at the central governance level. Meanwhile, secondment rules and the current staff situation involving both ES and AES have an impact on different players in the system, involving MSs and teachers, and also have a direct impact on pupils’ educational processes and their learning environment. Several domains, such as a student’s well-being and the current implementation of L1, L2, L3 and L4 in the curricula need to be revisited as the ESS keeps expanding. A changing world also impacts the system, which means that some aspects such as sustainability or an understanding of European Identity are highly impacted by broader changes.

3. EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE ESS

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall, the educational system established within the ESS has been functioning rather well, although potential improvements in the areas of pedagogical quality assurance, language learning, and education for sustainable development are relevant.
- Individual Schools generate many good practices in the educational area such as, for example, didactic and learning materials or new formats of extracurricular events or learning methods (e.g. CLIL method). However, these do not always reach other ES/AES and so, they should be documented more thoroughly and better disseminated.
- Both teachers and parents point to the need to establish a system of continuous professional development to ensure constant improvement in pedagogical quality of the provided education, its European dimension, and in language learning.
- The COVID-19 pandemic significantly undermined teaching and administrative processes, also because the ESS heavily relies on extracurricular activities. However, a positive side-effect was an increase in the pace of digitalisation within the ESS.

3.1. Pedagogical quality assurance

The following section examines questions related to the pedagogical quality assurance system currently in place within the ESS. Specifically, it not only reports on the current overall situation in pedagogical quality assurance, but also investigates separate elements of the system. Specifically, these include the existing institutional framework; the implementation of a competence-based approach (see [the relevant section 2.2.3](#) for more details) and a new marking system for the secondary cycle; as well as issues of teachers' professional development and accountability. The section highlights the main good practices and challenges for the improvement of pedagogical quality assurance in the ESS.

3.1.1. Assessment of the overall situation by stakeholders

On the whole, the situation with pedagogical quality assurance is somewhat mixed since **there are, on the one hand, positive elements and good practices and, on the other, specific areas where improvements can be made.** As the survey of ESS stakeholders demonstrates (see Table 8 and

Table 9), more than half of the respondents positively or very positively view the marking and assessment system that is in place (although students express a less positive sentiment compared to other stakeholders). A similar share of respondents demonstrates a positive assessment of ESS teaching and learning practices. Approximately the same share of respondents sees both areas as potential sources of good practices for individual Schools. This seems to resonate with arguments made about the system's effectiveness in academic and 'grey' literature regarding the high-level of performance of ES students in standardised PISA tests (Lewis 2019) as well as their improving scores on the EB exam (see Figure 11 below). Nevertheless, a quarter of non-students and a third of student respondents assessed the quality of teaching and learning as "neither good nor bad". Almost a third of both respondent types did so for the quality of marking and assessment. This also reflects the uncertainty of

the surveyed and interviewed respondents about ongoing changes in the implementation of a competence based-approach and pedagogical professional development.

Table 8: Survey results: assessment of the pedagogical quality assurance by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of marking and assessment	406	9.4	1551	35.9	1337	31.0	589	13.7	178	4.1
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of teaching and learning	563	13.0	1841	42.6	1092	25.3	569	13.2	179	4.1

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of all stakeholders. N=4320 for the first row; 4315 for the second; NAs and "Do not know" excluded

Table 9: Survey results: assessment of the pedagogical quality assurance by students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The way teachers assess students at the school	61	11.0	145	26.1	195	35.1	99	17.8	39	7.0
The way teachers teach students at the school	58	10.5	179	32.3	188	33.9	74	13.3	26	4.7

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of secondary cycle students. N=555 for both rows; NAs and "Do not know" excluded.

3.1.2. Implementation of the competence-based approach and of the new marking system

Transitioning to a competence-based approach in learning is one of the largest pedagogical developments in the ESS in the past decade (for more details and a description of the competence-based approach, please see Figure 4 and the respective [sub-section 2.2.3](#)). In-depth interviews with OSG representatives, parents, students, and inspectors confirm that introducing a competence-based learning approach was seen by many of them as a move in the right direction. As one of the parents' representatives put it: *"A competence-based approach is completely different from the traditional one – it tells the pupil and parents what they need to do in order to get a high mark. Thus, it helps children to grow and improve. This is a move in the right direction also in terms of feedback and measuring progress as well as harmonisation across the subjects and sections"*. This argument was also supported both by School Directors and representatives of the OSG. The positive aspect of introducing a competence-based approach together with the new marking system, according to one of the interviewed teachers, allows students to benefit from healthy feedback as well as to better benchmark themselves in terms of their previous performance (e.g. understand in what specific areas/competences they have improved).

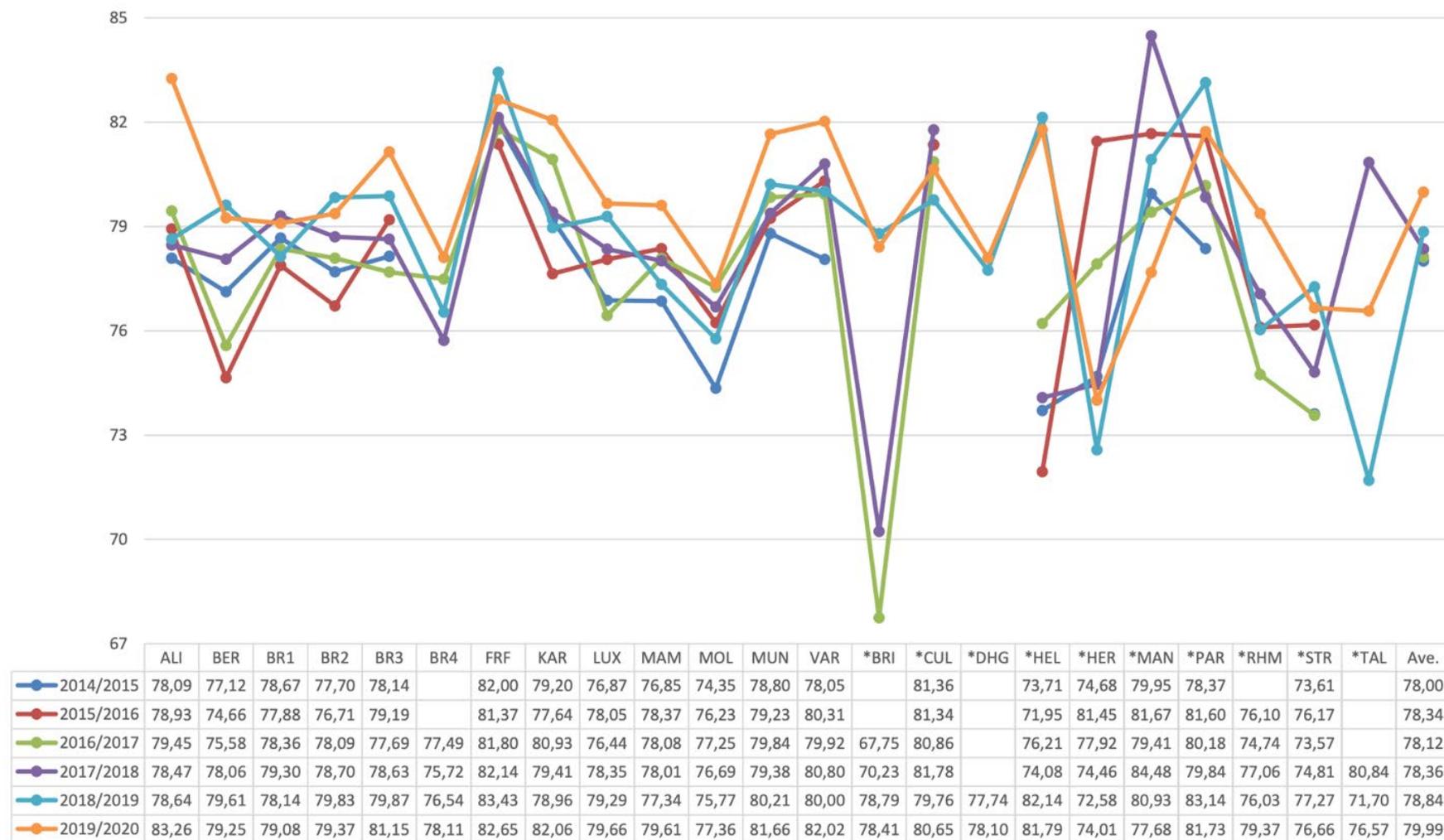
This transition has also greatly helped the ongoing process of syllabi²⁵ harmonisation. This was a long-term goal of the ESS even before the introduction of the competence-based system, but the reform has significantly fostered the process. All the syllabi must be based on the same structure and must integrate the eight key competences (ES 2018e), which serve as the key foundation for harmonisation. Furthermore, all syllabi must include detailed assessment criteria to justify the marks

²⁵ Syllabus (pl. syllabi) is a document that communicates information about a specific academic course or class and defines expectations and responsibilities.

awarded with reference to competence-related skills. The process is still ongoing as of 2021 because some syllabi still need to be updated (e.g. for teaching certain subjects at L3), as was confirmed by the OSG's PDU.

As illustrated by Figure 11, the broader trend (especially in the ES as opposed to AES) shows that there is a steadily growing improvement of the EB results over time, and this correlates with the implementation of a competence-based approach. The patterns in grading across the AES, however, are less clear partly because some of them were accredited only recently with no longitudinal data available for detailed comparison. This is further corroborated by the evidence on the EB examination success rate demonstrated in Figure 12 below. Success rates for the examination have remained similar across all the ES and AES in the past two years, with larger Schools in Brussels and Luxembourg demonstrating a lesser variation in results. It must be noted that the outliers (e.g. AES Helsinki, ES Mol) also have a relatively small student population, which significantly impacts the average success rates.

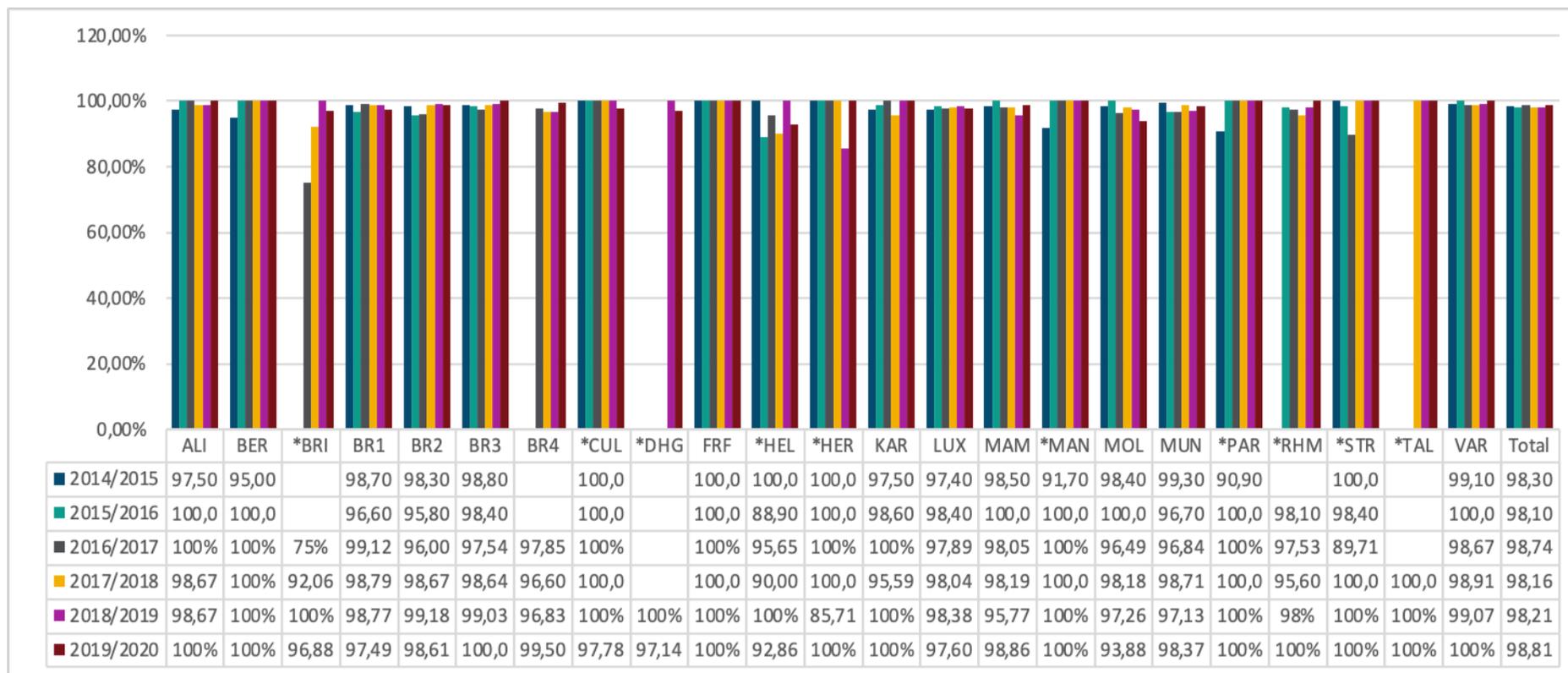
Figure 11: Final EB mark per School between the academic years 2014/2015 and 2019/2020.



Source: ES (2021). Report on European Bacallaureate 2020, available at: <https://www.eursc.eu/Documents/2020-08-D-2-en-5.pdf>

Note: AES are marked with an asterisk (*)

Figure 12: Final EB exam success rate per School between the academic years 2014/2015 and 2019/2020.



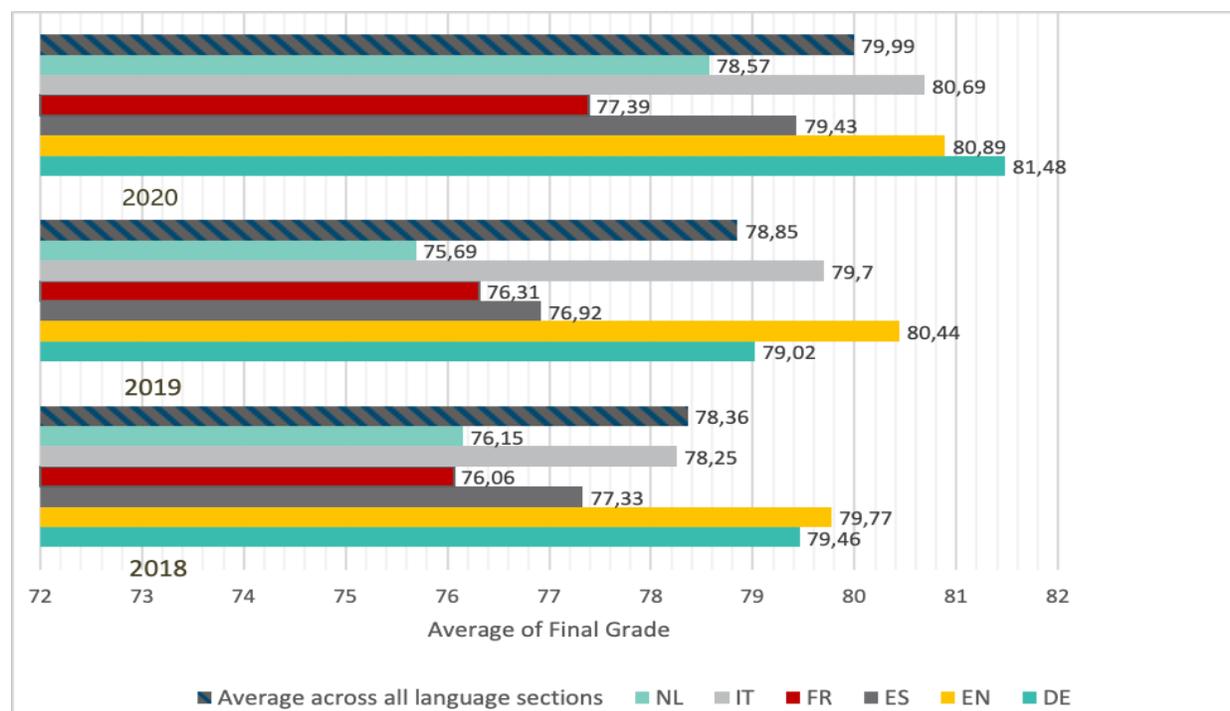
Source: ES (2021), based on the EB Reports 2015-2020.

Note: AES are marked with an asterisk (*)

At the same time, the ongoing process of introducing a competence-based approach along with a new marking system still faces some barriers. The general trend, which might slightly differ from School to School, is that there has been **significant progress on the integration of six competences, but two of them (entrepreneurship and digital competence) are lagging behind according to interviewed students and parents**. This claim was also confirmed by our examination of the existing syllabi. For example, the secondary cycle syllabi on economics and career guidance do not even mention the entrepreneurship competence. While the ICT syllabi perform much better in terms of digital competences integration, in S6-S7, the more advanced ICT classes are only complementary (ES 2021y), and S1-S5 syllabi are criticised by some students and parents as being too basic. Another related problem is that the current competences framework does not integrate topics related to education for sustainable development or ESD, such as green skills (ES 2018e), despite common European commitments to advancing them (EC 2022). ESD topics are only tangentially covered in the syllabi on biology and economy in the secondary cycle. This also highlights the problem of persistent subject boundaries with insufficient inter-subject integration. For more details on the topic of education for sustainable development in the ESS, please see [section 3.5](#).

Another persisting pedagogical challenge that has not yet been solved even after the introduction of the new marking system is that **some language sections (such as French or Dutch) regularly underperform on the EB examinations**. An analysis of statistical data on EB from the largest language sections in years 2018-2020, as represented in Figure 13, shows that the French-language section has continuously had a lower average final grade when compared to the overall average across all language sections. In fact, the difference between the French section and the average of the final grade across all other language sections has even slightly increased from 2,3 in 2018 to 2,6 in 2020. The French section also presents lower results than most of the other comparable language sections with the largest number of EB candidates, such as German, English, Spanish and Italian. It has shown relatively similar results only with the Dutch section. As indicated by in-depth interviews with various stakeholder groups (especially parents associations; Directors; and students) the problem could be connected to a lack of cohesive training on the new marking system as some teachers in these sections may still be discretely applying their national grading standards instead of the ones used by the ES.

Figure 13: Average of the Final EB Grade across all language sections vs. the largest ES language sections in years 2018-2020 (after the implementation of the new marking system and competence-based approach).



Sources: Visionary Analytics (2021). Visualisation based on data from EB reports (2018-2020).

Note: The following selection includes the largest sections only (i.e. German, English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Dutch) to ensure statistical comparability since smaller sections (e.g. Hungarian) have a much smaller size.

Moreover, since **most examinations apart from the EB are still assessed internally, teachers spend much time on marking, which may impede their creativity and autonomy, according to recent studies** (EP 2021). No training by the ESS for external independent experts/markers on using the new system has been provided so far. This was also confirmed by the in-depth interviews with the teachers. Some of them complained that it can be very hard for them to integrate the eight competences into their syllabi and then conceive how to incorporate them in the examination materials because it requires a lot of extra time for administrative work. The situation is even more complex in the AES framework, where additional requirements already exist to ensure pedagogical quality assurance. As indicated above, there are still cases when teachers in different ES/AES, with different national, and thus educational and cultural, backgrounds, disagree on what constitutes a good mark, which results in a systemic underperformance of certain language sections (see Figure 13 above). Currently, the marking system is being partially digitalised through special online software, ViatiqueTM (ES 2018), which may help reduce the teachers' workload, but the process is still ongoing.

Furthermore, in terms of the actual quality of the provided education, it is also impacted by regular teacher absences, which is particularly challenging for children in the primary cycle as evidenced by the open answers analysis of the survey responses. The issue of teacher absenteeism has often been mentioned in combination with the issue of pedagogical quality: *"Too many teachers are not at the level or do not have the required commitment, not to mention terrifying absenteeism"* (translation from French).

The problem stems from ESS staffing problems (see [sub-section 4.3.1](#) for more details) and has become particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to most classes being transferred online.

Additionally, even though the new marking system was designed to ease interpretation for institutions of higher education across Europe, **its implementation also resulted in a temporary devaluation of the EB in several MS**. The problem is that the system needs to be recognised both by national universities and governments when establishing equivalence tables. Unfortunately, some MSs, such as Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, have developed incorrect conversion formulas that failed to guarantee proper equivalence, which results in problems for individual students with recognition of their qualifications (EP 2021). As a result of these technical inconsistencies, the EC has launched infringement procedures against Denmark and Germany and both MSs received a letter of formal notice in June 2021 (EC 2021). As evidenced by the open answers analysis, the issue also causes a lot of distress on both students and parents in respective Member States: *“The New Marking Scale, in particular in Germany and France, put our students in an extremely difficult situation, especially those with the highest BAC averages. The old equivalence table required an average of 90 % for the BAC, which was equal to the German 1.0. The new equivalence table requires an average of 93.75%, which equals to the German 1.0. A 93.75 % is almost impossible to reach, therefore, studies like medicine, psychology or veterinary studies became unreachable for our students”*. While the technical implementation of the equivalence tables lies in the competences of the Member States, EC and representatives of parents’ associations pointed out that some problems in the communication work of the ESS stakeholders could have been done more effectively by approaching and extensively explaining the new system to representatives of the national ministries of education.

Finally, there are some concerns pertaining to the nature of student assessment in the ESS. Specifically, the problem is that **the ESS is a rather exam-centred and very competitive educational system** (Leaton Gray et al 2015), which is also confirmed by the evidence collected from interviews with parents and students. This also poses a challenge for the implementation of a competence-based approach in learning. The existing evidence in the academic literature was also corroborated by an analysis of the survey’s open answers:

- *You see, you all say that everyone needs to relax, eat well, sleep well, go outside, and do something fun during your free time every day, perhaps some hobby. But, of course, we need to do our homework AND study for our tests. How do you all possibly think we have the time to do anything, when we arrive home at around 17.00 p.m. and have a load of work? No, we do not have the time to relax, no we do not have time to go outside, perhaps have a normal amount of sleep, do something fun. I've always been disappointed in the amount of stress education has caused me, it makes me think of nothing else but my grades and my next class. I can't do anything for fun, everything turns into work. (Student)*
- *In my opinion, the European schools mostly care about what's on the system, grades, that kids have high grades and not actually on who they are and what they're capable of. (Student)*
- *Students are overloaded with the number of tests and amount of homework. Very old-fashioned approach to acquiring knowledge. (Parent)*

Some authors argue that this focus on standardised tests (e.g. EB performance; PISA scores) shows contradictory reasoning within the ESS, in which the context-based goal of ‘becoming European’ is juxtaposed with the desire to perform well on test scores (Lewis 2019). This issue was also raised during the in-depth interviews with both parent and student representatives. Specifically, interviewees raised concerns about the system becoming extremely test oriented. This allegedly manifests itself in a very high number of pre-Bac exams and tests aimed at preparing students for the final EB test as well as PISA or standardised tests for university applications when compared to national education systems. The interviewed stakeholders argue that this high number of tests could have potentially negative consequences for both the quality of education provided as well as the mental well-being of the students (also see the [section 4.3.4](#) on student well-being).

3.1.3. Institutional framework of pedagogical quality assurance and teachers’ accountability

The ESS pedagogical quality assurance system has a solid **institutional basis centred on the Quality Assurance and Development in the European Schools document** (ES 2006). The ESS feedback loops for teachers, when compared to national systems, usually involve a wider range of stakeholders – national inspectors, local Directors, and OSG representatives, which allows for a better professional development of teachers, according to interviewed staff members and inspectors. The system also develops various tools that aim at improving the accountability of teachers (as well as that of School management). An example of such a tool is the so-called whole-School inspection (see .

Box 1 below). This good practice could be extensively built upon by actively involving other stakeholders such as parents and students.

Box 1: Good practice: Thematic inspections

The tool of **thematic inspections** was referenced by some interviewed teachers as a good practice that helps to hold School management more accountable, especially in the area of pedagogical quality assurance and also in the implementation of some concrete goals (e.g. related to inclusive education or sustainability). These inspections serve the goal of adopting a cyclical approach to improving the process of quality assurance (planning – implementation – feedback – planning) as referenced by OSG representatives. They also assess a School across various dimensions such as management, teaching and learning, resources, and educational support. That said, the quality of recommendations made in the final report very strongly depends on the inspecting team as was shown by whole-School inspections²⁶.

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), based on in-depth interviews with stakeholders.

Nevertheless, there are still two challenges in this area that must be addressed. Firstly, at the broadest governance level, interviews with some parents and teaching staff show that **certain provisions of the central document (esp. effectiveness measurement indicators)** used for quality assurance (titled “Quality Assurance and Development in the European Schools”) **cause a degree of confusion**. This is also corroborated by the concerns related to pedagogical quality expressed in previous evaluations. For

²⁶E.g. see the following report which makes very broad and vague recommendations/general points such as “Management should take firm decisions and implement them”.

example, the evaluation of a proposal on the organisation of secondary studies from 2015 states that the "*absence of discussion about the quality of teaching seems to covertly place the responsibility for the drop-out rates on the current organisation of studies and students, and not on teaching*" (Leaton Gray, et al. 2015)²⁷. The Quality Assurance and Development in the European Schools document covers an exhaustive list of areas (namely School ethos; School climate; curriculum and organisation; management and administration; teaching; learning; professional development; resources for learning; links with parents and external agencies; and School-level evaluations). It also establishes a clear list of criteria for each of these areas (ES 2006). However, at the level of effectiveness indicators, some of the provisions of the document can be ambiguous and provide too much room of interpretation (e.g. "adequate number of rooms of appropriate size" with both of the terms "adequate" and "appropriate" remaining unclear). The other problem is that the existing quality assurance system has not been fully updated to reflect some ongoing societal trends. This includes the recent digitalisation drift; a need for better inclusiveness and openness (incl. for the children of ancillary staff); and questions related to environmental sustainability both in education and operations. While the OSG PDU is currently working on updating this document, it should make sure that it does not just concretise but also quantify the pedagogical quality indicators to make teacher and School evaluations more robust.

Secondly, **the accountability mechanisms aimed at seconded teachers do not always work the way they should**. This manifests itself in different ways. Currently, the Inspectors' Board is responsible for supervising the overall educational process in the Schools (ES 2021v). This also makes the inspectors responsible for seconding and overseeing seconded teachers through class inspections as well as taking potential disciplinary action against them, if needed. Since inspectors are also responsible for appointing and supervising seconded teachers, in certain cases this might lead to conflicts of interest, e.g. when the inspector is unwilling to act against the teacher because it would question their initial choice (Hetterschijt 2012). This was also confirmed by a series of in-depth interviews with student and parent representatives. There is also another dimension of a **possible conflict of interest** here: even though individual Directors do not have the ability to discipline or dismiss seconded teachers (since this is the responsibility of inspectors), they still bear responsibility for a teacher's actions. As a result, the question of seconded teachers' accountability remains unaddressed between the scheduled inspections regularly conducted by national inspectors from the MS.

A connected problem reported in the interviews is that **sometimes the institution of inspection can be seriously understaffed and lack resources**. When an inspector has to cover too many Schools, some of them do not have enough time to visit individual Schools very regularly or for longer periods of time to gain a better understanding of the situation in the field. This situation is further complicated by the fact that not all inspectors actually work full-time within the ESS. The relevant documentation states that, "*the proportion of an inspector's time devoted to European Schools is not fixed. However, the responsibilities of the posts require a minimum of 40 per cent*" (ES 2010). On the other hand, the involved external experts point out that some full-time working inspectors can also be somewhat out of touch with the most up-to-date national inspection practices.

²⁷ For example, External Evaluation of a Proposal for the Reorganisation of Secondary Studies in the European School System.

Some good practices such as the use of teacher evaluation toolkits have been introduced to alleviate the issue of inspections through self-evaluations (see Box 2 below). The toolbox can also be used by inspectors and Directors for the purpose of monitoring a teacher's performance.

Box 2: Good practice: Toolkit for teacher (self-)evaluations

The 2015 Booklet on Quality Teaching in the European Schools promoted by BoG and supported by the Joint Board of Inspectors introduced a special (self-)evaluation toolkit for teachers in light of the harmonisation of teaching assessment methods (ES 2016). The toolkit offers a range of instruments for teachers, inspectors, and other stakeholders who help teachers to reflect on their own teaching in light of the Teaching Standards of the European Schools, their wider responsibilities, and their needs for further professional development.

The tool can be used by teachers for self-evaluation, but the official evaluation reports on teachers' performance are later drawn up by both the national Inspector and the Director. Currently, the provisions of the booklet foresee that in the event of a disagreement, the national Inspector's report shall prevail.

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), based on the interviews and ES (2016j)

3.1.4. Pedagogical professional development

The framework for the professional development of teachers in the ESS was only institutionalised very recently. Indeed, in 2020, the BoG published a framework for the organisation of continuous professional development in the European Schools (also in light of having to train teachers after the introduction of the new competence-based system) (ES 2018e). However, the document covers only the trainings related to the implementation of the competence-based approach and the new marking system. In the current institutional setting, individual Schools are responsible for taking care of both the teachers' training and performance evaluations, which might result in a methodological and, consequently, qualification heterogeneity of the teaching staff.

Nonetheless, the existing pedagogical quality assurance system both directly and indirectly supports an exchange of experience and pedagogical good practices between teachers as well as between other staff members. The system foresees that individual ES receive highly qualified seconded professionals from individual MSs. Throughout their secondment, teachers gain much experience in the ESS that they can later make practical use of in their national schools once their secondment ends. This was referred to by some teachers and OSG representatives as a channel that effectively contributes to an exchange of experience between the ESS and national systems. However, this system of exchange cannot be considered a fully functioning system of continuous professional development (CPD).

A connected challenge is the lack of a cohesive approach for training teachers. On the one hand, this pertains to the question of how the new marking system should be properly implemented. While introductory training was provided in 2017 (ES 2018), in-depth interviews with parents and teachers demonstrate that more follow-up is required, in particular, in Schools where the turnover of staff is high. This could also be particularly relevant for new incoming teachers at the start of each academic year. More comprehensive training about how the ESS functions in general could be beneficial for those teachers coming in from different national backgrounds and who are used to applying specific national practices in teaching and learning as well as assessment. Some of the interviewed teachers lamented

the lack of onboarding trainings, which complicates their integration into the working environment. This issue was also confirmed in several in-depth interviews with ES/AES Directors, who pointed out the need for further work and additional efforts on harmonisation in this area. As one interviewed teacher validly pointed out, *“there is no MA degree in teaching at the European Schools”*. In other words, teachers do not have the alternative of studying for a certificate or diploma in ESS professional practice, which would be accredited by universities. Finally, a functioning CPD system would also be supported both by parents and students themselves, who have actively expressed their wishes for more versatile teaching methods in the survey open answers analysis.

3.2. European dimension of education in the ESS

This section examines the European dimension of education provided by the ES. Specifically, it examines how the ESS meets the challenge of the ‘one EU’ policy whilst maintaining respect for national identities. Furthermore, it looks into how it manifests in the Schools’ curricula. This section also outlines key challenges and good practices in this area that can potentially be replicated in the broader context of the European Education Area (EEA).

The task of bringing up children as European citizens while maintaining their national identities has always been an integral but rather challenging part of the Schools’ mission: *“...without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe”*. Implementation of this task consists of three main components:

- Development of the European dimension in the curricula and in teaching.
- European-spirited extracurricular activities (e.g. such as Eurosport, school exchanges).
- Multicultural environment in the ESS, where children find themselves in a very multilingual and culturally diverse setting with both students and staff coming from varying national backgrounds.

3.2.1. Assessment of the overall situation by stakeholders

As the stakeholders’ survey clearly demonstrates, more than half of them believe that the objectives of encouraging ‘a European and global perspective’ in the study of sciences and fostering tolerance and cooperation are well or very well reflected in practice in the identity of the ES (see Table 10 below for more details).

Table 10: Summary of the survey results on how well the European dimension is reflected in practice in the identity of the ES.

Survey results	Reflects very well		Reflects well		Neutral		Does not reflect		Does not reflect at all	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. To encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of human sciences.	781	18	1962	46	1073	25	344	8	75	2

2. To foster tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond	788	18	1850	42	1022	23	556	13	207	5
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Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders, N=4235 for the first row; 4423 for the second row; NAs/Do not know excluded

Similarly, an assessment of the European dimension of the curriculum seems to demonstrate a similar trend with more than half of the surveyed respondents seeing the situation as either positive or very positive (see Table 11 below for more details).

Table 11: Summary of the survey results on how well the European dimension is reflected in practice in the identity of the ES.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); coherent European approaches to history and the arts)	575	13.3	1751	40.5	1047	24.2	399	9.2	142	3.3

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders, N=4319 for the first row; NAs/Do not know excluded

The positive survey results on the European dimension are further corroborated by evidence coming from the in-depth interviews and the existing literature. Specifically, representatives of students both at the ESS and individual ES levels confirmed that the European dimension is strongly present in the educational processes.

3.2.2. European dimension of the curriculum

The fact that ES pupils follow **a common curriculum is also considered a contributory factor in developing a sense of European identity** (see [subsections 2.3.1-2.3.2](#) for additional descriptive details). Following the same courses and striving for the same goals helps to create a feeling of togetherness, thereby fostering a community spirit amongst these pupils from different backgrounds (Savvides 2006; Savvides & Fass 2015).

We observe two different ways of integration of the European dimension into curricula in the primary and secondary cycles of education respectively. As the analysis of interviews with parents and of their open answers in the survey demonstrates, both approaches have their supporters and opponents. On the one hand, **the primary cycle mostly relies on a more centralised approach through the subject named European Hours**. European Hours aims to demonstrate to students the benefits of combined efforts, diversity, and unity, as well as the advantages/necessities of working together in certain fields through cooperation activities (e.g. building a pupils’ parliament, cooperating on science projects, pen-pal exchanges with students from other ES/AES) (ES 2016g). Sometimes, some of these European Hours activities are integrated with other classes (e.g. Discovery of the World).

On the other hand, **the secondary cycle uses a different, less centralised approach that relies on a variety of subjects integrating different European topics**, e.g. EU institutions, common European history and geography combined with the content-integrated language learning (CLIL) approach (see [the next section](#) for more details), where subjects are taught in L2 or even L3. Some subjects, such as history, geography, arts, and music employ a European rather than national perspective. When studying history, for example, students from a certain country are assigned to a teacher from a different country so that they can develop new perspectives. Furthermore, the main topics covered in the history syllabus are broadly European in nature – such as, for example, Renaissance or Reformation – while individual countries are used for the purpose of illustration (ES 2010b).

Interviews with Student Union representatives showed that although **students agree that there are enough European topics in the secondary cycle curricula, they also find that the approach is somewhat fragmented when it comes to teaching these topics**. Specifically, they point towards the lack of necessary teaching materials, which could help teachers to instruct children coherently across different ES and across different language groups. This problem was confirmed by our interviews with teachers and an examination of the syllabi. For example, even today there are no common ESS-level didactic materials on subjects such as history or geography. As an alternative, the history brochure suggests using a variety of different textbooks in different combinations while mostly relying on the World History textbooks (ES 2010b). Consequently, each teacher is responsible for deciding which textbook they will use in their classes. In the absence of a common training framework (see the [previous section](#)), this might also hinder the process of curricula harmonisation and lead to somewhat more fragmented teaching approaches in integrating the European dimension into teaching and learning.

Another issue related to curriculum harmonisation is the need for stronger connections between different subjects in the secondary cycle. The in-depth interviews with both students and teachers, supplemented by our examination of the syllabi for both mandatory courses such as history and geography as well as some optional ones such as economics and political science, have shown that students get different bits of information about Europe and the EU in a rather non-systemic fashion. This leads to potential gaps since some of these subjects, such as economics or political science, are not compulsory or, on the contrary, this may lead to some overlaps. For illustration, we provide two examples of overlaps, where more synergy would be possible:

- Modules related to the EU economy and role of the EU in economic life, which are covered in the S6-S7 classes on geography and economics²⁸.
- Modules related to the EU institutional structure, which are covered in S6-S7 classes on geography and political science²⁹.

In terms of balancing the European dimension with national ones, the **students remain connected to their own country through one of the leading ESS principles of L1 primacy**. The right of all students to be taught in their native/dominant language is enshrined in the Schools' main legal and administrative acts (ES 2019i). Attendant upon that principle, the division of each ES into language sections takes place (e.g. Estonian section, French section). However, this subdivision into different national sections has also come under criticism from some parents, students, and teachers during an

²⁸ See, e.g. the syllabi: <https://www.eursec.eu/Syllabuses/2013-01-D-36-en-4.pdf> and <https://www.eursec.eu/Syllabuses/2013-01-D-37-en-2.pdf>

²⁹ See, e.g. the syllabi: <https://www.eursec.eu/Syllabuses/2013-01-D-36-en-4.pdf> and <https://www.eursec.eu/Syllabuses/2018-12-D-32-en-2.pdf>

analysis of open answers to the survey and some of the interviews. The main argument underpinning the criticism is that subdivision into language section results in less active interaction between children from different countries with different languages and, thus, in less prominent European dimension in the educational environment. The situation, however, is rather heterogeneous across different language sections, with some of them being much looser than others (i.e. comprising many pupils of different nationalities).

Finally, a related problem that was reported by some of the student representatives and cross-referenced by our examination of the syllabi and some teacher interviews is the focus on the European dimension. For example, **some of the existing history syllabi tend to pay less attention to Eastern and South-Western European history until S6-S7**. At the same time, a focus on the history of larger Western European countries such as France and Germany is very persistent, which has become a case of frustration for some students, who believe that the national identities of smaller Member States from Eastern and South-Western European regions could be more present. As indicated by the results of the open answers analysis, some students and parents point out that the provided education could also pay somewhat more attention to global issues and the rest of the world, and not just to Europe.

3.2.3. Extra-curricular activities supporting the European dimension

The European dimension of the curriculum is **supplemented by extra-curricular activities**. These, for example, include regular events like Eurosport, Model of the European Parliament, the European Schools' Science Symposium or European tours of Schools' orchestras. During these events, students get an opportunity to meet their peers from different ES and interact in learning activities. All interviewed stakeholder groups emphasised the importance of these activities in the development of the European spirit in the ESS as they allow students from different countries and different Schools to collaborate on the same objectives in a spirit of togetherness (e.g. scientific symposia). The interviewees also stressed that a curriculum alone cannot be enough and often students get a lot of hands-on knowledge through extracurriculars (e.g. with the political science, history, and geography curriculum being supplemented by the Model European Council or Model European Parliament activities).

Another important type of activity that could be **considered a good practice for individual ES/AES are the student exchange programmes between different ES and AES**. As the in-depth interviews demonstrate, these exchanges are important for students to "live through the European experience" as well as to potentially interact with and learn more about different institutions in different cities. The latter part is more relevant for traditional ES since they are usually established in connection with specific European institutions in a city (e.g. ES Frankfurt – ECB). At the same time, the exchange and cooperation potential between ES and AES in extracurricular activities could be leveraged further. The integration of AES into common ES-level extracurricular activities remains low. For example, AES were invited to participate in Eurosport tournaments only starting in 2017 (ES 2016i). On top of that, it remains unclear when the AES are going to be granted the right to host Eurosport tournaments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly undermined all in-person extracurricular activities (see [section 3.7](#) for more details on the impact of COVID-19 on the ESS). Many of them were either curtailed or indefinitely postponed throughout 2020-2021. As the in-depth interviews with teachers and representatives of student' associations showed, student exchange programmes were particularly affected by the pandemic because exchanges at that time remained in their inchoate stages from before

2020³⁰. Throughout the period of the pandemic, student exchanges between ES and AES stopped completely. While the OSG working group and individual Schools are currently discussing potential digital solutions that may alleviate the situation (e.g. by organising some of the symposia online), launching full-fledged in-person student exchange programmes remains challenging due to the regularly changing COVID-19 situation.

3.2.4. Replicability of the ESS approaches

There was **no consensus on the replicability of ESS approaches towards integrating a European dimension into education in regular national schools** based on interviews with parents, Directors, and inspectors. The main concern expressed was that regular schools in the MSs usually do not have the opportunity to benefit from a very international environment, where most students and teachers come from very different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, education lies in the domain of the national governments, which is why it would be up to individual MSs to decide whether they want to invest in replicating such a system or not. On the one hand, many of these stakeholders agree that fostering the growth of AES through individual national schools could be a good way to demonstrate the benefits of the ESS approach to the individual MSs. In terms of replicable curricular elements, the CLIL approach and some existing pedagogical practices (e.g. common approaches to teaching arts, geography, and history) were cited most often. Furthermore, some of the ESS extracurricular elements that foster the European dimension in education such as exchange programmes, inter-school festivals, and models of the European Council/European Parliament, should also be considered.

At the same time, **despite the presence of some potentially replicable elements, there are some limitations to the exchanges of good practices**. For example, instructional materials and textbooks on common European subjects such as history are not always available. Furthermore, even if available or codified, good practices and materials in the European dimension are not always shared through existing channels with other schools in the national system consistently.

3.3. Language learning

This section focuses on and examines the ESS approach to learning of both L1 (native or dominant language) and L2/L3/L4/L5 (other/foreign languages)³¹. It also aims to analyse and review the main challenges to learning and based upon this, devise recommendations that help address challenges and enable the ESS language learning provisions to become even more inclusive, efficient, and effective (for a detailed description of the language learning system, please see [sub-section 2.2.2](#) of the contextual chapter).

³⁰ The students exchange system was proposed by the BoG only as a recommended measure starting in 2017 <https://www.eursec.eu/BasicTexts/2016-01-D-49-en-4%20+Annex.pdf>.

³¹ According to the ESS language policy, 'L1' refers to a pupil's main official language of learning and medium of education, to be chosen from a list of 24 languages agreed upon by the BoG (also known as mother tongue or dominant language). 'L2' refers to a pupil's chronologically second and principal- but-one language of learning, to be chosen from a list of three languages: English, French, German. 'L3', 'L4', and 'L5' refer to any additional languages introduced in the European Schools' curriculum after the L2 has been introduced. The L3 and L4 can be chosen from among the official languages of the European Union depending on local expediencies. The L5 can be any language.

3.3.1. Assessment of the overall situation by stakeholders

Both the survey and in-depth interviews clearly show that there exists a consensus among stakeholders (Table 12) that the ESS language learning system is one of the system’s strongest and most valuable aspects. 78.8% of the respondents evaluated the quality of learning in L1 as either positive or very positive. 70.4% of the stakeholder respondents further agreed that the quality of learning in other languages was positive or very positive. Only 7.9% considered the quality of learning as negative or very negative for L1 as did 13.5% for L2/L3/L4/L5. As

Table 12 and Table 13 demonstrate, there is no significant difference between assessments made by current students and other stakeholder groups.

Table 12: Survey results: assessment of the quality of language learning by other stakeholder groups.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Learning pupil’s mother tongue/dominant language (L1)	1411	33,2	1936	45,5	571	13,4	234	5,5	101	2,4
2. Foreign language learning (L2, L3, L4, L5).	1076	25,8	1861	44,6	672	16,1	411	9,8	155	3,7

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=4253 for the first row; 4175 for the second row. NAs / Do not know excluded.

Table 13: Survey results: assessment of the quality of language learning by students for L1 (dominant language) and L2/L3/L4/L5 (other languages).

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Learning pupil’s mother tongue/dominant language (L1)	218	39,4	184	33,2	99	17,9	30	5,4	23	4,2
2. Foreign language learning (L2, L3, L4, L5)	193	35,2	157	28,6	123	22,4	51	9,3	25	4,6

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (students only), N=554 for the first row; 549 for the second row. NAs / Do not know excluded.

Many teachers, parents, and students expressed in open answers to the survey that the methods of language learning at ES should be considered a good practice. The in-depth interviews confirmed this trend that many stakeholder groups see content-integrated language learning or CLIL as a good practice for some national systems (see the box below for more details on the CLIL approach in the ESS).

Box 3: Good practice: Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL is a pedagogical approach for learning subject matter through a language (...) [L2/L3/L4/L5] different from the main language of learning (L1) which integrates both content and language related learning goals. The aim of CLIL is to enhance pupils' language skills in the target language while aiming to achieve the same level of content matter knowledge as would be attained if the content matter were taught in the main language of learning (L1). At the European Schools, CLIL is employed in a variety of subjects such as Human Science from Secondary 3, History and Geography from Secondary 4. The number of CLIL subjects tends to increase in the Baccalaureate cycle (Secondary 6 and 7 years), depending on pupils' choices and may include subjects in L2 as well as in L3.

Source: ES (2019). Language Policy of the European Schools, available at: <https://www.eursec.eu/BasicTexts/2019-01-D-35-en-2.pdf>

3.3.2. Learning of L1 and SWALS situation

As the ESS is transitioning to a competence-based approach in learning, the language learning system and corresponding syllabi had to be accordingly amended. Specifically, after some calls from the expert community (Gray, Scott & Mehisto 2018, pp. 49-73), the ESS finally **introduced an overarching language policy in a separate 2019 BoG decision known as the "Language Policy of the European Schools"** (ES 2019i). This has helped to create a cohesive tool centralising all of the language policy elements (ranging from education support to the determination of a student's L1).

Another positive development in the language education field has been that the ESS has also been actively **addressing issues faced by students who are in a School that does not teach their L1, i.e. students without a language section (SWALS)**. The SWALS are exposed to L2 in a more intensive way than their counterparts who are enrolled in the language section of their dominant language (L1) because they are taught non-language subjects in L2 (e.g. mathematics; history, etc.) starting from the very first years in the ESS. Due to their special situation (see [Chapter 2](#) for more details on SWALS), the recently established Language Policy foresees that individual Schools are not allowed to leave the SWALS without instructions in L1. The policy clearly states that, *"The protection of the dominant language (Language 1) of SWALS pupils is a priority in order to counter-balance the effect of the multilingual environment and the lack of use of the dominant language in most of the subjects"* (ES 2019i). Pupils who do not classify as children of the EU institutions' staff but are still enrolled, are also entitled to tuition in L1. However, this rule applies only if these children's language choices do not necessitate the creation of a new language group (i.e. it applies only when there are not enough children to create a new language group). While the rules state that even when enrolled in a working language section, every student is *"entitled to tuition in their L1, working on the assumption that the school has at its disposal a duly qualified teacher, or can recruit one"* (ES 2019i), they remain silent regarding the procedures that follow, when the "assumption" does not hold.

The in-depth interviews revealed that every School adapts to the L1 requirements for SWALS in three main ways: first, they sometimes try to find teachers in other Member States; second, they sometimes merge languages classes for L1 across different years to increase the cost-benefit of language learning and thereby allow for L1 tuition; third, according to OSG representatives, digital solutions such as remote learning are also currently being piloted and discussed as another option to ensure better and

more inclusive language learning (both for SWALS and generally). An additional solution was put forward by an interviewed national government representative sitting on the BoG who said that some governments also show interest in providing support to the ESS by seconding more language (not subject) teachers, as those are easier to find.

There are **two main challenges to L1 learning** as evidenced by the analysed data – **the number of students in some L1 groups and the lack of staff**. The size of language groups, which tend to vary dramatically according to L1 (from 5 to 25 students, according to interviewed parents associations), sometimes present problems with infrastructure in the ESS. Whereas some L1 languages lead to relatively big groups (25 students), others apply to such a small number of students (for example Estonian and Hungarian) that for financial and human resources it is necessary to mix students from different years and thereby skills levels to guarantee L1 learning. As inputs from the in-depth interviews with teachers and inspectors and national government representatives demonstrate, mixing students of different age and skill levels is a challenge to the learning process as well as to the quality of teaching as the latter depends on both the size of the group and a teacher's ability to differentiate between students. It leads to situations where more advanced students want to engage in more complex topics and are frustrated with the slow pace of the classes, while less advanced students might get stressed and demotivated due to complex content and unattainable intellectual demands.

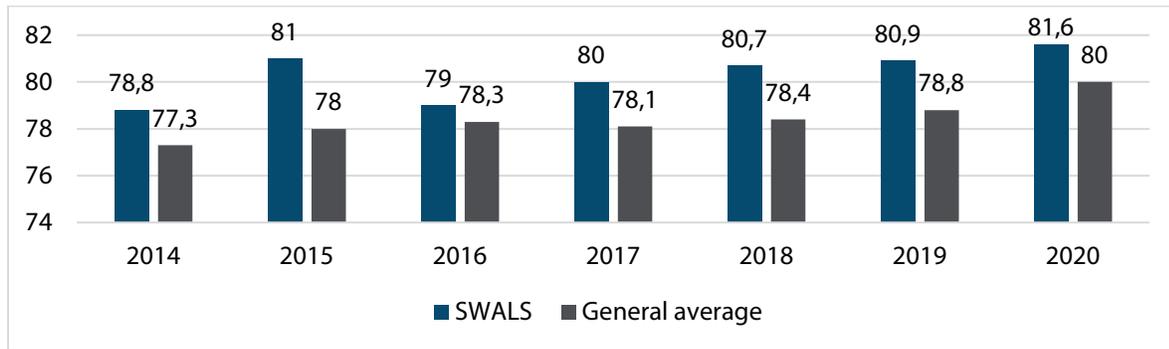
Secondly, as reported by staff and management representatives from such Schools, the problem of group size is further **exacerbated in non-Brussels based ES due to more limited resources and the difficulty of finding locally recruited teachers in less multinational cities**. This was also corroborated by an interview with the representative of a national government, who stressed the difference between the primary and secondary cycles. The problem is more complicated in the secondary cycle where different teachers are needed to teach different subjects, as opposed to the primary cycle, where most of the content can be delivered by one teacher. In subjects with English as L1, the staffing issue is particularly evident due to the pressure caused by a decrease in the number of seconded native English-speakers as a result of Brexit.

Finally, language learning for SWALS is also interconnected with **the needs of multilingual students**. Multilingual students who speak two or more languages at home are not provided with sufficient opportunities to learn and develop all their languages. The system of learning the mother tongue (L1) and starting a second language (L2) was designed for pupils who are comfortable in only one language. However, when multilingual pupils start L2 classes, they are already relatively well-advanced, making them disinterested, and, as both teachers and parents point out, unable to advance or build healthy language learning habits. This is also very relevant for SWALS, as they must attend L2 classes for the language in which they study every day. This further results in SWALS not being able to learn subjects in another L2 like their peers, who go on to study subjects in their L2 in secondary School – SWALS study *all* their subjects in the same language that functions as L1 on a daily basis but is categorised as L2. Stakeholders suggest differentiating pupils according to ability in L2 and L3 classes, or opting for a module approach, where a limited number of credits would be given for each language. For example, pupils could enrol in L1 level classes for two languages or opt for one L1 level class and two L2 level classes (see the [next subsection](#) for more details on L2 and other languages).

Despite these challenges, representatives of the OSG have stressed that **SWALS students are very well educated and excel at their studies even more than their peers**. The claim is corroborated by the

data on the average final grades of SWALS and all EB Candidates across the ES (see Figure 14 below). The average final grade of SWALS students exceeded the overall average by ca. 1-2 points out of 100 every year. The biggest difference between the SWALS' and general EB performance was observed in 2015, when the average final mark of SWALS candidates came up to 81 while the overall average amounted to 78. That being said, when analysing the SWALS' performance results, it may be important to consider the statistical difference between the groups' sizes (i.e. number of all EB candidates vs. SWALS group, which is significantly smaller). For example, in 2020, out of 2,265 EB candidates only 255 were SWALS, hence a larger variation of grades in a bigger group of students is only natural. However, a higher level of SWALS performance seems to be a time-consistent trend.

Figure 14: Final grade averages of SWALS students and all EB Candidates across all ES.



Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on the 2018-2020 Reports on European Baccalaureate
 Note: Previous reports between 2015 and 2017 provide a more rounded version of SWALS' Average Final Grade (i.e. 8,1.; 7,9, 8)

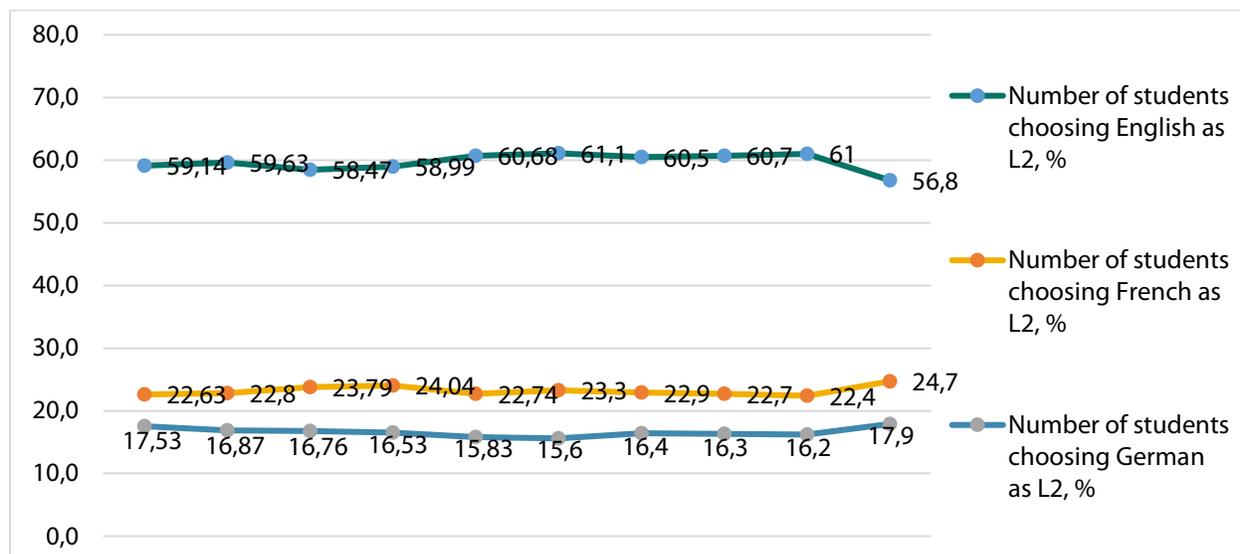
3.3.3. Learning of other languages (L2/L3/L4/L5)

The situation in the field of learning other languages (L2/L3/L4/L5) is also undergoing a process of change in line with the transition to a competence-based approach and curriculum reform. Similar to L1, the areas of learning at L2/L3/L4 face two challenges –a lack of staff and the availability of language options. However, additionally, there is also the challenge of competence measurement across different languages.

First, **the staffing challenge stems from the fact that all languages usually need to be taught by native speakers.** Thus, as with L1, because of the secondment rules, the ES were particularly hard-hit by Brexit, with English being the most popular choice for L2 (56.8% as opposed to French with 24.7%, see Figure 15 for more details). Even though the popularity of English as L2 might be slightly declining³² and Ireland/Malta have been trying to help with secondments, the problem persists, in particular with a fall in the quality of learning English as L1 and L2. The way to redress this challenge has been that some Schools have resorted to hiring non-native speakers to give courses in English, but in a rigorously regulated way (e.g. the ESS requires a relevant diploma for teaching the subject and Schools resort to this measure only in cases of great need).

³² In 2020, the Figure for English fell significantly below 60% for the first time in half a-decade based on the Facts and Figures reports. This idea was also expressed by several interviewed stakeholders, incl. parents and students.

Figure 15: Choice of L2 by academic years.



Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on the reports and statistical data by OSG.

The second challenge concerns **the issue of language availability for L3, L4, and L5**. According to the 2019 Language Policy, L3 and L4 can be chosen from among the EU official languages depending on the local circumstances and needs (ES 2019i). However, this policy stipulation means in practice that students can usually choose from approximately 6-7 languages (usually French, English, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and Portuguese with some minor exceptions; for more details on L3 see Table 14 below).

As noted above, this issue is **particularly relevant for smaller Schools**, according to interviewed Directors and parent representatives, since they usually cannot organise small language groups due to resource and staff constraints as opposed to the larger Schools in Brussels. This is also corroborated by the open answers analysis, where some parents made a similar point: *“Smaller European Schools such as Varese, seem to be disadvantaged compared to bigger sites such as Brussels/Luxembourg. This is particularly relevant for quality of teachers, recruitment attractiveness and issues with school transport”*. Some parents have also expressed concerns about the fact that the ES do not offer opportunities to learn (non-EU) languages beyond those listed here above, such as Russian or Chinese, as L5. The question of language availability is also becoming closely linked to using digital technologies as a good practice tool for remote language learning. As pointed out by some interviewed parents, a national government representative, and some experts, digital language classes in the secondary cycle could alleviate staffing pressure on the ESS. Discussions about this practice continue, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and in line with the ESS Digital Mission Statement (see [section 3.7](#) on more details about digitalisation efforts in the aftermath of the academic year 2020/2021).

Table 14: Top three choices of L3 by year from 2011 to 2021.

Year	Most frequent choices of L3		
	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3
2011-2012	Spanish	French	Spanish
2012-2013	English	French	Spanish
2013-2014	English	French	French
2014-2015	English/Spanish	French	Spanish
2015-2016	French/Spanish	English	Spanish
2016-2017	French/Spanish	English	Spanish
2017-2018	French/Spanish	German/English/French	Spanish
2018-2019	French	English	Spanish
2019-2020	French	English	Spanish
2020-2021	French	English	German

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on the reports and statistical data by OSG in the “Facts and Figures” reports.

Finally, the third challenge is related to the question of **competence measurement across L2/L3/L4**. This challenge is particularly relevant for L3 students because it is different from L2 and L4 in the following way. As reported by inspectors and parents, L3 classes occasionally have a share of pupils (e.g. bilingual students), who speak the language fluently, which causes distress for beginner students. The parents, whose children speak fluent L3 already, suggest splitting the L3 groups into two parts – beginner and advanced students. Other proposed solutions by inspectors and parents include getting an L3 exemption through exams, making an even earlier start with L3 in the primary cycle (currently L3 begins only in the secondary cycle). However, all these proposals have met with resistance from different stakeholder groups and the situation so far remains unresolved. The issue broadly reflects the question of proficiency measurement across different languages. Several parent associations point out that there should be additional tools aimed at examining a student’s proficiency of L3 or L4 through some form of examination based on the Common European Framework of Language Reference (especially before students join their L3/L4 language classes.)

The central administration has been trying to address some of these challenges in the framework of the ESS transition to competence-based learning. During an interview, OSG representatives stated that they expected a lot from introducing new syllabi in L3 because this will help to further harmonise syllabi, boost the level of L3 among students, and further develop the CLIL approach. A new proposal suggested that L3 would become compulsory for all students beginning from S1 (currently it is S3). This adjustment will make the delivery of classes more flexible considering the decreasing number of teachers. The logic behind this is that the CLIL approach is likely to be extended from L2 and L3 in a limited number of subjects to a large number of subjects in L3, enabling the system to recruit teachers from a broader pool of candidates. Since these subjects will be taught in a greater number of languages (not just L1/L2), this could help the administration with broadening their recruitment field. Furthermore, the OSG intends to propose allowing individual Schools to introduce the host country language in L2, which could further alleviate the problem (but so far, the idea remains under consideration). If passed, the proposal could help students to better integrate into the local environment, in particular in smaller Schools.

3.4. Inclusive education

According to the BoG Policy on the Provision of Educational Support and Inclusive Education, *“inclusive Education is the guiding principle of the European Schools, which serve a diverse and mobile pupil population and offer diverse/flexible teaching and learning approaches adapted to children with different learning profiles”*. However, the implementation of this principle faces many serious challenges. Thus, the topic of inclusive education has been at the centre of educational and pedagogical discussions within the ESS for the past decade. Its value has been widely recognised; a recognition that was also reflected in the results of the stakeholders’ survey, where an overwhelming majority of the stakeholders (ca. 90%) agreed that *“Fostering tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond”* is a relevant or very relevant objective.

This section summarises the evidence pertinent to the ever more necessary requirement for ESS to provide an inclusive education (e.g. SWALS integration; education for children with SEN) that was gathered in the course of this study via interviews and the survey. This section is complementary and can be used in addition to the currently ongoing evaluation by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education which provides a comprehensive and detailed assessment of the ESS approach and strategies for inclusive education.

The ESS has made evident progress in the area of inclusive education after the European Implementation Assessment on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ES 2018g) as well as of some of the recommendations from the Cavada report (EP 2011). Specifically, throughout 2018-2019, the Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education was discussed and adopted by the BoG³³. Since its implementation only started in 2020, the Plan’s results and impacts are not yet entirely clear, and an assessment was only recently commissioned³⁴. Nevertheless, there are some short-term indicators of progress.

Furthermore, the ESS faces a range of ongoing institutional changes. For example, the OSG is currently assessing barriers in the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs (such as the need for more flexible teaching formats; special equipment, etc.) and preparing a proposal on addressing these issues (ES 2018g). Efforts are being made to adapt the teaching material to specific individual needs as well as provide personalised support through so-called “support teachers”³⁵. Teaching and administrative staff also currently participate in relevant (re)training. Two further positive developments are worth noting. First, the budget allocation for students with special needs has been increasing³⁶ and the number of staff providing assistance has also been growing, albeit slowly (from 25 students per one support staff member in 2018 to 20 students per support staff member in 2020; see the table below for more details).

³³ The Action Plan is a comprehensive document, which aims to address the recommendations made during the previous evaluations of the ESS aimed at making the educational system there more inclusive. For more details, see: <https://www.eursc.eu/Documents/2018-12-D-34-en-5.pdf>.

³⁴ According to the OSG, an interim evaluation of the strategy’s implementation is scheduled for early 2022.

³⁵ Support teachers are either seconded or locally recruited teachers with recognised additional qualifications for teaching pupils with diverse needs. Support teachers are responsible for using differentiated teaching methods; assessing and reporting a child’s progress and needs to other teachers and the child’s parents among other functions. Support teachers are assisted by support assistants.

³⁶ E.g. according to the OSG SEN reports, the costs rose from 1.118€ in 2015/2016 to 1.821€ in 2019-2020 per child.

It must be noted, however, that the situation in the AES remains unclear because the OSG does not collect any uniform panel data for the AES.

Table 15: Resources for educational support.

Schools	2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
	N. of pupils per School	Total support staff ³⁷	N. of support staff per student	N. of pupils per School	Total support staff	N. of support staff per student	N. of pupils per School	Total support staff	N. of support staff per student
Alicante	1033	68	0.07	1050	74	0.07	1040	80	0.08
Bergen	521	35	0.07	538	40	0.07	590	33	0.06
Brussels I	3743	106	0.03	3947	80	0.02	4074	173	0.04
Brussels II	3104	106	0.03	3070	118	0.04	3174	138	0.04
Brussels III	3059	115	0.04	3097	117	0.04	3190	148	0.05
Brussels IV	2777	86	0.03	2834	90	0.03	2970	84	0.03
Frankfurt	1517	56	0.04	1520	74	0.05	1588	74	0.05
Karlsruhe	842	59	0.07	857	63	0.07	881	71	0.08
Luxembourg I	3350	163	0.05	3346	207	0.06	3333	197	0.06
Luxembourg II	2599	116	0.04	2650	122	0.05	2645	115	0.04
Mol	733	55	0.08	690	58	0.08	680	50	0.07
Munich	2283	61	0.03	2235	85	0.04	2191	81	0.04
Varese	1316	117	0.09	1342	76	0.06	1352	91	0.07
Total	26877	1143	0.04	27176	1204	0.04	27708	1335	0.05

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), based on reports and statistical data by OSG (SEN and Facts and Figures Reports). No statistical data is available for the AES.

Second, stakeholders in individual Schools as well as at various levels of ESS governance are becoming increasingly aware of inclusive education – its existence, value and necessity. For example, ES Brussels I, in cooperation with local students, have recently motioned a detailed proposal on promoting LGBTQ+ inclusivity in the entire ESS by adopting a discourse that normalises LGBTQ+ identities and adjusting the sexual education curriculum (CoSup 2022). In other cases, individual Schools may also act (see the text box below) and promote specific types of policies aimed at ensuring both better inclusion and well-being (for a detailed discussion of well-being policies, see [section 4.3.4](#)).

³⁷ Includes support teachers, support assistants, psychologists, and other relevant staff assigned with supporting functions.

Box 4: Good practise: “Care Team” as a part of the Social Climate Policy at the ES Karlsruhe

The Karlsruhe ES has developed the concept of a so-called **Care Team**³⁸, which consists of teachers, psychologists, management representatives, special teachers, and students. Their main goal is to make a School as accommodating as possible for its students. The Care Team concept functions as a confidential physical mailbox, where students report issues anonymously (i.e. a confidential and practical way of working with students on their personal problems). After an issue is reported, the Care Team discusses how it could be addressed.

A multi-stakeholder approach is combined with regular group meetings (once a month), when the Care Team also reflects upon the School’s needs and what should be done to address them. Karlsruhe ES designed Care Teams as part of a broad social climate policy, and the Care Team concept is a part of it (as well as the anti-bullying task force). The multi-stakeholder approach allows the Care Team to react in a targeted fashion. For example, when a request focuses on bullying, the School’s psychologists get involved and can consult the student, and class representatives or teachers can help students with some additional learning needs.

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on the Social Climate Policy, available at: <https://www.es-karlsruhe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Annex-I.2-ESK-Social-Climate-Policy-2019.pdf> and an in-depth interview

Nevertheless, there are five main issues that remain unsolved. First, **some Schools are struggling with a lack of resources for tailored inclusion support in all areas**³⁹. Some interviewed School representatives admitted that in certain cases when a SWALS student, for example, also has a severe disability, it can be very problematic for them to provide targeted assistance due to the lack of resources (e.g. find a qualified support teacher in Brussels, who also speaks the language of a smaller EU MS). Some difficulties also persist in ensuring the equitable treatment of pupils in the provision of education (ES 2021d), when it comes to a choice of language groups because all students are entitled to L1 tutoring at the ESS. SWALS, especially in smaller ES, might face challenges of having to study with students from different School years or taking a foreign language as their L1 (for more details on language inclusion issues faced by SWALS see [section 3.3](#)). A heterogeneous situation with inclusion across different Schools is reflected in the survey results (e.g. 15% of the respondents assessed the situation with inclusion in ES Varese very negatively, while only 3% did so in Munich). In other cases, when there are many students with SEN in one class, some Schools have considered the creation of separate groups to improve the quality of learning and tailor the process, but this solution remains controversial for two reasons: a) as the analysis of the open answers to the survey as well as interviews with parents indicate, this could lead to the isolation of SEN students and a drop in inclusiveness; b) it also represents a financial and administrative burden for the School’s management. As one of the Directors put it during the interview: *“it would be good to have more options, for example, such as splitting the group for some periods of time or for some subjects, but there would be a budgetary implication”*⁴⁰.

Second, many **SEN students are still facing inclusion issues in class**. As evidenced by the open answers analysis and as confirmed by in-depth interviews, since the Schools often compete in how their

³⁸ This is the practice of many German schools, which also have the so-called *Vertrauenslehrer*, or caretaking teachers, as well as mentors.

³⁹ For example, in their 2018 study, Human Rights Watch found that some children with disabilities continue to be rejected, are pressured into changing schools, or lack appropriate accommodations and support (HRW 2018).

⁴⁰ At the national level, a similar practice of “localised unit for school inclusion” known as ULIS (fr. Unité localisée pour l’inclusion scolaire) exists in France.

pupils perform on the EB examination, some tend to put pressure on less academically capable SEN students, who do not perform as well as high achievers. SEN pupils are expected to perform at the same level as their peers in tests, achieving similar results and making sure that they do not bring down the School's average. In classes, SEN pupils may often feel devalued or inferior, as they find themselves unable to compete with their peers when it comes to test-oriented tasks. Bringing them up to a higher performance level requires extensive support in terms of both financial and human resources. For example, children with dyslexia and autism are particularly subject to discrimination by teachers, but pupils diagnosed with issues such as ADHD also struggle. Many parents point out that the attainment goals for students to progress into the next years are usually made without consideration for SEN, which is why some children with disabilities tend to repeat the same academic year multiple times. SEN pupils were said to be poorly taken care of by most Schools, and insufficient attention paid by School administrations to ensure their appropriate education.

Third, although **inclusion support measures have been mandated in a centralised fashion, their implementation is still not very cohesive and depends on individual Schools**. The creation of the role of a Central Coordinator for educational support and inclusive education at the OSG was planned for late 2019 (ES 2019j), but it has been facing major delays. This further prevents coordination efforts by the OSG across different ES, where the situation varies a lot based on the size and diversity of the student body and staff. As the result, there are still some alleged cases of discrimination and pressure as reported by parents in their open answers to the survey:

- *"My family and I had to leave Luxembourg because the EU school LUX II threatened to expel our kid with Down Syndrome. I had to leave my job at OP and be relocated in JRC so that he could attend a school in the Italian public system (inclusive)."*
- *"The inclusion policies and their implementation do not encompass children with disabilities. There is [a] total failure already on providing physical accessibility (as simple as it should be); the school buildings are largely not accessible by wheelchair, there is no information on accessibility on [the] school website or communication on events in school."*

As evidenced by the in-depth interviews, approaches vary widely across Schools. In some Schools, teachers are required to undertake supporting or tutoring roles and try to address the psychological issues faced by children after doing some additional training, while others tend to rely on professional psychologists. Some Schools, such as Brussels I, have created very specific inclusion policies (e.g. an anti-bullying policy), while others opt out for broader policies such as the above-mentioned Karlsruhe Social Climate policy that encompasses a great variety of inclusion topics (incl. anti-bullying measures, community guidelines, behaviour management, etc.) (ES Karlsruhe 2019).

Fourth, the broader problem is that the ESS opening process is still going rather slowly. As the analysis of open answers of the survey shows, **the issue of admission having an inclusion dimension is extremely relevant with many parents demanding that the ESS adapt a uniform and transparent admission policy**. In some ES, there are still challenges with the administration not accepting more Category III⁴¹ students due to the limited number of spaces available at individual Schools (see [section](#)

⁴¹ Children of the general public.

[2.1](#) regarding a description of various student categories). Category III admissions largely depend on the Directors of individual Schools, especially when there is a limited number of available places. During the in-depth interviews, this decision-making power of the Directors and decision-making processes were criticised by multiple stakeholder groups as being opaque and unaccountable. Another example is that the children of the EU-contracted ancillary staff on paper have the same rights as those of other staff to attend EU Schools, but they remain underrepresented. Taken together, the fact that the ESS remains largely closed to Category III students (with the exception of AES) and that the admissions policy remains rather obscure contributes to the perception of the ES as being elitist and closed (see [section 4.1](#) on the ES identity for more details).

Fifth, as reported by the interviewed Directors and teachers and evidenced by the most recent statistics, (see the table below for more details) **ES are experiencing a dramatic increase in the number students who need so-called ISA assistance** (Intensive support A). ISA assistance means that students usually need close follow-up by support teachers or their assistants in their educational process and study following an Individual Learning Plan in coordination with a support teacher. ISA assistance is usually tailored for children with learning disabilities, disorders, or for those who are experiencing significant behavioural or emotional difficulties (ES 2012b). The interviewed Directors pointed out that since early detection of students' special needs has been improving, they detect more and more cases compared to previous years. These improvements, however, intensify the demand on the side of both parents and students because more and more support measures become available. As one of the interviewed Directors put it: *"We are victims of our own success. But then, at the same time, we have budgetary implications, and we need much more money"*.

Table 16: Pupils receiving ISA by School and by cycle, %.

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Alicante	2.2	1.4	1.5	1.7	2.1	2.3
Bergen	1.1	1.3	1.9	2.2	2.7	2.3
Brussels I	3.1	3.1	3.8	4.0	4.9	5.0
Brussels II	5.0	6.4	5.5	6.8	5.3	4.7
Brussels III	4.5	4.5	4.9	5.2	4.6	5.5
Brussels IV	1.8	2.4	2.6	2.0	1.9	1.8
Culham	2.6					
Frankfurt	1.6	1.9	2.2	2.9	3.6	3.6
Karlsruhe	4.0	5.3	4.6	4.9	5.3	5.4
Luxembourg I	3.9	4.1	3.7	4.5	6.0	7.6
Luxembourg II	4.2	4.5	5.7	6.2	7.9	8.8
Mol	0.4	1.1	1.3	2.8	4.8	5.2
Munich	4.1	4.3	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.6
Varese	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.5
Total	3.4	3.8	3.9	4.2	4.6	5.0

Source: Reports and statistical data by OSG based on the Facts and Figures reports

Note: The ES Culham closed in 2017, thus the lack of information. Here, Total refers to percentage of pupils receiving ISA in relation to the total pupil population of the ES.

Finally, another important ongoing pedagogical debate in the ESS in general is the question of **offering alternative diploma options**. Some interviewed students and parents point out that this could be an attractive option for those children who do not want to follow an explicitly academic path but would be interested in other options such as VET. According to these interviewees, this is further exacerbated by a lack of focus on non-academic education. The results of our survey indeed demonstrate that there is a significant gap between the perceptions of parents/students vs. that of School administration/teachers on the quality of teaching practical, non-academic skills (VA 2021). While 30% of teachers and 40% of administrative staff assess it positively, only 21% of students and 19% of parents do so correspondingly. Opponents of the initiative to offer alternative diplomas point out that the demand for non-academic education in the ESS is quite low. This seems to be tangentially corroborated by the evidence available on the career paths of ES alumni (ca. 94% of alumni pursue advanced academic education) (Anglmayer 2016a). However, since the referred study is quite outdated and the data on dropout reasons was not taken into consideration, as of 2021, there is no relevant or up-to-date information on the demand for additional education paths for children amongst parents and students. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the current academia-oriented curriculum of the ESS and academic diplomas that they receive is one of the factors that could potentially be turning away parents with children who are interested in vocational programmes, or nudging them towards academic paths.

Some of the interviewed parents and Directors suggested exploring the issue of demand for alternative diplomas among students and parents through a specialised survey to better understand the demand.

3.5. Education for sustainable development

Educational focus on environmental sustainability has recently become one of the key EU priorities as outlined by the EC in light of the European Green New Deal (EC 2022). As a result of both policy-level and broader societal discussions on the importance of effective ‘green transition’ in the EU, the ESS is also impacted by the trend with the provision of education for sustainable development (ESD) becoming one of the key objectives of the ESS (ES 2021c). This section, therefore, examines the current situation with ESD in the ESS and points out the main challenges that it faces.

3.5.1. Assessment of the overall situation by stakeholders

More than three quarters of the surveyed stakeholders believe that providing high-quality ESD is either ‘relevant’ (36.6%) or ‘very relevant’ (41.7%). At the same time, if compared to other educational aspects, the quality assessment of ESD demonstrates a wider variety of opinions in the survey. Less than a half of the total respondents (47%) assess the situation as positive or very positive. When it comes to a differentiation between respondent groups, students are clearly one of the most dissatisfied groups with ca. 30% perceiving the situation either negatively or very negatively (see Table 17 and Table 18 below). Furthermore, an analysis of the interviews with students and teachers as well as some of the open answers demonstrates some evidence of fragmented implementation of the central guidelines (i.e. that the approaches and degree of implementation varies significantly from School to School).

Table 17: Survey results: assessment of the offered education on sustainable development by students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Education on sustainable development	106	19,9	132	24,8	136	25,6	110	20,7	48	9,0

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), Survey of stakeholders (students), N=532. NAs excluded

Table 18: Survey results: assessment of the offered education on sustainable development by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Education on sustainable development	440	11,15	1627	41,23	1328	33,65	401	10,16	150	3,80

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=3946. NAs excluded

3.5.2. Integration of ESD-related topics in the curriculum

ESD-related topics are increasingly gaining attention from stakeholders both at the local level and from central administration. As the in-depth interviews show, individual Schools actively focus on ESD in classes and especially in extracurricular activities by, for example adding additional learning modules, or by making School activities and field trips more environmentally friendly. This was confirmed by an OSG representative: “[ESD] is gaining importance. For the last 2-3 years, pupils’ representatives raised the issue during meetings that they want to be more involved and have more projects at the school and at the system level. Not only teaching pupils the theory to respect nature but also taking some steps to set an example of how to live in a sustainable way: trying to review the policy of traveling i.e., to move some of the meetings online to be in line with the climate policy.”

As of now, these topics are only **partially integrated into the educational processes at the secondary level**. According to an interview with a representative of the OSG PDU, the upcoming new syllabi will have stronger recommendations on ESD. Currently, there is no individual subject or centralised policy document that deals with this area. The lack of a cohesive approach for ESD remains a serious challenge. As of now, ESD provisions are scattered across a very wide range of mandatory and elective subjects such as geography, economics, biology, chemistry, and integrated sciences without any coordinated approach to learning. For example, the ES curriculum on geography touches upon the topics of climate change and threatened environments (ES 2015c), while the topic of food waste is covered in the integrated sciences curriculum and the economics syllabus only very briefly touches upon the impact of human economic activities on the environment (ES 2018j). It is unclear how interconnected those are since some of the interviewed stakeholders (e.g. some inspectors and teachers) have demonstrated a rather low level of awareness of the topic. There are also some emerging good practices at the level of individual schools like the Climate Academy (see Box 5 below), which try to develop a more cohesive approach to ESD.

Box 5: Good practice: Climate Academy as an extracurricular activity

The Climate Academy is an ESS initiative, which was launched by Matthew Pye, Philosophy Coordinator of ES Brussels II. The Academy functions as a voluntary body, membership to which is offered to students in Years 5, 6 and 7 in the secondary cycle. The programme of the Climate Academy provides a holistic understanding of sustainability questions. Academically, if they choose the programme as an elective, students commit themselves to dedicating one formal teaching period (45 minutes) in their timetable, to the subject and sustainability projects that they develop on their own. They also work through the Climate Academy Textbook, which covers 10 different modules on various ESD topics (e.g. closed mass systems, CO₂ emissions) through a specialised textbook. The Academy’s activities are funded from the school’s budget.

Source: (2021), Based on the Climate Academy website, available at: <https://www.climateacademy.eu/about-3-4/> and promotional materials (brochure, presentation)

Integration in the primary cycle, however, is much stronger. Specifically, the two key subjects that cover ESD are European Hours and Discovery of the World. Two content areas of the European Hours syllabus are specifically focused on the environment, sustainability, and the environmental impact of human activities in the developing world (ES 2016g). The European Hours are more focused on in-class learning and the development of conceptual understanding of key ESD concepts. As for the Discovery of the World, the subject has a broader range of topics in general, but its biological area has a distinct

element focused on environmental protection, while its socio-cultural area discusses the concept of sustainable development. The learning activities foresee not only in-class learning but also field trips and classes within the local environment, and thus, supplement the European Hours in terms of teaching methods.

3.5.3. Operational spill-over effects of ESD

An **increased focus on environmental sustainability also has a positive spill-over effect on operational aspects**. The topic of ESD was emphasised for the first time by the French EU presidency in 2021, which argued that it should become a focus area in future decisions of the BoG (ES 2021y). As a result, the BoG has taken notice of the proposals for action and follow-up made by the Working Group on Education for Sustainable Development. This was the first time in at least the past decade that the topic was officially raised in a BoG decision.

While no official policy measures had been adopted as of late 2021, there were several reported initiatives. For example, the French presidency suggested analysing the budget from a sustainability point of view and joining the initiative of the so-called Eco-School system. The Eco-School system is a European initiative that encourages sustainable practices in educational institutions (e.g. class trips by trains instead of planes) (Eco-Schools 2022). As an interview with one of the School's Directors demonstrates, some Schools can also leverage the EU Green Deal to exert more pressure in budget negotiations when trying to support their own green initiatives. Furthermore, School administrations must pay an increasing amount of attention to sustainability in their School's daily operations due to student pressure. This relates to, for example, School trips, CO₂ emissions analysis, or the purchase of sustainable equipment. For example, students of ES Luxembourg I, ES Brussels I, and ES Brussels III have pushed through an initiative to install solar panels on School buildings for the provision of green electricity⁴².

The in-depth interviews demonstrate that there are ongoing ESD-related activities in the Schools, but they are not always visible/institutionalised or presented as good examples. For example, ES Luxembourg I is currently implementing a targeted project named Sustainable Innovative School⁴³. The project foresees that each class would select two environmental delegates from each secondary class, who would be responsible for promoting sustainable initiatives on food, waste, energy consumption, and in other areas. The Parents Association of ES Luxembourg II has its own Sustainability Committee⁴⁴, through which the parents are trying to push sustainability initiatives, while ES Brussels III has its own multistakeholder sustainability working group (ES Brussels III, 2022). ES Varese has one of the most comprehensive green agendas in the framework of the Green School project that it has joined voluntarily (see **Box 6** below).

⁴² See e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9SQfrPcr3o>; <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=652859842320843&ref=sharing>; and <https://www.sunforschools.be/european-school-brussels> for project presentations.

⁴³ According to the School Director, due to the currently ongoing nature of the project, its results are not available in open access but can be acquired after a targeted inquiry from the School Direction.

⁴⁴ See e.g. <https://www.apeeel2.lu/sustainability-committee/>

Box 6: Good practice: ES Varese’s Green School strategy

The ES Varese’s Green School strategy is based on four key pillars – biodiversity, waste management, energy efficiency, and recycling. The strategic documents are rather broad and provide students and teachers with opportunities to develop their own projects including extracurriculars (e.g. with staff teaching their students how to recycle different products or produce composts from waste). While a significant share of the ongoing project activities remains extracurricular, there is strong evidence that this focus on environmental issues is being integrated in classes as well (i.e. there are openly available results of student assignments and presentations on the school’s website).

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), based on Green School strategic documents, available at: <https://www.eurscva.eu/en/green-school-2/>

3.6. Curriculum and facilities for sports/physical education

This section investigates questions related to the areas of sports and physical education (PE) at the ES. The section examines these questions both from a pedagogical and an infrastructural perspective.

Overall, there is a consensus among all stakeholder groups that the ESS objectives related to sports and PE are relevant. Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents believe that PE is important. However, there are some observable differences between the groups, with students themselves seeing PE as much less important than other stakeholder groups, with 47% of students seeing it as relevant or very relevant as opposed to 87% of other stakeholders. The reason behind this gap is not entirely clear, however, an analysis of the open answers as well as some of the student responses indicates that the students’ extreme focus on academic attainment in the ESS might be one of the reasons. At the same time, this contrasts with the stakeholder’s perception of how these ESS objectives reflect in practice in the actions of the ES. Here, only half of the stakeholders agreed with the statement that the goals are well reflected in practice, which suggests some potential for improvement (11% think that this goal is very well reflected; while 39% think that it is well reflected).

Table 19: Survey results: perceived relevance of sports and PE among students.

Survey results	Very relevant		Relevant		Neither relevant nor irrelevant (neutral)		Not relevant		Not relevant at all	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
7. Develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities.	161	25,9	131	21,1	155	25,0	106	17,1	68	11,0

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), Survey of stakeholders (students), N=621 NAs excluded

Table 20: Survey results: perceived relevance of sports and PE among non-students.

Survey results	Very relevant		Relevant		Neither relevant nor irrelevant (neutral)		Not relevant		Not relevant at all	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
7. Develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities.	2055	44,12	2016	43,28	434	9,32	112	2,40	41	0,88

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=4658 NAs excluded

3.6.1. Sports curriculum

An analysis of the in-depth interviews shows that, generally, most of the stakeholders, including students’ representatives, are satisfied with the quality of the offered sports and PE classes. In fact, as

Box 7 below illustrates, sports have become an important driver of strengthening the European dimension in the existing curricula. Specifically, the inter-School events of Eurosport that have been organised biannually within the ESS since the early 2000s play a particularly important role in fostering a spirit of cooperation between the children.

Box 7: Good practice: Eurosport

Since 2001, Eurosport has become an essential part of the activities of all the ES and is seen as an important step for the social and physical development of students in the European spirit. Eurosport takes place every two years in one of the ES. Within the scope of physical activities, the hosting School determines beforehand what type of team sports competitions will be held (chosen between football, basketball, handball, and volleyball). There are both girls’ and boys’ teams. In addition, there are badminton and table tennis mixed tournaments with three doubles teams competing against each other. At the end of the three-day-long sports competitions a duathlon tournament is held, consisting of a swimming and running relay.

Source: ES Munich (2021), Eurosport, available at: <https://esmunich.de/en/secondary-school/projects/eurosport.html> as well as ES (2016). Eurosport Handbook, available at: <https://www.eurc.eu/BasicTexts/2014-09-D-49-en-3.pdf>

Overall, **none of the interviewees reported any systemic problems with the content of the sports and PE curricula.** Desk research aimed at an examination of the curricula demonstrates that the competence-based approach is well reflected in these documents. Common values as well as the importance of well-being and personality competences are well reflected there, which was also confirmed by the interviewees – students, parents, and teachers. This curriculum is supplemented by a diverse variety of extracurricular activities outdoors. This includes activities such as skating, slack lining, skateboarding, orienteering, wall climbing and cycling, which are often organised both during sports days and School trips. The Inter-School Teacher’s Committee (ISTC), however, has noted that a further expansion of the curriculum could be considered regarding the possibility of adding more information on a healthy lifestyle and nutrition.

Stakeholders positively view the method of formative assessment in sports and PE, which is continuous within the learning process, based on prior learning and provides feedback about how learning is proceeding, for both pupils and teachers. The key positive aspect is the wholesomeness of the approach: assessments are based on continuous observation during lessons, tests, a student's self-assessment, a portfolio that tracks a student's achievements, a pupil's record that documents a student's progress and an obligatory School report that records the level of achievement of PE objectives (ES 2015d).

Nevertheless, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been very significant on sports classes. Many classes and activities were cancelled multiple times throughout 2020-2021 in various Schools while children were forced to stay at home. Furthermore, social distancing regulations - imposed especially on in-door sports - have also hampered class activities, thus, significantly undermining the educational process. Full normalisation of the situation, however, is expected by stakeholders once and only if the pandemic subsides.

Other two non-systemic issues reported during the in-depth interviews included very **heterogeneous class groups and the lack of variety in offered sports**. These seem to be partially supported by stakeholder inputs to the open-ended questions in the stakeholders' survey, however, it is hard to identify their importance across different Schools. The first challenge relates to the fact that quite often students with very different PE levels end up in the same group, which causes complaints on both sides with parents wanting to separate children into more and less advanced groups. This option, however, might not always be available due to class size and infrastructure limitations. Furthermore, there is a lack of a gender-based analysis of participation in sports and PE as a part of the broader efforts at developing social competences (i.e. understanding whether participation by gender remains constant through the years/cycles and in different Schools).

The second challenge is a lack of variety in offered sports that was reported by various stakeholder groups from different Schools. Nevertheless, parents' associations in individual ES have adopted the good practice of organising additional extracurricular sports activities on their own (see Box 8 below).

Box 8: Good practice: Catalogue of extracurricular (sports) activities organised by the parents' association in ES Karlsruhe

The parents' association of ES Karlsruhe independently organised a special system of extracurricular activities, including one for sports. The system functions based on paid memberships, where any willing student may register and book a specific course from the catalogue. The parents' association then takes care of any organisational/administrative matters in cooperation with local teachers and management. The range of sports activities offered is quite broad and includes gymnastics, karate, and yoga, among others. Apart from that, the system offers other courses with a focus on general education (e.g. languages; programming) and practical skills (e.g. cooking, handicrafts).

Source: ES Karlsruhe (2021). Außerschulische Aktivitäten, Available at: <https://www.esk-eltern.de/de/ausserschulische-aktivitaeten/>

3.6.2. Sports infrastructure and facilities

Overall, students and parents seem to be generally satisfied with the available infrastructure as evidenced in the in-depth interviews with their representatives. The assessment did not show any

systemic problems with the quality of the existing infrastructure, even though multiple individual complaints were registered in open answers to the survey (e.g. related to the quality of infrastructure in individual Schools, a need for specific equipment, etc.). That said, representatives of the ES in Brussels have admitted that students there are experiencing problems with accessing facilities due to the problem of overcrowding (see [section 4.4.3](#)).

Despite overall satisfaction with the existing infrastructure, there is still one emerging challenge related to the **provision of additional necessary facilities**. According to ES regulations, some activities (e.g. swimming) are prescribed in the curriculum, but only if facilities are available for that. However, such facilities are not always available at all Schools and management is not always able to do anything about this because the financing of both new and old equipment/facilities is the responsibility of the Member State where the School is established. This problem is particularly relevant for more overcrowded Schools. The problem, according to some interviewed School Directors, also leads parents and students to question the existing sports requirements in the syllabi.

3.7. COVID-19 impact on education at the ESS

This section examines the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the ESS context as of late 2021. While reviewing the key lessons learned, this sub-section pays particular attention to the main challenges that the ESS faced in dealing with COVID-19 as well as the good practices that it adopted to combat them.

3.7.1. COVID-19 response of the ESS

The COVID-19 pandemic became a game-changer for the educational environment of the ESS for various reasons. On the one hand, it caused mental distress for many stakeholders including children, parents, teachers, and staff members and put their health at risk. It also became a challenging test for the system's resilience in emergency situations. On the other hand, the pandemic significantly sped up the education digitalisation process that had already started in the ESS before the pandemic.

There have been several areas in which the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly detrimental and is similar to the effect it had on national systems. First, the **flow of teaching and learning was disrupted** by the crisis at the beginning of 2020. In March 2020, some Schools had to suspend regular *in situ* teaching and proceeded with a distance teaching and learning scenario in a very spontaneous fashion. Both the open answers to some of the survey questions as well as the in-depth interviews demonstrate that this was a particularly hard moment for both children and parents as well as the OSG's PDU (PDU). The disruptions were caused not only by a change in the teaching mode, but also by the fact that some teachers and staff members fell sick, and there were rapidly changing government regulations regarding COVID-19 safety measures.

While the survey did directly touch upon COVID-19-related questions (because the OSG is currently conducting its internal follow-up survey on the topic), issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic were actively raised in answers to the open-ended questions. Generally, assessments of the situation were quite positive, especially because most stakeholder groups had a chance to compare the response of the ESS and the national public education systems, most of which were much slower and far less efficient. This general assessment is well-reflected in a summary offered by a representative of the ES Alumni Association, who is also an ES parent: *"The European Schools managed the situation really well*

compared to national schools, for example, in Germany, where schools were understaffed and did not perform well. One of the key reasons is because the European Schools are so technically well-equipped. Considering the restrictions that they had to face, I think they offered a very good level of education."

The **BoG and OSG responded to the challenge very quickly by establishing an institutional framework necessary for the continuous functioning of the ESS** within weeks after the start of the pandemic. A special task force was organised for the pandemic response, partly because the BoG decision-making process was too slow for a response to a crisis event. The OSG PDU put together guidelines for remote teaching and issued several updates based on feedback from individual ES and parents. This was followed by a Distance Teaching and Learning Policy, which concisely reflects upon the duties of stakeholders in distance teaching scenarios (ES 2020). As a follow-up to the COVID-19 impact, the OSG PDU also created a multi-stakeholder taskforce for the year 2021/2022, which is tasked with discussing how to address the issues of a potential academic loss from the COVID-19 period as well as measures for social and psychological accommodation for students. Examination requirements (incl. the EB examinations) in both 2020 and 2021 were adjusted to accommodate for the students' psychological needs and health regulations.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on the interdependence of psycho-socio-emotional well-being and pedagogical attainment (for a detailed discussion of well-being policies, see [section 4.3.4](#)). The overly strong focus on educational progression was also criticised by parents in the open answers analysis: *"Some teachers only cared about advancing in the program without worrying about the children's understanding or note taking"*. As a result, during the pandemic, the mental health and well-being of pupils and School staff became a key priority for educational management. As OSG representatives, parents' associations, and teachers point out in the interviews, adapted pedagogical approaches became necessary for ensuring engagement and impactful teaching and learning while also promoting socioemotional skills and supporting vulnerable members of the community. In that respect, various ES have also adopted various good practices such as online mental health support groups (see an example in the box below).

Box 9: Good practice: Within-Schools' COVID-19 task forces

ES Brussels IV has its own special COVID-19 taskforce, which meets every two weeks and discusses possible improvements to the COVID-19 situation in their School (once a week – when the COVID-19 situation is serious). To combat "pandemic fatigue"⁴⁵, the task force also put in place some measures to ensure the well-being of community members. For example, they have organised Weeks of Mental Health, which are full of specialised activities such as counselling sessions and mental health workshops. The task force has also encouraged establishing online teacher groups to exchange best practices and reduce the pressures of self-isolation.

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), Based on the Social Climate Policy, available at: <https://www.es-karlsruhe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Annex-I.2-ESK-Social-Climate-Policy-2019.pdf>

⁴⁵ Pandemic fatigue, according to the World Health Organisation, refers to an expected and natural response to a prolonged public health crisis. See e.g. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/335820/WHO-EURO-2020-1160-40906-55390-eng.pdf>

3.7.2. Challenges related to the COVID-19 impact

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted several challenges that the system faces (incl. increased workload for teachers and staff, disruption of educational activities, mental health challenges, infrastructural problems, and communication issues). While these problems were not unique to the ESS, their contextual embedding in the ESS was somewhat different when compared to national schools. This section elaborates on each of these challenges in greater detail as of early 2022, but a more complex additional investigation of long-term COVID-19 impacts on the ESS might be required in the future.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately **increased pressure on teachers and staff, who had to take up additional responsibilities**, adapt to online and hybrid learning, as well as undergo thorough extra training. Another example is that the ESS, at the moment of writing of this study, is about to introduce the role of digital teaching and learning coordinators, who will replace ICT coordinators. However, those digital teaching and learning coordinators are usually the same people (former ICT coordinators), whose workload significantly increases, while their work hours remain the same. Some parents and teachers also pointed out that the introduction of Distance Teaching and Learning in various scenarios seems to have blurred the boundaries between personal and academic/professional activities, which makes it harder to maintain a work-life balance.

Second, the **disruption of class activities and regular examination procedures also resulted in a somewhat negative impact on the quality of provided education**. Despite a quick reaction on the part of the OSG, not all teachers were ready for the digital transition. While some “digital skills” trainings have been taking place for staff members, these were not cohesive enough across the board in all Schools and with all teachers. Furthermore, the high rate of teacher turnover⁴⁶ in the ESS framework, as reported by students and parents and as confirmed by the OSG in its 2021 presentation to the EP, became even more problematic in the digital context, when children would have to get used to not only a new learning environment and methods but also to regularly changing teachers. Apart from that, many in-person extracurricular activities such as field trips, inter-School competitions or symposia had to be cancelled due to public health regulations, which had a negative impact on the European dimension of the received education.

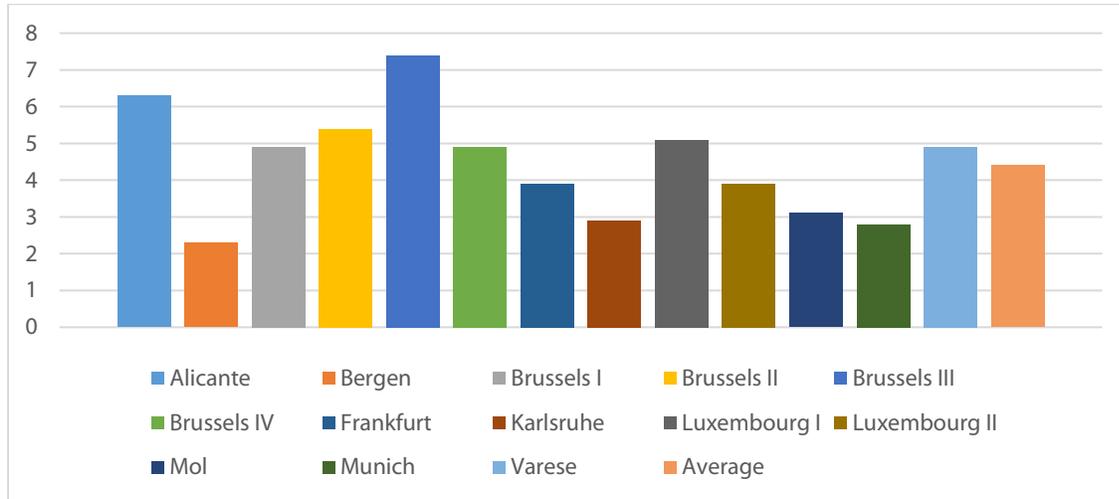
Third, despite all measures put in place to alleviate mental health issues for students, many of them faced **serious mental health-related/emotional challenges** during the pandemic. According to interviewed students’ representatives as well as several parents’ associations, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the already ongoing mental health crisis in the ESS context (Lalova & Molnarfi 2020), which is very competitive and largely centred around academic success. The COVID-19 pandemic also added problems of self-isolation and adaptation to new learning conditions. The negative effects might have differed somewhat across different age groups, as pointed out by the OSG. In terms of age groups, nursery and primary cycles were hit hardest because in these classes students are in much greater need of face-to-face interactions with both their teachers and peers. According to students’ representatives, this could have been alleviated with practical workshops and trainings for students on the topics of mental well-being in the context of a pandemic.

Fourth, the COVID-19 crisis has also highlighted some **infrastructural problems across the different ES and the existing digital differentiation** (see [section 4.3.3](#) for more details). Some Schools

⁴⁶ More detailed statistics / panel data on the turnover are not available.

progressed much faster in terms of digitalisation before the pandemic (e.g. through the Bring Your Own Device project, see below), while others lagged behind due to a lack of the necessary infrastructure such as tablets or computers. For example, in Bergen, there are about 2 pupils per PC, while in Frankfurt more than 7 pupils per PC, which demonstrates how diverse the situation is across different Schools (see Figure 16 below). This has resulted in very varied effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the quality of provided education across different ES. The overcrowding problem in Brussels (see [section 4.3.3](#) for more details) also received a new dimension due to social distancing requirements imposed by national authorities, which are very difficult to abide by due to a lack of space.

Figure 16: Pupils per PC ratio in traditional ES in 2020 by School.



Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), based on the OSG 2020 Facts and Figures report data

Box 10: Good practice: Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) project

According to the ESS, the main objective of the BYOD project is to allow pupils to bring personal mobile devices, such as laptops or tablets, to the educational institution where they study and use them. The BYOD project helps students develop digital skills and competences to become efficient, active, critical, creative, and responsible learners and users of digital technologies. The BYOD project has become an important driver of ESS digitalisation plans and is aimed at creating learning environments where digital technologies and media are used for learning, communication, and cooperation between all stakeholders.

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), Based on the policies of individual Schools

Finally, the pandemic also shed light on **communication problems** within the ESS. The legal framework in some Schools was confusing for parents and children because of the different regulation regimes imposed at the School, regional, and national levels. As one of the student representatives studying in Belgium put it: *“Regulations and requirements were not communicated in a clear, straightforward fashion. There were different requirements: in Flanders versus the School itself and versus Brussels. Some students would ask legitimate questions: why do we have to wear masks when students in Flanders do not?”*. Regularly changing policies and requirements at different levels (i.e. School, local, regional, and national levels) further contributed to the confusion.

4. OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE ESS

KEY FINDINGS

- The ESS' expansion and changes in the surrounding world have impacted the mission of the ESS. Although still perceived as relevant, many believe it ought to be broadened to include explicit references to values such as diversity, inclusion, co-operation, and tolerance.
- The current governance model is perceived as too complex, bureaucratic, and without appropriate checks and balances. Likewise, due to teacher shortages, the funding model and the cost-sharing mechanism are seen as not being effective enough.
- At the level of managing individual Schools, communication amongst administrative staff and teachers or parents needs to be improved and a system with clearer division of responsibilities should be established.
- Finally, when it comes to growth of the ES, expanding and promoting the system through the AES should be adopted as a policy priority.

4.1. European Schools System's Identity: Mission and Objectives

The European Schools' mission encompasses every aspect of School-life, including institutional and governance structures, daily management of administrative tasks, design and content of curriculum, extra-curricular activities as well as an overall understanding of what it means to be educated in a European way.

The mission, first defined when the first European School was created in Luxembourg in 1957 and engraved onto its foundation stone, has remained its guiding principle ever since. It is characterised by the desire to create a European sense of belonging amongst students (see [section 3.2](#)) through multicultural and multilingual education (see [section 3.3](#)) all by retaining a sense of national identity. The ESS shows that national and European identities are indeed compatible and that the co-existence of both is desirable.

The ESS' mission has underwritten the truly international educational learning environment that the ESS represents. However, it has also given rise to a rather inflexible School system that has become perceived as elitist. Representatives of both parents' and students' associations argue that the system caters only to students who have the academic and intellectual skills to keep up with a demanding curriculum, who have a natural ability for foreign languages, and who aim to obtain a European Baccalaureate that enables them to go to university. The ESS does not meet the demands of students with a different profile, ability, and ambition and, as such, has been perceived as being insufficiently adaptable to diverse student backgrounds and needs.

Many stakeholders agree that the mission of the ESS is still relevant and valued (see Table 21 below). It is largely seen as sufficiently reflective of the identity of European Schools and what they stand for. The mission statement is also seen in a generally favourable light as regards its contribution towards the development of a European identity. The students themselves, however, are less positive about the ESS

mission statement (see Table 22 below). A smaller share of them said it was relevant or sufficiently reflective of the School’s identity. There is clearly a difference in perception of what a school should be and how it is actually experienced by those attending it.

Table 21: Survey results: assessment of the ESS mission relevance by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The mission statement of the European Schools is still relevant today	1899	35.2	2212	41.0	585	10.8	391	7.2	129	2.4	178	3.3
The mission statement sufficiently reflects the identity of European Schools	1179	21.9	2426	45.1	844	15.7	556	10.3	132	2.5	243	4.5
The mission statement contributes to the development of a European identity and a spirit of European citizenship among students	1398	26.1	2202	41.1	860	16.0	519	9.7	172	3.2	213	4.0

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=5394, N=5380, N=5364.

Table 22: Survey results: assessment of the ESS mission relevance by students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I think that the mission statement of the European Schools is still relevant today.	217	32.7	194	29.3	102	15.4	70	10.6	25	3.8	55	8.3
I think that the mission statement sufficiently reflects the identity of European Schools.	167	25.4	210	32.0	112	17.0	78	11.9	21	3.2	69	10.5
I think that the mission statement contributes to the development of European identity and spirit of European citizenship among students.	190	29.0	142	21.6	117	17.8	101	15.4	39	5.9	67	10.2

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (students), N=663, N=657, N=656.

However, there is a growing consensus that the way in which the ESS functions and operates is insufficient to accommodate the diversity of students' skills, needs, abilities and ambitions. More specifically and building upon this, interviews and surveys with stakeholders revealed that the following five main operational issues prevent Schools from fully living up to the mission:

- 1) **Increasingly ambiguous relationship between national language and identity.** This has become one of the key problems for pupils attending the Schools, their parents, and staff members. The national language sections are constructed to mirror national education offered in the EU Member States for pupils with clearly defined national backgrounds. However, there are a growing number of mixed families, with pupils speaking two, sometimes even three languages at home, so then the children's dominant language is not the one that is native to their parents. This happens when, for example, mixed families speak English, German or French at home, where none of these languages is the pupil's native language, i.e. the language that accords with the parents' nationalities. Instead of being able to pursue the main language as if it was a native language, the pupil is forced to abide by nationality rather than custom. Another situation in which families find themselves is when they have decided to settle in a host country and would prefer that their child be educated like a native in the host country's language rather than in their native language. However, the ESS does not allow for this, thereby undermining to some extent the idea of European citizenship that is expressed in the mission statement. In other words, there is a growing view that the ES' system of placing pupils in national sections is too rigid, outdated, and unfit for truly multilingual and multicultural education. In support of this, the literature also points out that pupils themselves see this type of nationalism that the ESS promotes, and which insists on native language education, regardless of individual context, as a thing of the past (Rohde-Liebnau, 2020). Some parents have gone so far as to claim that the division of national/language sections creates an environment where unhealthy competition between sections results in discrimination and segregation rather than multicultural learning. For example, some classes in particular sections get students stereotyped as being "lazy" or "overachievers", irrespective of an individual pupil's results. Competition amongst sections regarding, for example, grades or sports performance is translated into competition amongst nationalities. This point was also previously expressed in several literature sources (Gray et al, 2018; Rohde-Liebnau, 2020). Finally, the current system often places students from smaller language sections at a disadvantage when it comes to learning the language of the host country – for too many pupils who are not in the English, French or German sections, learning the host language comes as a third language. This causes such pupils to remain in their own national "bubbles" without the opportunity to engage in life outside of the School, and, as a result, to appreciate the culture in which they now live.
- 2) **Parents' understanding of the Schools' mission.** Once again, this partly relates to the issue of national language and identity – many parents wish to enrol their children in language sections other than those in their native language(s) as a means of providing them with better learning and educational opportunities. School administrations argue that many parents increasingly perceive the European Schools as solely "language schools", largely detached from their mission of providing education in a language that parents speak at home. In this case, parents simply wish to enrol their children in language sections that are often unfamiliar to the child (most commonly English, French, or German), and sometimes even to the parents themselves. This creates tension between parents

and School administrations, and, in the case of SWALS, other parents, whose children attend the popular sections, namely English, French, or German, when there is no section corresponding to their native language/nationality. In the latter case, native speakers are mixed in with children who are not yet fluent in the language of a particular section and thus require additional attention/support. However, once such children acquire the language of their section, they do not necessarily relate to the cultural identity attributed to the spoken language. The ESS objective to “Give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – the bedrock for their development as European citizens” was marked amongst the least relevant objectives for all stakeholders and especially the parents and pupils themselves (see Table 20 below). Other objectives, such as developing various competences (native language and foreign languages, mathematical and scientific skills) and preparing pupils for the next stage of education were said to be much more relevant.

- 3) **Increasing diversity of pupils and staff.** Overall, given that the EU has significantly expanded since 1957, when the ESS was originally established, European Schools encompass a much wider variety of pupils as well as staff members. In this case, the problem is two-fold. First of all, some stakeholders, especially parents and pupils, believe that the Schools follow an outdated concept of European identity. More specifically, they claim there is too much focus on Western European cultural achievements or history (mainly the UK, France, and Germany) in the curricula, without adequate attention paid to other parts of Europe, or other parts of the world. The Schools were said to implicitly operate on a post-war Eurocentrism that favours a narrative of Western European success but lacks a critical stance on topics such as imperialism or colonialism. The ESS objective to “Encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of human sciences” was said to be quite relevant amongst all stakeholders, but even more so amongst pupils themselves. Secondly, the extremely large diversity of nationalities and languages makes it exceedingly difficult to ensure high-quality education from a management point of view. For example, smaller Schools in Germany or Italy struggle to provide high-quality L1 classes to all pupils. In some cases, SWALS students, according to other students and parents, were said to be treated as second-class citizens (see [section 4.3.4](#) on student well-being).
- 4) **Clear articulation of the European identity and values.** According to some Schools’ staff members and parents, while an overarching European identity is ever-present in the Schools, it is not properly, nor clearly articulated. That is to say, neither the mission statement, nor any other document (e.g. charter or declaration) explicitly outlines what the European identity and European values stand for. This makes European identity vague and intangible to parents and, more importantly, to pupils. A comprehensive set of principles and values, such as the respectful treatment of individuals, tolerance and well-being, openness and inclusion, democracy, respect for the environment, responsibility, etc., were said to be missing. For example, one parent said that *“the mission statement should be rewritten towards a comprehensive summary of the principles behind a European education respectful of human rights, rules based, sustainable, just and gender balanced.”*, while another argued that *“The European Schools’ mission statement should be also based on the promotion of European values - human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and human rights. These are not empty words. These values have to be the base for our children’s upbringing. The “United in diversity” slogan fits the EU Schools’ environment so perfectly.”* Such principles are also

important for helping pupils to gain a better understanding of what is expected from them on a daily basis (e.g. no bullying). Without a reference to any values, the Schools’ mission was even claimed by one parent to be, “a very generic mission that could be applied to many Schools in Brussels which have diverse students and where many languages are taught”.

Table 23: Survey results: assessment of the ESS mission (inclusion) by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The mission adequately reflects the values of diversity and inclusion (for example, for students with disabilities or students without a language section)	794	14.8	1568	29.3	1132	21.1	1075	20.1	457	8.5	329	6.1

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=5355.

Table 24: Survey results: assessment of the ESS mission (inclusion) by students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The mission adequately reflects the values of diversity and inclusion (for example, for students with disabilities or students without a language section)	133	20.3	147	22.4	146	22.3	110	16.8	61	9.3	58	8.9

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=655.

References to multiculturalism and multilingualism in the ESS’ mission statement are not perceived as sufficient for reflecting the broader values of diversity and inclusion. A significant share of stakeholders disagreed or held back from agreeing (see Tables 23-24 above) that the mission adequately reflects such values. In fact, many claimed that references to diversity and inclusion need to be explicit and that significant effort is needed to achieve them in practice. The ESS objective to “Foster tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the School community and beyond” was marked as one of the most relevant amongst stakeholders (see Table 20). Catering to the diversity of pupils’ abilities, talents and backgrounds was identified by all stakeholder groups as an especially difficult challenge for the ESS, and one that ought to be resolved. In particular, the following issues are perceived as critical:

- 1) **Education focused solely on academic achievement.** The highly academic, one-size-fits-all education model that the ESS offers was said to be great for children who excel in academic competence and thus often continue their education in university. However, the Schools offer few

venues outside of this traditional academic pathway, and as a result, little attention is given to the other abilities and talents of students. For example, despite criticisms raised in the Cavada report as far back as 2011 (EP 2011), there are still no options and no leaving certificate for pupils who wish to pursue a vocational career pathway. Pupils who are interested in the arts, or lean towards creative endeavours, including entrepreneurship, are also given little scope to develop these abilities. As a result, multiple parents, pupils, and teachers claim that the ESS places too much emphasis on achieving excellence via tests and exams, without really focusing on developing the full potential of individuals. The mission statement does not refer to pupils' well-being or their future as balanced individuals. As a result, parents and teachers believe there is an insufficient focus on that. Indeed, the ESS objective to "Cultivate pupils' personal, social, and academic development and prepare them for the next stage of education" was selected as the third most relevant objective amongst stakeholders, however one that was not always sufficiently implemented (see Table 25). The problem of elitism at the ESS has also been widely discussed in the literature – Schools were said to be insufficiently integrated into local communities (Gray et al, 2018, Martinez et al, 2015), and pupil experiences were limited to contacts with children from similar socioeconomic backgrounds (Rohde-Liebnau 2020).

- 2) **Insufficient attention to/ integration of/ engagement with pupils with special needs.** This point refers to the successful inclusion of all pupils irrespective of their abilities – abilities here can refer to both exceptionally gifted pupils as well as those who have cognitive learning challenges, such as pupils with mild learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia) or more serious disorders (e.g. autism or Asperger's syndrome). While progress has been made in this area and is particularly visible in selected Schools (see section 3.4), the ESS continues to struggle to offer systematic and individualised support across all of its Schools. Parent representatives claim that individual experiences of pupils with learning difficulties vary across locations and Schools. There is, however, an overall consensus among parents and pupils that such pupils are pushed away rather than integrated. Pupils and some teachers have pointed out that instead of being valued for who they are, children with learning difficulties are increasingly pushed to perform as well as their peers, resulting in higher than usual stress, the exacerbation of mental health issues as well as the emergence of new ones.
- 3) **Insufficient diversity provisions.** The ESS was said to be quite good at creating a truly European environment where children from many EU Member States mingle and learn together. However, the scope for encouraging the development of individual identities falling outside of traditional national boundaries was said to be limited by several parents and teachers. For example, they mentioned that children from families without a separate language section (e.g. Irish, Maltese, Catalan, who may not identify with a British/Spanish nationality, even if English or Spanish are considered their native language), or whose nationality is too small to have one (SWALS) often feel like "outsiders" from the system, or may even be discriminated against. Likewise, children from religious minorities (Jewish, Muslim, or other), or those who identify as a part of the LGBTQ community, also feel excluded. The latter topic was said to have been covered during the so-called Respect Week organised by some Schools, yet, for the rest of the year, the subject remains taboo. Parents, teachers, and pupils claim that the Schools' mission ought to be updated to cater to such diversity as well.

The mission statement of the ESS also states that such Schools are primarily meant to educate the children of the staff of European institutions. What this does, however, is create a School system that caters to a specific and privileged socio-economic category thereby leading to a School system and education that is far removed from reality and everyday life outside of the Schools. This is contrary to a wholesome education, and in stark opposition to European values. Some stakeholder representatives have gone so far as to call the ESS a “social ghetto” for socio-economically privileged pupils. According to one parent, *“The limitation to children of the staff of European institutions does not foster a multicultural environment. This segregation has led to creating quite a homogeneous bubble of students who are sometimes shocked when leaving school and discovering the world beyond.”* Accordingly, the vast majority of them believe that European Schools need to become more open and better connected to the outside world in two ways: first, through more engagement with local communities and second, through the inclusion of children from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds. To take each in turn:

- 1) **Integration in and engagement with local communities.** The ES are said to be too often detached from local realities – for example, there is little space to cover the history and culture of host countries in classrooms, and some pupils, due to specific language arrangements, do not start learning the host country’s language until secondary School, if at all. This makes their integration in and engagement with local communities difficult. For example, attendance at afterschool activities, where pupils could interact with children of the host country, is not as common as many would like it to be. Such a lack of connection with the host country also results in tension between those who are part of the ESS, and those who are not, but remain affected by its presence (e.g. residents who live nearby, host country policy makers, etc.). One stakeholder described these relations as very tense, claiming that the local residents *“just hate us because we don’t contribute in any way to their communities but only cause problems.”* Parents and teachers suggest that more attention could be paid to the host country by, for example, including more educational daytrips to cultural or historical places, exchanges (e.g. participation in Erasmus+, which very few ES currently do), projects or various activities done in collaboration with local Schools, including, for example, extending an invitation to some of the events organised at the ES (e.g. Eurosport). To sum up, many stakeholders believe that more attention to the history, culture, and language of the host country would help pupils to make more and better contacts outside of School and be less isolated within the ESS.
- 2) **Attendance mainly limited to a clearly defined pool of children with similar socio-economic backgrounds.** This is naturally due to the nature of the ESS and the socio-economic background of the pupils’ parents. It is a question of whether this can easily be resolved, especially as some of the Schools are overcrowded and face difficulties in admitting even category I children. However, many parents and teachers believe that the education offered at the ES should be available to as many Europeans as possible, assuming that they share such values and would like their children to be brought up this way (see section 4.1). Furthermore, the exclusivity of Schools makes some parents and teachers uneasy, especially as the ESS is funded from public money. Even though traditional ES are publicly funded, they are in fact closed to children from the general public and are perceived as private schools in the way that they operate. The fact that some categories of students have to pay tuition, while others do not, further stresses the issue of seeming inequality. Parents and teachers suggest that one way of integrating more pupils from local families ought to be found (e.g. by offering scholarships or other means), or adopting entirely different, more open approaches (e.g.

through a significant expansion of the AES). Finally, the Schools are increasingly attended by children whose parents do not work for European institutions, especially in the AES. However, due to the mission statement’s explicit focus on education for children whose parents work for European institutions, parents and pupils who do not meet this criterion often feel excluded and their needs are considered to be less important.

On a different note, representatives of some Schools’ administrations claimed that the perception of the ESS by other educational establishments as elitist might stem from a seemingly sizeable budget allocated per pupil. However, while this budget seems generous on paper, it is not necessarily felt in practice. Many pupils in traditional ES are not given the attention they ought to be given due to their Schools’ size (see [section 4.3.3](#) on infrastructure and facilities). The well-being of pupils is compromised as a result, and educational achievement as well as pupils’ self-esteem and confidence all suffer. The mission of the ESS does not reference the latter elements, yet a significant number of parents and students believe this to be extremely important (see Table 25 below).

Finally, there is a clear consensus amongst most stakeholders of the ESS that ES should provide a broad and high-quality education for their pupils, and at the same time foster tolerance, co-operation and communication (see Table 25 below). Delivering high-quality education is perceived as the utmost priority for the Schools, which also includes ensuring high standards in languages, mathematical and scientific skills, and physical skills. Other aspects, such as encouraging creativity in music and the plastic arts, fostering specific cultural identities amongst its pupils, or even providing education for sustainable development were perceived as less important.

Table 25: Survey results: assessment of ESS education objectives by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – the bedrock for their development as European citizens	1968	36.8	2299	43.0	644	12.0	249	4.7	133	2.5	52	1.0
Provide a broad education of high quality from nursery level to university-entrance	3665	68.7	1236	23.2	230	4.3	102	1.9	56	1.0	45	0.8
Develop high standards in the mother tongue and in foreign languages [namely, first (I1), second (I2), third (L3) and fourth (L4) languages]	3183	59.6	1626	30.5	287	5.4	142	2.7	65	1.2	34	0.6

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout the entire period of schooling	3001	56.3	1758	33.0	348	6.5	119	2.2	57	1.1	49	0.9
Encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of human sciences	2485	46.6	2049	38.4	481	9.0	170	3.2	69	1.3	77	1.4
Encourage creativity in music and the plastic arts and an appreciation of all that is best in a common European artistic heritage	1855	34.8	2115	39.7	853	16.0	299	5.6	133	2.5	79	1.5
Develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities	2216	41.6	2147	40.3	589	11.0	218	4.1	109	2.0	54	1.0
Offer pupils professional guidance on their choice of subjects and on career/university decisions in their later years of secondary school	2734	51.4	1672	31.4	447	8.4	171	3.2	100	1.9	200	3.8
Foster tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond	3336	62.7	1394	26.2	341	6.4	131	2.5	67	1.3	54	1.0
Cultivate pupils' personal, social, and academic development and prepare them for the next stage of education	3281	61.7	1467	27.6	309	5.8	127	2.4	68	1.3	63	1.2
Provide Education for Sustainable Development with a cross curriculum approach in line with European and international documents.	2137	40.2	1866	35.1	762	14.3	193	3.6	112	2.1	249	4.7

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=5315-5345.

Given the issues discussed in this section, it is clear that the **mission statement of the ESS should be adapted to the changing world** and, more importantly, expand its scope to cater to more diversity and inclusion. Close to half of the stakeholders surveyed during the study (see Tables 26-27 below) would be in favour of updating the mission statement, all the more so, as the system is expected to expand via the AES, which are not necessarily attended by the staff of European institutions (see [section 4.4](#)). Implementation of the ESS mission also needs to be improved via concrete policies to ensure that the principles behind the ES are fully respected and truly achieved.

Table 26: Survey results: assessment of the ESS mission by non-students (updating).

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The mission statement should be updated	1047	19.6	1450	27.1	1550	29.0	611	11.4	235	4.4	451	8.4

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=5344.

Table 27: Survey results: assessment of the ESS mission by students (updating).

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I think that the mission statement should be updated.	119	18.3	108	16.6	159	24.4	98	15.0	72	11.0	96	14.7

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=652.

4.2. Governance of the ESS

This section covers the following aspects: first, it examines the current governance model of the ESS in terms of its complexity and reasons behind it; second, it analyses how the governance structure, and its functioning dynamics affect daily School-life across the ESS, and third, which is based on this analysis, it identifies areas where improvements are needed. Issues, such as the complexity, speed, and inclusivity of various stakeholders in decision-making in the ESS, as well as the roles, responsibilities, and accountability of various actors across the governance system are covered in greater detail. The last subsection also looks at the current conflict resolution mechanisms at the ESS via the Complaints Board. The effectiveness of the Complaints Board is also discussed.

4.2.1. The current governance model of the ESS

The complete governance system of the ES is described in more detail in the [second chapter](#). The ESS governance model is comprised of several levels: the BoG is responsible for key decisions relevant to the entire ESS, and the OSG acts as an executive body to the BoG and commonly oversees separate Schools and their administrations, which are then responsible for dealing with the day-to-day

management of the Schools in consultation with the Administrative Board and the School Advisory Council. The Board of Governors (BoG) is comprised of representatives from each MS, the European Commission, parent, and pupil representatives, as well as representatives of Schools' administrations. Each individual School has a certain degree of autonomy when deciding on matters such as pupil enrolment, staff training and employment, and other management decisions.

While the governance model was said to have worked well in the past, when there were fewer ES with fewer language sections and much smaller numbers of pupils, most stakeholders now believe that the model needs to be updated. A significant share of stakeholders, mostly parents and teachers, but sometimes also the administrative personnel, members of the BoG or the OSG, perceive the governance of the ESS as relatively complex and overly bureaucratic. According to most stakeholders, it is often unclear how the system is balanced and who is accountable for what. The roles and responsibilities of all entities involved at different governance levels are not sufficiently defined, which results in difficulties when the system is faced with specific issues or challenges. For example, one parent said that *"the dual system (Board of Governors - Director at local level) serves many times to provide Directors with the excuse that it is not in their hands to decide upon something <...> for the parents it is not easy to overcome that, since any complaint to the Board seems immediately too formalistic"*. In this case it remains an open question to whom the issue ought to be addressed. Another parent commented that *"I cannot fathom how this system is still up and running. So many different players, so many overlapping systems, so many different interests that come into play and are not those of the students or parents. Incredibly opaque, inefficient... The worst kind of bureaucratic nightmarish "mish-mash."* Finally, the perception of most parents can be summarised by the following quote: *"the governance system feels overly complex, remote, bureaucratic, and impenetrable. Several times we have had the sense that if there is a problem, the system is too large and complex to produce meaningful change swiftly"*.

In line with previous comments, more than a quarter of the survey's respondents (see Table 28 below) evaluated the ESS governance model negatively or very negatively, while a significant share said it was neither good nor bad. A large share (21.8%) could not evaluate the model because they were unfamiliar with it – a possible indication of its complexity and obscurity. A fair number of comments were made by survey respondents indicating they did not understand how the system functioned, nor how it was governed. Likewise, the share of pupils who believe that the Schools are not run well by those in charge is rather large (16.9% and 8.2% provided negative evaluations, see Table 29 below), especially when compared to the evaluations of other operational aspects (see other sections in Chapter 4).

Table 28: Survey results: assessment of the governance model of the ESS by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Governance model of the whole system, which consists of an international and inter-institutional Board of Governors represented by a Secretary General, whose office coordinates different schools	151	4.6	631	19.1	969	29.3	497	15.0	338	10.3	720	21.8

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=3306.

Table 29: Survey results: assessment of the governance model of the ESS by students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The European Schools seem to be run well by those in charge	74	16.5	115	25.6	140	31.1	76	16.9	37	8.2	8	1.8

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (students), N=3306.

Reasons behind the perceived complexity and bureaucracy of the ESS governance model

The perceived complexity and bureaucratic load within the ESS are mainly due to the following reasons:

- **The legal basis of the ESS.** The ESS was established under the Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools⁴⁷. The Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that determines the basic principles of how the ESS operates. The principles are agreed upon by all MSs and need to be adhered to across the different Schools. However, this has rendered the ES an intergovernmental organisation, where day-to-day functioning is determined, and significantly constrained, by a legal protocol. Any more serious or fundamental changes in the ESS require modifying the said treaty or other agreements, which, in turn, require unanimity from all MSs. This is often difficult if not impossible to achieve in practice and makes the ESS subject to inertia. According to one parent representative, within the ESS “no new ideas are welcome, because of long-existing outdated rules”.
- **The number of stakeholders involved in decision making.** The BoG, which is the main decision-making entity, is comprised of multiple stakeholders (see Figure 11 in the [Chapter 2](#)), whereby all MSs, the EC, parents, teachers and students are represented. Some, especially the administrative personnel who are more familiar with - and therefore more at-ease with - the ESS governance model, believe this is necessary to ensure that all aspects and views are taken into account. They tend to agree that the number of stakeholders involved hinders the speed of decision-making but is nonetheless beneficial to maintain balance in the system long-term. However, many parents,

⁴⁷ More information available at: https://www.eursec.eu/BasicTexts/SW1_21994A0817-en.pdf

teachers and pupils did not think that there was a tangible benefit for two main reasons: first, they pointed out that involving so many stakeholders to run the ESS and oversee decisions across the whole network is inefficient. According to one parent, *“the admin model is outdated and feels like all the things everyone hates about the EU – too many people trying to make decisions inefficiently”*. Second, they noted that the governance model, and especially the presence of all MSs, is overly politicised. Decisions taken at the BoG were said to be more about ensuring that all MSs are satisfied with proposed outcomes from a political or financial point of view, rather than guaranteeing that decisions made are in the pupils’ and their parents’ best interests. For example, it was stated that representatives of the 27 Member States often engage in policymaking and diplomacy instead of addressing issues across the Schools in a pragmatic fashion. This entails negotiating how much their respective countries are willing to spend, or how it should better reflect the needs of their national systems. To quote one parent, the ESS should *“stop making the education of our kids into an international political issue. It’s a very practical problem, which should have pragmatic solutions. <...> No more meddling from Member States. Just give the students and the parents what they need instead of trying to prove a point to the Belgian government or score points with the German ministry of education.”*

- **Strong hierarchy across all levels of governance.** Although traditional ES were granted additional autonomy in 2009 in finance, administration and pedagogy (see [Chapter 2](#)) the “top-down” arrangement, where all Schools are centrally overseen by the OSG and the BoG, continues to be criticised by many parents as too far removed from the factual realities of each School. In other words, while the division of responsibilities amongst individual School administrations (including Administrative Boards and the Directors) and the OSG should ensure a smooth decision-making process at all levels, this is often not the case, as ultimately many decisions still require consultation with other stakeholders within the system. This results in an accumulation of issues that remain properly unaddressed and unresolved, as individual School administrations lack the power for doing so. Parents feel especially removed from decision-making at the ES, because, they argue, attempts to resolve relatively small and ordinary issues via the APEEE, and then, if necessary, further via Interparents, is too time-consuming and complicated for most. They perceive the ESS governance system as a *“monolithic structure”*, as one parent put it, and further stated that *“the governance system is too far removed from the parents’ concerns. The local governance is also too dismissive of parents’ concerns and ideas for improvements. It’s a very hierarchical system and teachers themselves are afraid of speaking out.”*

4.2.2. *The impact of governance on the functioning of the ESS*

The three points described above have had further consequences. Most importantly, the large number of stakeholders involved in the system has led both parents and teachers to believe that there is **limited commitment to ensure pedagogical quality** and a **serious lack of accountability** for decisions made. There is a lack of clarity in who, between all the actors involved, gets the final say in what, and consequently, who is to be held accountable when something goes amiss.

For example, the issue of underperforming seconded teachers was raised by a fair number of parents (approximately 200 parents, or ca. 6% of total respondents, raised this issue in the open answers to the survey) – it is the responsibility of MSs to recruit teachers, which is why the Schools’ administrations do

not have any decision-making power over them. If there are any concerns with their quality of teaching, the Board of Inspectors ought to investigate. The inspectors themselves, however, commonly participate in the selection of teachers, which means that teacher underperformance puts a question mark on their initial choice, and consequently, their work as inspectors (see [the relevant sub-section of Chapter 3](#) for more details). Neither the OSG, nor the BoG play any role in teacher secondment. Ultimately, it remains unclear to parents who has the power to reprimand, or even fire a teacher, if performance remains sub-standard. In the case of locally-recruited teachers, the situation is reversed – while the Directors are responsible for their hiring, such teachers are not supervised by the Board of Inspectors, and as a result the responsibility for their performance seems to lie entirely with the Schools' management. However, in this case, if pupils or their parents are dissatisfied with a teacher's performance, the possibility of a dialogue with the School's administration rests on the goodwill of those in charge. Unfortunately, this does not help to ensure efficient, timely and diplomatically effective communication amongst all parties involved, nor does it lead to satisfactory outcomes in a systematic way.

The accountability of the OSG, or even the BoG, has also been called into question. For one, the BoG is not held accountable to any other entity, even though its decisions impact the whole of the ESS, both overall and in very specific instances (e.g. number of supporting staff in schools). The OSG is held accountable to the BoG, yet the BoG is too far removed from the day-to-day life of the ESS and is therefore unable to adequately supervise the OSG. Representatives of MSs, who sit on the BoG, are sent by national education ministries. However, they have not necessarily had direct experience with managing a School or setting a curriculum. Furthermore, they do not always have adequate knowledge and understanding of the ESS itself. The amount of time that representatives of the MSs can allocate for matters related to the ESS is quite limited and the actual number of days they sit on the BoG is relatively small. A lack of proper separation and balance also exists in other domains. The School Directors are accountable to the OSG, but at the same time, are directly dependent on the OSG's decisions, which means that their decisions may lean more towards ensuring the satisfaction of the OSG even if parents, teachers, or School staff are disappointed in the outcome.

Overall, this has led some parents and teachers to doubt the **transparency** of the ESS – some claim that the system lacks checks and balances, and that the issues described have led to continuous internal tensions between the various governance entities, especially parents and their representatives, versus the rest of the system. The system itself, apart from teachers, students, and parents, was said to lack independent voices. It was noted multiple times by various stakeholders that most staff members depend on the goodwill of their superiors to advance their careers or even keep their jobs. Within this context, teachers' representation is especially tricky – while teachers are represented on the local Administrative Boards, some parents and teachers pointed out that there is no clear and transparent process for this, and that some Schools remain "*steered by powerful cliques of teachers*". This may have resulted from the lack of a clear middle-management structure, which is then filled by more experienced teachers. The AES and smaller traditional ES also claimed that they lack proper representation and a voice on the BoG (e.g. only one School Director from AES is present on the Joint Teaching Committee, while all Directors from traditional ES, (currently 13) are invited to participate). As

a result, those who work for or whose children attend more peripheral ES or the AES, also tend to believe that most of the decisions made are oriented towards the large ES in Brussels or Luxembourg.

4.2.3. Conflict resolution for decisions made at the ESS

The Complaints Board was set-up to help solve any problems that arise when School administrations, the OSG, and parents perceive the situation differently. For example, the Complaints Board was said to play a big role in *“safeguarding the children from being kicked out of a school”*. However, in most other cases, the Complaints’ Board was said to be ineffective because of the following two reasons:

- The Complaints Board has a **limited mandate**. The Board may help resolve only very specific legal matters, and a very limited range of decisions made by one of the organs of the ES⁴⁸ may be appealed. According to parents, this entity *“never solves anything due to limited powers, everyone involved wastes time and money”* – complaints are rejected on procedure-driven terms, or the Board has no power to decide. The Complaints Board cannot decide on any pedagogical matters - so, for example, issues related to educational support for a child with learning difficulties cannot be resolved in this way.
- The Complaints Board **entails a legal process for all parties involved**. Bringing an issue to the Complaints Board is considered a measure of last resort, yet there is no mid-level entity that could help to address any issues before it. Many parents have asked for an Ombudsman or an intermediary institution, *“where one can go immediately without suing someone”*. Such an Ombudsman may help resolve issues as they occur, rather than postpone or deal with them *“after the fact”*. This could help prevent more serious complaints or accusations down the line. Furthermore, the Ombudsman could also deal with a wider range of issues, including pedagogical ones. Finally, the legal process of going to the Complaints Board drains significant resources from the OSG as well as the parents – it entails financial costs and takes a lot of time for everyone involved.

According to school administrations’ personnel, parents often involve the Complaints Board when they do not understand something about the ESS and how it functions. School Directors and some of the government representatives at the BoG point out that parents at the ES are much more adept at raising issues and complaining because they work for European institutions and therefore have more capacity to engage than parents in ordinary national schools would otherwise have. According to one School Director *“it is not easy for some parents to accept a decision”*, and this is made all the more complicated because, to quote one representative of the School’s administration, *“half of the parents are lawyers and the other half think they are”*. Indeed, the ESS, especially the traditional ES, suffer from internal tensions between parents and School administrations, with parents feeling quite detached from and uninformed about the educational processes of their children. **Better communication** is one of the ways this can be improved – parents need to be made well-aware of ESS policies and the rationale behind them when their children first enter the ES and continue to be more informed about decisions taken throughout (see section 4.3 on management). As one parent mentioned *“the communication towards and*

⁴⁸ Decisions made by the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Central Enrolment Authority, Director (Head Teacher) of a School, Class Council, Discipline Council, Examining Board of the Baccalaureate may be appealed. More information available at: <http://www.schola-europaea.eu/cree/>

involvement of parents in school affairs is limited, the decisions of school management are not properly explained and communicated – it seems that children are here for the school and not the school for the children”.

Finally, multiple stakeholders have raised the concern that there is a serious **lack of pedagogical competence** in the current governance system of the ESS. While the BoG is comprised of various representatives who should have the necessary pedagogical knowledge and experience, it does not necessarily mean that all persons participating in the BoG will be sufficiently informed about the pedagogy at the ESS. Furthermore, its members are not selected on the basis of competence, but rather seats are distributed according to required mandates for each MS. Positions within the OSG are not based on pedagogical or managerial competence, but are selected depending on the politics and finances of each MS. Administrative personnel, parents, teachers and experts have mentioned that the OSG also lacks a solid pedagogical team, which would enable them to effectively oversee the educational process across the ESS. Some positive improvements within the PDU were noted by teachers, yet it is not enough to provide adequate pedagogical support and maintain a high standard of education across the ESS. Parents have noted that, whenever there are issues with the quality of teaching, often teachers simply require additional guidance that is not provided on a systemic basis. Some have also suggested that the EC should be more involved in overseeing the ESS, not only as a financial contributor, but by also inviting representatives from DG EAC to sit on the BoG and steer the ESS towards better educational practices.

All in all, there is clearly a need for a more flexible and more effective governance model, with better defined roles and responsibilities. Some have suggested transforming the ESS into an agency or a similar international or supra-national entity, possibly managed by the EC, which would oversee the ES and the AES and which would also have the capacity to ensure pedagogical quality (see [section 3.1](#)). At the same time, others argue that an overly centralised approach is not desirable, especially for the AES or more peripheral traditional ES (e.g. Varese or Alicante), because it would hinder them from solving their own highly specific issues. Furthermore, follow-through of a centralised “agency” approach would mean that MSs are no longer in a position to participate in the decision-making of the BoG. However, as MSs contribute to the funding of the ES via seconded teachers, this could be an issue – each MS wants to have an equal say in decision-making that they will need to fund (see [section 4.3.1](#)). An appropriate governance model for the ES will not be easy to find, yet a change in the system seems long overdue. According to one parent *“The governance model and management structure are not fit for the purpose of guaranteeing a school system that complies with standards, practices and legislation that delivers education with quality and a good learning environment. If there is good delivery, it is rather because of good individuals, not because of the schools' system.”* A more simplified, better streamlined and more transparent system would be welcome. A clear scheme of delegation, where it is fully clear which responsibilities fall to the EC, the EP, MS delegations, and other stakeholders, would already simplify the governance process.

4.3. Management

This section examines the various aspects of management, infrastructure and policies guaranteeing the well-being of students across the ESS. The first section looks at the current funding and HR policies. It focuses on the cost-sharing mechanisms in a traditional School as well as teacher hiring policies. The second section analyses the ES' daily management and administration processes. More specifically, it examines the decision-making processes at individual School levels, the role of middle-management and communication arrangements amongst staff and parents. The third section examines the ES infrastructure including digital capabilities, recreational spaces, and the availability of sports facilities across the Schools. Finally, the fourth section looks at the policies aiming to support the well-being of pupils. Here it focuses on identifying progress and emerging good practices.

4.3.1. Management: Funding & HR policies

4.3.1.1. Funding policy

The funding mechanism of the ESS, its governance and, consequently, its HR policies are closely intertwined. In brief, the ESS operates under a cost-sharing mechanism, whereby MSs cover the costs of seconded teachers, the EC covers the costs of locally recruited teachers as well as additional school personnel and administrative staff, while host countries, where the Schools are located, cover expenses related to infrastructure (see [section 4.3.3](#)). This cost-sharing mechanism has a direct impact on the ESS' teacher hiring policies as teachers' salaries are covered by different budgets. As a result, employment contracts for teachers differ. The hiring policy and attendant finance issues also differ in the AES as they employ teachers directly without secondments. Their funding difficulties lie in other areas as well. For example, AES encounter administrative issues in the use of funding they receive from the EC – parents have reported that in some instances the schools could not cover very specific expenses, such as employing a teaching assistant at a nursery, because this was not how the funding was expected to be spent.

The survey with non-student respondents showed mixed responses when asked about the current finance model - with figures nearly evenly spread out across the spectrum of answers. Nearly 25% stated that they thought the finance model was neither good nor bad. In combination with our interview findings, this relatively high number can be explained by a lack of knowledge and an attitude of uncertainty about how the model works and how budgets are spent. More specifically, many have raised questions throughout the study with respect to available funding, yet they were more commonly concerned with how it is used rather than how much of it is available. According to one parent: *"the school has enough money, but they put it into the wrong things"*. This perception seems to originate from the fact that many of the schools have unsatisfactory infrastructure facilities (see [section 4.3.3](#) on infrastructure) for which separate funding rules apply, but parents, pupils and teachers are not necessarily aware of that. For example, one teacher claimed that *"I have never worked in a school that is so old, ugly, and only has cold water, old bathrooms, classrooms that are worn out. I was thinking a new and modern environment when I started working for the EU"*, while one parent said that *"the buildings/facilities need a good makeover, it is ridiculous that it takes one year to have window blinds installed or gates repaired."* The actual implications to how the cost-sharing mechanism plays out in practice and how it affects the day-to-day functioning of the ES is not always clear to those outside of ES administrations.

Students, who are present at the Schools daily, generally find that funding is sufficient and that they have what they need. For them, the problems lie elsewhere (e.g. governance or management, see [section 4.2](#) or [section 4.3](#)).

Table 30: Survey results: assessment of the financing model of the ESS by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Financing model (how the European School system is financed)	182	5.5	608	18.4	797	24.1	470	14.2	280	8.5	969	29.3

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=3306.

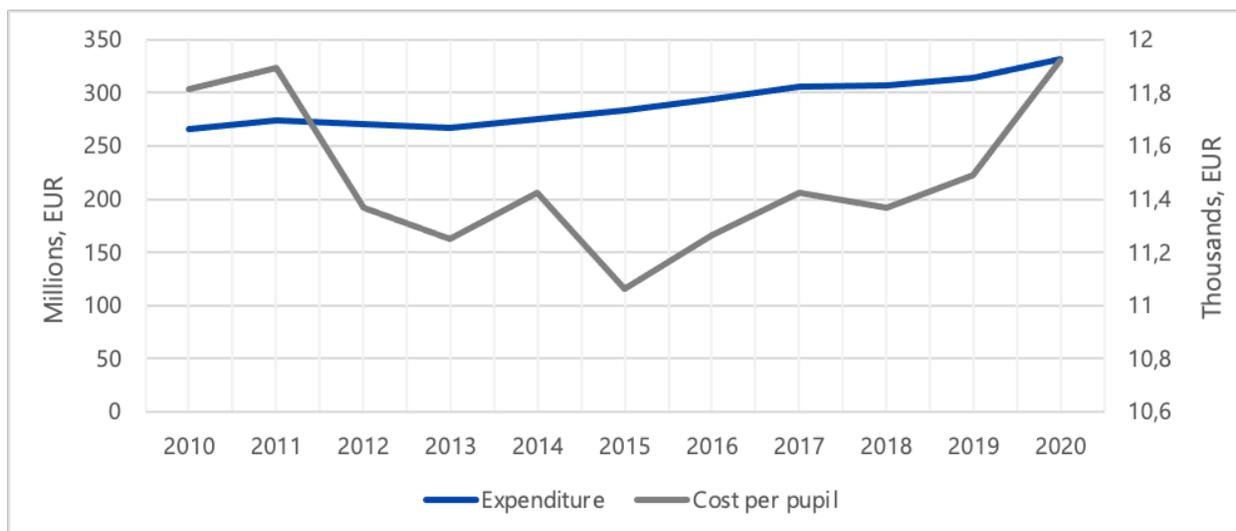
Table 31: Survey results: assessment of the financing model of the ESS by students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
There seems to be enough money in the European Schools to make sure that students have what they need	132	29.4	94	20.9	100	22.3	66	14.7	42	9.4	15	3.3

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (students), N=449.

During the last 10 years, overall funding for the traditional ES has increased, though not at a steady pace or proportionally in line with the admission of new pupils each year (see Figure 17 below). Between 2011 and 2019, traditional ES have been struggling to cover growing expenses as the expenditure available per pupil decreased because of high student intakes that weren't accompanied by budget adjustments. Budgets stagnated or even decreased (esp. between 2011 and 2013). It was only in 2019 that the per pupil budget allocation returned to levels similar to those in 2011.

Figure 17: Budget expenditure and cost per pupil at all the traditional ES between 2010 and 2020.



Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on reports and statistical data provided by OSG.

Generally, disparities in costs per pupil across the ES are high. Some Schools, including Bergen, Mol, and Karlsruhe showcase much larger costs per pupil throughout the 2016-2020 period than larger Schools in Brussels (especially Brussels IV or Brussels III) and Luxembourg I and II (see Table 32 below). The latter are amongst the top-funded Schools in the ESS, but they are also the biggest Schools and when divided by students, the funding remains significantly less generous than that of smaller Schools and thereby limits a School’s capacity to ensure the quality of teaching and students’ well-being. At the same time, higher costs associated with smaller schools are also due to higher expenses incurred, for example, in maintaining smaller language sections or ensuring L1 classes to a very small minority of pupils. In other words, larger Schools may be more cost-efficient because of their scale.

Table 32: Cost per pupil from 2016 to 2020 at each traditional ES.

School	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Alicante	11,968	11,819	12,072	12,207	13,200
Bergen	15,813	16,513	15,853	15,396	16,594
Brussels I	10,565	10,378	10,177	10,132	10,294
Brussels II	10,733	10,940	10,791	10,454	10,414
Brussels III	10,132	10,164	9,994	9,727	9,857
Brussels IV	8,548	9,297	9,272	9,434	9,832
Brussels I, II, III & IV	10,068	10,227	10,083	9,958	10,116
Frankfurt	10,161	10,365	11,136	11,219	11,414
Karlsruhe	13,459	13,635	13,983	14,274	14,070
Munich	10,828	11,124	12,293	12,627	13,102
Germany	11,089	11,336	12,223	12,466	12,709
Luxembourg I	9,513	9,379	9,327	9,950	11,397
Luxembourg II	10,442	10,477	10,169	10,504	11,591
Luxembourg I & II	9,916	9,859	9,696	10,195	11,483
Mol	15,294	16,007	15,855	17,159	16,855
Varese	13,373	14,097	14,114	14,499	13,899
Culham	17,253	14,924	N/A	N/A	N/A
All schools	10,839	10,991	10,906	11,035	11,444
All schools & Central Office	11,256	11,426	11,368	11,491	11,931

Source: Statistical data by OSG, based on Data on Budget implementation, ref.: 2021-02-D-45-en-3

Note: The ES Culham closed in 2017, thus the lack of information.

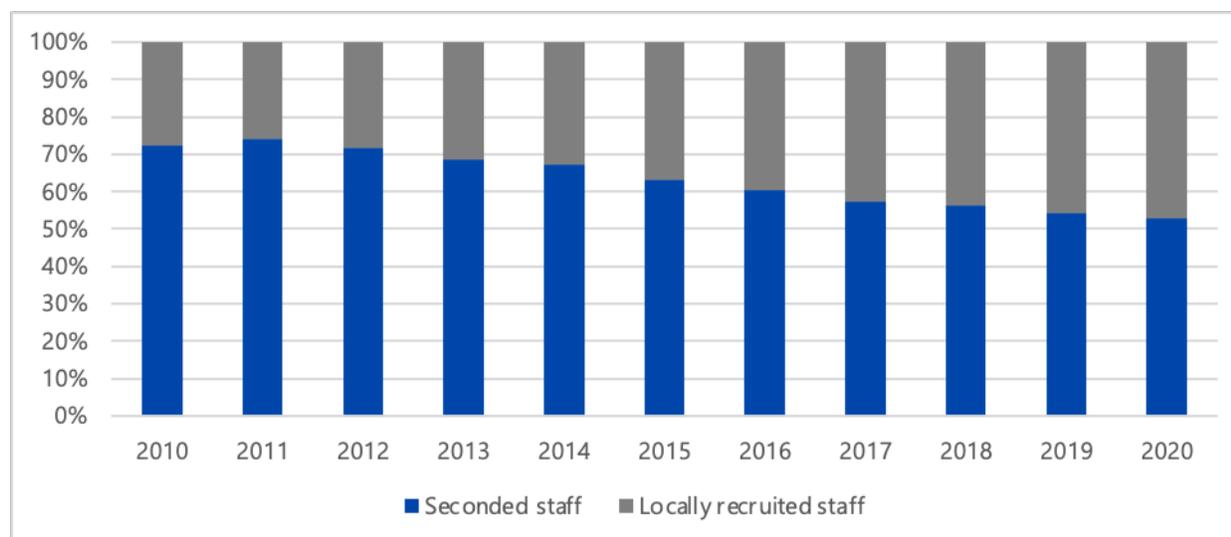
Over the last five years, the budget of ES was continuously adjusted to accommodate costs related to an increasing number of SEN pupils, the need for enhanced security (including imminent threats of terrorist attacks), increasing HR and IT costs, amongst others. Although the funding model allowed for the funding of these costs, schools have been prevented from investing into two key areas: a) teaching and support staff and b) school infrastructure. Regarding a), the cost-sharing mechanism has resulted in unsatisfactory working conditions for teachers. As a result, **teacher shortages** have become a **key challenge** for the majority of ES. With regard to b), MSs where many traditional ES are open, such as Brussels or Germany, are no longer willing to invest in these Schools because they are not their highest priority (as opposed to other national schools). Consequently, there has been no investment to avoid overcrowding, poor facilities, and insufficient maintenance as well as to support the development of a digital infrastructure and for the upgrading of equipment (see [section 4.3.3](#) on infrastructure). This stands in stark contrast to those countries where government authorities are more willing to invest, e.g.

in Luxembourg where the school infrastructure is satisfactory and new infrastructures have been built or are being built (e.g. a new sports hall).

4.3.1.2. HR policy

The salaries of working staff, namely seconded staff, locally recruited teachers (LRT) and educational support make up the largest share of the ES expenditure (73.6% in 2020). It is expected that MSs should cover 65% of the cost via teacher and staff seconding – this is the share of seconded teachers and staff that, ideally, each School should employ, with another 35% being LRTs. However, the share of seconded teachers has been steadily decreasing since 2011, and School Directors have been trying to fill the vacant posts with LRTs (see Figure 18 below).

Figure 18: Share of seconded teachers as opposed to locally recruited staff across traditional ES (2010-2020).



Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on reports and statistical data by OSG.

While LRTs have, for the most part, become valuable and long-time members of the ES communities, attracting additional LRTs to the ES has not been easy for several reasons, namely:

- **Poor employment conditions.** LRTs get a different employment package to seconded teachers. First, they receive lower salaries due to budgetary constraints. The salaries also do not increase sufficiently over time, hence LRTs become likely to leave the Schools as they gain experience. Second, some LRTs might be let go from their posts as soon as seconded teachers from MSs arrive in their place, meaning that LRTs have little job security. Third, in some cases (e.g. Belgium) LRTs are not covered by the same pension scheme as other teachers in the country, resulting in smaller pensions at the end of their careers.
- **Unattractive career prospects.** As noted above, LRTs do not have a secure working position and if they have to leave, they are likely to face challenges on their home job market. For example, teachers returning to some national education systems are not as welcome as those who have always taught within national education systems. This is because LRTs have been immersed in different teaching frameworks and curricula and therefore might not be seen to be sufficiently familiar with national frameworks and curricula. If they are rehired, they are also likely to be paid

less than their peers as LRTs' and national teachers' salaries increase in different ways and the former does so at a much slower rate. This means that the LRTs' salaries will be lower compared to that of their peers at the same career stage. Finally, training prospects are likely to be better in teachers' home countries.

- **Difficulties of finding teachers due to more competitive offers.** Teachers in some language sections, especially English, but also French and German, are needed in high numbers across the ES. However, such teachers may either find more attractive employment in their home countries (esp. Germany, France, or Luxembourg, where teacher salaries are almost as high or higher than at the ES), or, in the case of English teachers, other international schools. For example, the AES in Luxembourg have been attracting teachers from traditional ES by offering better employment conditions.

Overall, School administration personnel and parents have all expressed concern for the employment conditions of LRTs, which they believe must be improved. According to one parent, *"the two-tier recruitment of well-paid seconded teachers and poorly paid locally contracted teachers is a shame"*. The system of hiring LRTs was developed as a secondary option to teacher secondment from MS, but teacher secondment has been an issue as well for the following reasons:

- **Some MSs are required to send disproportionately high numbers of teachers.** Some MSs are requested to send teachers even if they will not be teaching pupils from that MS. Most notably these are a) English-speaking teachers (pre-Brexit) and b) French- and German-speaking teachers. With regard to a), before the 2014-2015 school year, the UK was seconding more teachers than necessary to meet its seconding obligations. However, having received no financial compensation, the UK ceased to second as many teachers, and eventually, due to Brexit, stopped seconding them altogether (Molnarfi, 2019). Recruitment of teachers for the English sections and English language learning has become a major difficulty, especially as these teachers are highly sought-after in other international schools including the British and American schools as well as the AES. Regarding b), the number of pupils in the French sections has grown considerably in the last few years post-Brexit (between 2016 and 2020), as many as 939 new pupils were admitted to the French sections across the traditional ES. This corresponds to 67% of all new pupils at the ES, and according to stakeholders, could become an issue if there aren't enough teachers available. The number of pupils in the German section has not increased that much – a total of 128 new pupils were admitted. However, Schools in Frankfurt and Munich have been admitting increasing numbers of pupils, and there, German is the second language of first choice.
- **MSs do not send enough teachers for two main reasons:** first, teacher shortages at MS national schools; second, budgetary cuts combined with an unwillingness to cover the costs of teaching at the ES via secondments, or the unavailability of posts to be filled due to linguistic barriers. The latter aspect is especially relevant. Given the lack of teachers, a fair number of them are required to teach in a non-native language (English, French or German). National governments have refused to test their teachers' ability to provide education in another language. In addition, teachers willing to teach subjects such as history or geography in another language than their own remain difficult to find. All in all, MSs have continuously failed to meet their obligations for secondments without,

however, facing consequences. This has placed a strain on the ESS and amplified tensions between the EC and MSs on financial issues.

- **Teachers are not interested in secondments** due to limited career prospects. While the salaries of seconded teachers are higher than those of LRTs, they have two main limitations that put teachers off from applying to these posts. First, seconded teachers (with some exceptions) may stay at the School for up to 9-years. This means that they are required to return to their home countries afterwards, and the 9-year term is considered a break, rather than a development, of their careers. Second, many teachers do not have the language skills that teaching at such a School requires – this does not always mean teaching in another language, but also conversing with colleagues, translating tests, exams, and instructions, and doing other work in one of the three major languages.
- **The performance of seconded teachers may be poor.** This is a separate issue that has been previously touched upon (see [section 4.2 on governance](#)) but is important to reiterate here, nonetheless. The obligation of a MS to send secondments despite few teachers being interested in doing a secondment has resulted in some MSs having to send teachers who are not as strongly motivated to perform well within the ESS. In addition, occasionally, such secondments are made for political reasons, without taking pedagogical competences fully into account. For example, some instances were reported where teachers were selected as a favour to certain political groups. However, this would require a more extensive investigation. Overall, this has resulted in lower educational quality for some pupils, which school administrations are unable to address, as they are not directly responsible for seconded teachers. According to parents and pupils, the decision to recruit teachers should be *“based on [their] quality of teaching”*, which is currently not the case due to the inherent complexities of the cost-sharing mechanism.

School administrations emphasise that it has become very difficult to find good teachers, and as a result, the education quality at ES has suffered. Furthermore, this has created a negative incentive to keep on underperforming teachers, because finding substitutes is too difficult, especially at short notice. According to several School Directors, the working environment and working conditions of teachers must be improved, expressing that *“if we are doing a job well for our students, we also need to do the job well for our teachers.”* It was noted that this is not just about the salaries, but about the entire employment package offered to teachers at the traditional ES – teachers need more training opportunities, better teacher support structures (e.g. teacher groups, assistants), more substantial pedagogical support such as teaching materials for the specific curricula taught at the Schools as it differs from their own national systems, guidance on how to best implement the European dimension or work with subjects such as European Hours (see [section 3.1 on pedagogical quality assurance](#)), and more balanced workloads. While some measures to increase the attractiveness of teaching positions (especially an increase in salaries) were adopted in 2019, so far this has not been enough to reverse the negative teaching staff trends.

4.3.1.3. Avenues for improving funding and HR policies

Throughout the study, some suggestions had been made on how the cost-sharing mechanism could be improved or adjusted for the benefit of teachers. For example, some parents have argued that MSs ought to simply pay a certain amount for each pupil enrolled per MS, leaving the Schools to operate more freely with the budgets they have and allowing them to offer more competitive salaries. This

would also remove the direct link between seconding teachers and financing the ESS. Others have once again put forward the idea of setting-up an agency (or another kind of entity) to supervise the Schools, including their budgets. Some parents emphasised that funding decisions need to be kept separate from the governance of the Schools, hence decision-making at the BoG should not involve funding decisions. Otherwise, decisions are not necessarily made in the best interests of the pupils and their parents, but rather, with the budget and financial rules in mind. A similar argument has been raised with respect to the School Administrative Boards that often over-focus on the budget rather than pedagogical output. There were also suggestions to set-up a centralised hiring system for all the ESS that could be run by the EC or the OSG, where teachers and other education professionals interested in working at the traditional ES would sign-up and be offered contracts in places where they are most needed. This would make the recruitment process for the ES less costly and more efficient, but individual Schools would have less autonomy over selected teachers.

Numerous concerns that school budgets are micro-managed by the central office to the detriment of education quality and student well-being were raised by both parents and teachers alike. The current funding system is perceived as overly rigid when it comes to other aspects besides teacher salaries and infrastructure. Most clearly, the lack of financial autonomy is reflected in the limited funding available for students' well-being. According to parent representatives, the budget is considered as "*looking at the spreadsheets*" rather than an individual pupil's needs. As a result, very limited funding is available for the support staff, such as (career) counsellors or psychologists. For example, despite their immense size, the ES in Brussels employ only one or two part-time psychologists for secondary school pupils. Funding had been somewhat adjusted to cater for SEN pupils, and some parents expect that the same ought to be done to ensure pupils' well-being (see [section 4.3.4](#) on students' well-being). At the same time, tensions between the EC and the MSs about who should cover the expenses and how, ought to be resolved.

4.3.2. Management: School administration process

The daily management of traditional ES was reviewed and adjusted in 2009 to give traditional ES' administrations more autonomy and leeway for making decisions, while at the same time removing certain responsibilities from the Central Office of the OSG (see [the second chapter](#) for descriptive details). As part of this review and resulting adjustments, the role of Assistant Deputy Director was created to help School Directors and Deputy Directors manage the workload carried out by School administrations. This workload grew increasingly complex over the years as Schools expanded to admit more pupils from additional language sections. Thus, there were corresponding increases in staff, and also in additional areas including IT, school finances, data security and safety measures. This expansion has led to specific issues, some of which seem to be reoccurring across the whole ESS, and others that are particular to certain schools. The perception of the efficiency and appropriateness of School management tends to vary across the Schools. The feedback, overall, is more positive than negative (see Table 33 below), yet many parents are asking for improvements, such as better communication, more transparency regarding admissions and other decisions as well as more daily inclusion in School life. School administrations themselves acknowledge that they would benefit from investment into training and competence-building, because most take up management posts having only limited experience as teachers or support staff. A more detailed analysis of survey responses has shown that

stakeholders from traditional ES in Mol, Munich and Alicante seem to be the most satisfied with the school management, while those in Frankfurt, Brussels, Luxembourg, and Varese are most dissatisfied. Teachers were the most dissatisfied group.

Table 33: Survey results: assessment of Schools’ management by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
European Schools’ management by the Directors (incl. their HR policies as well as practical implementation of the objectives of the European Schools).	234	7.1	807	24.4	880	26.6	588	17.8	366	11.1	430	13.0

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=3305.

Overall, most management issues that were reported during this study concern relations between School administrations and parents or teachers. However, some internal difficulties were also noted - two key internal aspects mentioned by School personnel and parents alike was the lack of qualified staff for management positions and limited investment into middle-management. The latter issue stems from limited funding available for additional expenses (discussed previously), while the former has to do with the fact that School administrations are formed by meeting quotas set by the BoG. These quotas result in MSs sending personnel where they have positions to fill, rather than appointing the most experienced personnel from any MS. Furthermore, in many cases, School Directors and other managerial staff lack experience in management positions, as they are promoted directly from teaching only posts. In that respect, the career structure within the ES is also quite problematic due to limited contracts – it leads to a loss of experience amongst the staff due to relatively high turnover. Internal School management processes were said to also be too complex and bureaucratic, with teachers required to continuously draft reports addressed directly to School principals. The latter, in turn, have little time to engage in any other activities, including to propose a strategic vision for the School or to adequately oversee the well-being of teachers and students. This over-burdensome complexity has resulted in the following issues:

- **Inadequate communication of roles in the Schools’ administration.** While the roles and responsibilities might be clear to School personnel, parents and teachers said that in many instances when there is an issue to be addressed, it is unclear who should be approached. The issue can become especially problematic as in many instances School management can do very little to resolve arising issues. As one parent pointed out, “*School management is not in charge of anything of meaning – neither infrastructure, nor curriculum, nor even operational activities such as canteen, transport and peri-scolaire [EN: after-School activities]*”. That is to say, School management has very limited power of decision over these issues, and this causes tension.
- **Dysfunctional Administrative Boards.** There is growing discontent amongst parents and teachers on how School Administrative Boards operate. They argue that these entities have become a formality, where School Directors simply present what they intend to do rather than discussing decisions with all representatives who sit on the Board. The plans and decisions seem to be made

beforehand or where voting occurs; it doesn't consistently uphold the relevant processes. As a result, parents claim that rules should be more strictly applied to decisions being taken and as regards the involvement of other stakeholders, especially pupil representatives.

- **Poor communication with teachers and parents.** This is one of the most commonly raised issues amongst teachers and parents. Many have claimed that School management provides very little information with respect to a School, and whatever is communicated is not done in a timely or acceptable manner. According to one parent, *"there is in fact no communication channel between the decision-making level and parents"*. Another parent reported that *"School management is not reachable and is not listening"*. The dissatisfaction with communication is perhaps best summarised by the following quote from a parent, who, due to these and other pertinent issues, has taken out one of their children from the School: *"many parents are extremely unsatisfied with the way the school communicates. It is like a black box with a little window. We are allowed to see inside a little bit, but if we ask too many questions we are shut down or ignored and referred to long Commission regulations about how things are supposed to work. School management are occasionally very rude. There is never an attempt to make a compromise that meets the needs of school, child, and parents. There is very little flexibility around rigid rules – the message is: it is our way or the highway"*. The issues of communication also extend to teachers, who are also dissatisfied. According to one teacher, *"management has no idea what we do in our classrooms"*. This means that School administrations are unable to adequately oversee pedagogical competence (also due to linguistic barriers), or the educational process. Criticisms with respect to administrations' limited engagement with the latter were also made (e.g. parents claimed that School managements only act as administrators while educational oversight is poor). Teachers are, just like the parents, unhappy about their own place within the ESS, as they too are unheard: *"there is no efficient way to be heard by management and colleagues who have brought forward their ideas, and opinions are ignored"*. Such issues in communication have led to everyone outside of School management to question the transparency of decisions that are made at the School level. Many parents are disappointed at the attitude of School management when responding to issues or concerns – many claim that School management is dismissive and uncooperative, sometimes even unresponsive, as some parents' emails go by unanswered. Overall, parents feel unwelcome in some Schools, arguing that sometimes it seems as if the *"schools are not there for the children, but the children are there for the school"*. Strengthening middle-management could help alleviate the issue, as currently there is a lack of personnel that can deal with communication.
- **Transparency issues.** Transparency issues were pointed out not only by parents, but also in the Court of Auditors' report on the ESS⁴⁹. In the report, references were made to unaccountable and opaque appointment decisions and processes. The upholding of other processes including those related to procurement were also raised as an issue. On the other hand, parents questioned the transparency of admissions to Type I Schools – any additional available spots are distributed by School Directors on an individual basis, but with a lack of clear criteria for admission or any other means that would ensure accountability and, by extension, fairness. In Type II Schools, the

⁴⁹ More information accessible at: https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/EUROPEAN_SCHOOLS_2019/EUROPEAN_SCHOOLS_2019_EN.pdf

admissions policy is much more transparent, as it comes down to whether a pupil's family can afford the School and the pupil performs well enough.

Some school administrations were praised for doing the best they can with the resources available, though additional support was said to be needed. It was also argued that management needed to be increasingly professionalised and receive targeted managerial training to future-proof the ESS. Other issues that were pointed out by teachers and parents included the bullying of staff members (not only teachers but also other personnel), a lack of psychological support for teachers on a daily basis, as well as the lack of a collaborative teaching environment and adequate leadership. As one parent put it: *"Better, visionary, flexible, agile entrepreneurial management is needed to move the schools forward. The dynamism of the schools in the school community is at a low level whereas a hampering, stiff, outdated administration by Brussels bureaucrats is stifling and choking the school system."*

Multiple parents and teachers lamented the decreasing sense of community. This loss of a collective feeling of belonging to the ESS has been exacerbated by the cancellation of collective events such as parties and School events. The resulting routinisation of everyday School life left many feeling as if pupils were *"just part of a big school machine which is just there to tick off boxes"*. Many stakeholders, including School administration representatives, believe that more but smaller Schools would resolve this issue and make both management and everyday learning at the Schools more engaging, adventurous, and dynamic.

Finally, the APEEE model which determines parents' responsibilities in organising the Schools' canteens, transport and extracurricular activities was said to be outdated. The model rests on the assumption that some parents choose to stay at home instead of pursuing a career, and therefore have the time to take care of such matters. However, a larger share of families now comprises of two full-time working parents. As a result, parents are less available and willing to dedicate their time free of charge to managing issues related to their children's School. According to one parent *"It is a crazy system to expect Transport, Canteen and After School activities to be run by volunteer parents. This should be a funded operation by either each school or centrally managed. It is a huge part of the system of the school which effectively is run for free by parents"*.

4.3.3. Management: Infrastructure and facilities

4.3.3.1. Assessment of physical and digital infrastructures and facilities

The dramatic increase in pupil numbers is one of the major challenges that the ESS has been facing over the last few years. This increase was not matched by a proportional increase in resources which in turn had a negative impact upon the overall quality of the schools' infrastructure and its pedagogical and educational performance.

The quality of the ESS' physical infrastructure is a persistent systemic problem that has been pointed out on several occasions and particularly in the 2010 European Commission report which concluded that inadequate infrastructures at School sites directly affects the quality of education, enrolment policies as well as pupils' and teachers' daily life (EC 2010). This was also echoed by the Cavada Report 2011, and it is still a persistent challenge that has not been successfully redressed and is becoming ever

more urgent. A significant proportion of stakeholders who participated in the survey believe that the infrastructure of the ES is inadequate (see Table 34 below) and that minimal or no progress has been made in the last five years. In fact, 28.3% of non-students said there was no progress – this was the most negatively assessed element from other operational elements evaluated. However, there are significant differences between traditional ES and AES: stakeholders from the ES are much more dissatisfied with the current situation. As many as 39.9% of ES stakeholders gave negative or very negative evaluations whereas for the AES only 18.8% of stakeholders gave negative evaluations. In addition, stakeholders from the schools in Brussels and Frankfurt were the most dissatisfied of all, while those in Mol, Munich and Luxembourg were the most satisfied.

Table 34: Survey results: assessment of Schools’ infrastructure facilities by non-students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
European Schools’ infrastructure (for example, the number of available places at schools; quality of class and communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities.	427	12.9	946	28.6	529	16.0	773	23.4	549	16.6	81	2.5

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=3305.

The students themselves were not as critical towards infrastructure and facilities (see Table 35 below). Instead, they believed that improving governance or management were more important issues (see [section 4.2](#) on governance).

Table 35: Survey results: assessment of Schools’ infrastructure facilities by students.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The European Schools have good class and good communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities	118	26.3	131	29.2	110	24.5	55	12.2	32	7.1	3	0.7

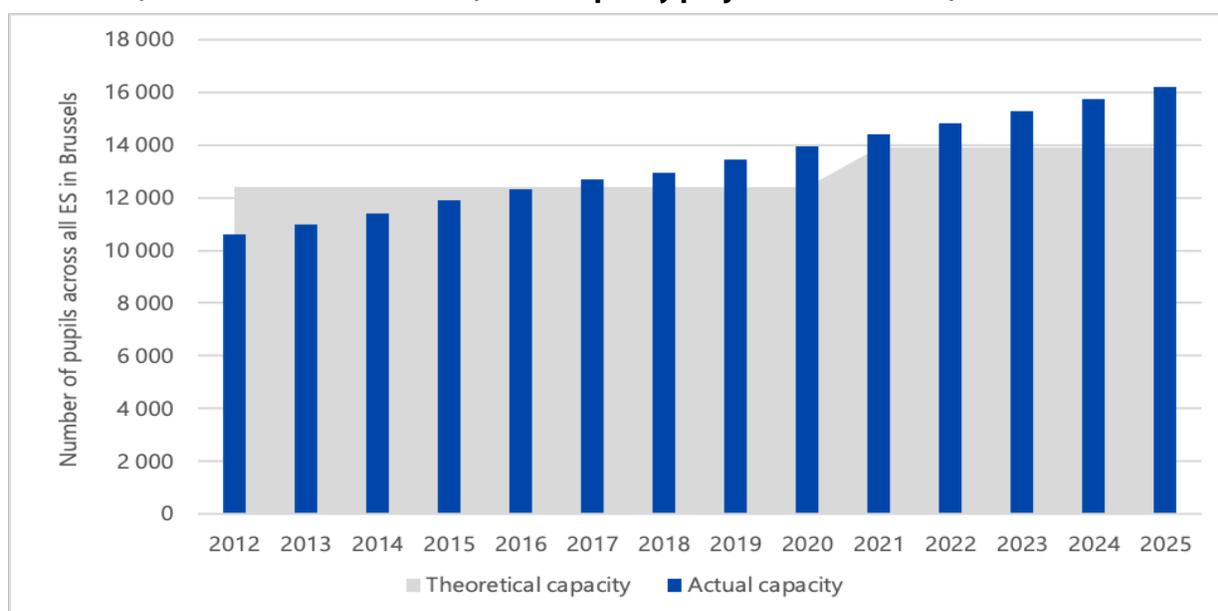
Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=449.

The level and quality of infrastructure varies according to host country and pupil density at different schools. In the area of infrastructure, the following issues were perceived as critical to its improvement:

- **Host MSs are responsible for funding infrastructure upgrades which results in uneven capacity and willingness to invest.** MSs that host ES are responsible for key administrative and organisational aspects, including the provision and maintenance of the infrastructure. The current funding system places a disproportionate burden on the provision of infrastructure for certain MSs, leading to problems in maintenance and the renovation of existing infrastructure or the purchase of new facilities. This has become a major issue in the cities of Brussels and Frankfurt, where major

EU institutions are located, and the number of pupils increases every year, with the issue of overcrowding becoming relevant in many larger ES. Already in 2011, the BoG decided to no longer enrol Category II pupils in Brussels ES due to the constraints placed by infrastructure. This has rendered the question of whether the mission of the ESS is being completely fulfilled. Some parents suggest addressing the problem by giving school management more autonomy via an allocation of funds, necessary for small-scale renovations or improvements in the schools. This would make the system more effective in responding to ongoing changes. Others suggest a change in system altogether: *“Perhaps unlinking the building of European schools from the Belgian government and just having the EU build and manage the schools directly would be more effective”* (see [section 4.3.1](#) on funding and HR policies). This is a lesser issue in Italy, however cooperation with national authorities were also reported as complex, as investment into the ES was not a priority there either. In Luxembourg, on the contrary, cooperation with national authorities and their capacity to invest in ES was said to be high, while in other places, such as Bergen, available infrastructure already operates below capacity, and as a result, there are fewer issues related to it.

Figure 19: Actual number of pupils in contrast to theoretical capacity across all European schools of Brussels, between 2012 and 2025 (actual capacity projected since 2020).



Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on the reports and statistical data by OSG. Situation of the European Schools in Brussels – Temporary site in Evere. Available at: <http://www.uccleparents.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2020-10-D-17-en-1.pdf>

- Lack of space negatively affects the quality of education.** According to multiple parent association representatives, as well as the parents themselves, the constant unavailability of funding for the construction of new Schools or necessary repairs results in poor or limited infrastructure everywhere: ordinary classrooms, specialised classrooms (e.g. science laboratories or arts rooms), examination rooms, canteens, sports facilities, and other common spaces where pupils spend their time during free periods for examples. Almost all stakeholders emphasised that the structural overcrowding and lack of appropriate common spaces adversely impacts pupils’

wellbeing and mental health, and in turn, their readiness to learn. For example, classroom space was said to be insufficient, and common spaces insufficiently adapted for quiet time or communal activities, the latter especially limited for children in lower secondary level, namely S1-S3, who in larger Schools have no place to spend their breaks. Green spaces were also said to be lacking, as children in some Schools commonly play in bus parking lots (e.g. Brussels II). Likewise, an insufficient sports infrastructure limits the quality of physical education. Although some Schools have sufficient and high-quality sports facilities, others have much more limited means. The issue is, once again, especially relevant for large, overpopulated Schools, for example, European School Brussels IV lacks an appropriate stadium. In contrast, Luxembourg I has secured funding for a new sports centre. Furthermore, it was argued that ES do not have sports clubs or School teams as options for afterschool activities.

- **Lack of space affects pupils' health, safety, and well-being.** Concerns for health and safety compliance are prevalent amongst parents, teachers, and School staff. In 2019, parent associations of Brussels Schools addressed the BoG stating that the *"Lack of appropriate space not only impacts the quality of teaching but also: daily planning, lunch periods and free-time breaks; noise and accident levels in common spaces. Moreover, in case of an emergency evacuation of a school site (due to gas leak, bomb threat, terrorist attack, or other), the overpopulation could have fatal consequences"*.⁵⁰ These views were echoed by School staff, who agreed that overcrowding in School corridors when pupils are outside of their classrooms is a safety hazard. Some specific in-class incidents were also reported, such as broken furniture in classrooms, and even a collapsed wall and ceiling. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was also a challenge to maintain social distancing measures in these Schools. In some Schools, proper ventilation was a challenge, for example, a dysfunctional ventilation system was reported in Brussels III, which had not been properly fixed. In addition, the lack of appropriate infrastructure and space in Schools hinders the implementation of inclusion policies and the provision of quality education for pupils with disabilities or special educational needs (see the [relevant section](#) on student well-being). Also, while pupils are allowed to leave the School grounds at break times, there is a lack of good quality outdoor spaces for pupils, particularly in Brussels.

Finally, many parents are concerned about commuting issues – in some instances, daily commuting to and from School takes a very long time and lacks in safety. For example, in some Schools the large amount of traffic from the arriving/leaving of buses on School territory is perceived as unsafe. The lack of a proper road infrastructure to accommodate School needs was mentioned as the main culprit.

4.3.3.2. Assessment of digital infrastructure

Alongside limitations in standard infrastructure (i.e. School buildings and facilities) the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digital infrastructure for delivering quality education. Prior to the pandemic, strategic documents on digital education and ICT were already implemented across the ESS, including the Digital Education Vision for the European Schools (DEVES)⁵¹ and a distance-learning project that had been piloted back in 2012. However, these have not been implemented equally across

⁵⁰ APEEEs of the European Schools in Brussels. More information available at: https://u4unity.eu/document3/BrusselsOvercrowding_APEEE_20191022.pdf

⁵¹ Digital Education Vision for the European Schools (DEVES), 2019. More information available at: <https://www.eursec.eu/BasicTexts/2018-12-D-7-en-4.pdf>

the Schools and, thus, some traditional ES were less advanced and therefore less prepared to go digital. Furthermore, a lack of digital skills by the staff posed significant challenges during the COVID-19 crisis and consequently, Schools adjusted to e-learning at different paces. Key issues in the area of digital infrastructure in the ESS have been identified as:

- **Variation in the quality of digital infrastructure.** Traditional ES' ICT infrastructure is said to have been underfunded for years (EP 2021), resulting in a different quality of digital infrastructure among traditional ES and AES. In 2020, across traditional ES, the average number of pupils per PC was 4.4, as compared with 4.8 in 2019. However, the situation was more problematic in overpopulated Schools in Brussels (i.e. in Brussels III one PC is for 7.4 pupils, a slight increase from 2019) (see Table 36 below). Moreover, the OSG representatives note that the financing for digital infrastructure depends on the host MS and that this in turn contributes to sometimes significant disparities.

Table 36: PC per pupil in each traditional ES between 2010 and 2020.

School	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Alicante	5.2	4.8	4.7	4.4	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.5	4.2	6.3
Bergen	3.5	3.2	3.8	5.1	2.6	3.1	2.6	2.5	2.9	2.2	2.3
Brussels I	7.1	7.0	6.8	3.1	7.4	7.5	7.2	7.0	6.9	7	4.9
Brussels II	7.5	6.6	6.8	6.5	5.7	5.7	5.6	7.2	5.7	5.3	5.4
Brussels III	8.4	8.3	8.2	6.3	7.9	8.2	8.1	7.2	6.7	7.3	7.4
Brussels IV	6.1	6.4	6.5	8.1	6.8	6.9	9.8	5.4	6.6	5.9	4.9
Frankfurt	6.5	6.8	6.4	4.2	5.9	5.9	4.8	4.5	4.3	4	3.9
Karlsruhe	3.2	3.6	3.1	6.0	2.6	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.0	3.1	2.9
Luxembourg I	6.6	6.7	5.1	3.0	5.9	6.1	6.5	6.4	6.3	6	5.1
Luxembourg II	8.3	16.2	3.5	5.1	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.4	3.9
Mol	4.5	4.7	4.0	3.4	3.2	4.3	3.5	3.5	3.7	2.8	3.1
Munich	6.6	6.1	5.4	4.0	4.7	4.8	5.0	5.3	4.7	5.3	2.8
Varese	6.3	6.6	6.1	4.8	6.2	5.8	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.1	4.9
Average	6.2	6.5	5.3	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.2	4.7	4.6	4.8	4.4

Source: Statistical data provided by OSG, ICT Report 2020, available at: <https://www.eursc.eu/Documents/2021-02-D-25-en-3.pdf> published by OSG.

- **Transition to e-learning because of the Covid-19 pandemic is perceived unevenly amongst different stakeholder groups.** Different Schools adjusted to online learning at various paces depending on previous engagement in online learning and the involvement and communication between a School's management, teachers, students, and their parents. Schools' management and stakeholders claim that the transition to e-learning was well centralised, and the ESS reacted more quickly to demands and challenges of online Schooling than national School systems. For example, the transition to online platforms in European School Luxembourg I was swiftly managed by the ICT team in cooperation with an active parent association. European School Brussels IV also managed

to adjust to online learning quite rapidly due to previous investment in teachers' digital competencies and online facilities (see Box 11 below). However, pupil and parents' representatives considered the transition to online learning to be less organised or well managed. The lack of digital competencies among teachers posed significant challenges in some Schools. Pupils noted that teachers struggled to adjust to e-learning and online teaching platforms, resulting in an increased workload both for pupils and teachers. This aspect, however, is not unique to the ESS, and can instead be seen in many national schools across the EU⁵². Parents' representatives highlighted the issue that teachers cannot be forced and can refuse to participate in online learning. This resulted in an absence of online schooling, which, in turn, eventually affected the quality of education, particularly for students in quarantine and those relying on hybrid learning. Teacher absence during the pandemic was called to attention by many parents, who were extremely dissatisfied with this situation. Parents thus suggest that *"the Central Office should be given more authority in putting more policies in place and enforcing them."*

Box 11: Good practice: Swift transition to e-learning in ES Brussels IV

ES Brussels IV was said to have adapted better to online and/or hybrid learning during the pandemic than other Schools due to a previous engagement in e-learning. According to the School's Director, the School already had some online platforms (e.g. MS Teams) and had already implemented the 'Bring Your Own Device' charter, so students were familiar with using online tools for teaching and learning. Teachers had also participated in trainings to develop their digital skills before the pandemic, hence they were better able to adapt quickly to e-learning and teaching. Also, to effectively respond to challenges and discuss possible improvements during the pandemic, the School established a task force that met every two weeks. Additionally, the School had already established its own guidelines for e-learning and teaching prior to the OSG publishing its recommendations, facilitating the transfer to online platforms. Moreover, to address increased teachers' workload and psychological strain, a teacher support group was set up to facilitate the sharing of good practices and recommendations among teachers. Finally, to alleviate 'pandemic fatigue', the School took steps to ensure everyone's well-being by organising a Mental Health Week.

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on interviews with School's stakeholders (2021) and *Bring Your Own Device Charter* (2020), available at: <https://eeb4.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/BYOD-Charter-EN-v1-15-10-2020.pdf>

4.3.4. Management: Policies supporting the well-being of students

While there is no explicit definition of pupil well-being in key documents of the ESS, the term is referenced several times in documents such as the ESS' Policy on the Provision of Educational Support and Inclusive Education in the European Schools⁵³, or the Annual Activity Report where COVID-19 measures are discussed⁵⁴. According to the OECD, students' well-being refers to the psychological, cognitive, social, and physical functioning and capabilities that students need to live a happy and fulfilling life (OECD 2017). Throughout this study on the ESS, students' well-being also emerged as a

⁵² Individual studies exist on this topic in various EU MSs. See, for example, Perifanou, M., Economides, A. and Tzafilkou, K., 2021. Teachers' digital skills readiness during COVID-19 pandemic.

⁵³ More information available at: <https://www.eursec.eu/Documents/2012-05-D-14-en-10.pdf>

⁵⁴ More information available at: <https://www.eursec.eu/Documents/2021-02-D-6-en-3.pdf#search=wellbeing>

sensitive topic – parents, pupils and teachers reported several issues that negatively impacted pupils' mental health, such as bullying, drug abuse or a lack of human resources as well as insufficient attention and time provided by teachers or supporting staff to help pupils deal with emotional problems they faced.

4.3.4.1. Development of policies aimed at supporting student well-being

The topic of student well-being has become more prominent in the internal ESS discussion in light of the Cavada report follow-up (EP 2011), thematic assessment results (EP 2008 and EP 2016), and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from the Action Plan for Inclusive Education (see [section 3.4](#) on inclusive education), both the central administration (OSG) and individual School managements created several measures and initiatives to improve the situation. These initiatives included the KiVa (an abbreviation for the Finnish words *Ki usaamisen Va stainen* or *Ki usaamista Va stustave*, anti-bullying) anti-bullying programmes as well as the additional financial resources that were invested into the system.

The introduction of the KiVa programme aimed at strengthening anti-bullying efforts across the entire ESS. It was developed by the University of Turku and is based on the three pillars of prevention, intervention, and monitoring⁵⁵. The preventive actions, such as the KiVa curriculum and online games, are the centrepiece of KiVa. They are directed at students and focus on students understanding and displaying anti-bullying behaviour. These are supplemented with interventive actions, which are targeted at both children and adolescents who have been involved in bullying. Annual monitoring of the situation is undertaken through surveys to ensure that bullying is prevented and redressed as much as possible. Currently, the KiVA-programme is implemented across the ESS in the primary cycle but not in the secondary.

Apart from KiVa, the response to bullying at the level of individual Schools has been rather heterogeneous with some of them adopting anti-bullying charters, while others developed broader social well-being policies. Some Schools have gone so far as to develop additional institutional arrangements to address the bullying issue along with other problems and needs. The example of ES Brussels II is particularly illustrative (see Box 12 below).

Box 12: Good practice: Pastorale

ES Brussels II operates the so-called Pastorale, which is a multi-stakeholder group that consists of School management representatives as well as educational environment staff members (incl. principal educational advisor, nurse, psychologists, guidance team coordinator, educational support coordinator). The Pastorale meets every week to provide long-term support to students with the aim of improving their well-being. During these meetings, each member of the Pastorale reviews the socio-emotional, psychological, and/or learning situations of students with special needs. A multi-stakeholder approach allows the group to pay closer attention to the cases of individual students and find tailored solutions for each of them.

⁵⁵ More information available at: <https://www.kivaprogram.net/what-is-kiva/>

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on ES Brussels (2022), Well-being. Available at: <https://www.eeb2.be/en/secondary--education--well-being/>

However, survey results from this study have revealed mixed feedback on the effectiveness of these measures including the KiVa programme. According to some parents, the KiVa programme has limited effect because it is only implemented in primary school and exists in a vacuum. For example, parents report a lack of socialising activities for pupils that would enhance their emotional intelligence and social skills. In secondary school, the overall care for pupils is further diminished, as they lack a stable point of reference, such as regular non-academic activities with a classroom teacher. Parents believe that the well-being of secondary students is especially low (most importantly in S6 and S7) because pupils are not cared for in the same way as they are in lower grades. They lack stability in their schedules and have no sense of community. This leads to feelings of loneliness, stress and anxiety which can be further exacerbated by instances of bullying and harassment. According to one parent, *“we do not feel that our children have the sense of belonging, unlike in cases at local schools”*, while another said that *“the general feeling is that no one really cares about the school environment, the well-being of students”*. In addition, the ES had to adapt to some emerging challenges such as cyber-bullying, but it remains unclear whether any measures have been put in place to tackle this specific issue. Coping with social media has emerged as an especially problematic issue for many pupils and parents.

Over the past several years, the ESS has been steadily increasing its investments into psychological and educational support systems in order to increase the well-being of its pupils. For example, the number of staff providing support has almost doubled: from 456 in 2015⁵⁶ to 837 in 2020⁵⁷. Furthermore, the total number of support staff has grown by approximately 16% over the period 2017/2018 to 2019/2020 (see Table 37 below). Nevertheless, the pupil to educational support staff ratio remains relatively low – with approximately 20 students per staff member. The situation is rather heterogeneous across the ESS with some Schools such as Brussels IV demonstrating a very low ratio (0.03), while other Schools like Alicante and Karlsruhe demonstrating a ratio that is more than twice as high (0.08).

⁵⁶ More information available at: <https://www.eursc.eu/Documents/2017-11-D-24-en-4.pdf>

⁵⁷ More information available at: <https://www.eursc.eu/Documents/2020-12-D-12-en-5.pdf>

Table 37: Resources for educational support at each traditional ES.

Schools	2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020		
	N. of pupils per School	Total support staff	N. of support staff per student	N. of pupils per School	Total support staff	N. of support staff per student	N. of pupils per School	Total support staff	N. of support staff per student
Alicante	1033	68	0.07	1050	74	0.07	1040	80	0.08
Bergen	521	35	0.07	538	40	0.07	590	33	0.06
Brussels I	3743	106	0.03	3947	80	0.02	4074	173	0.04
Brussels II	3104	106	0.03	3070	118	0.04	3174	138	0.04
Brussels III	3059	115	0.04	3097	117	0.04	3190	148	0.05
Brussels IV	2777	86	0.03	2834	90	0.03	2970	84	0.03
Frankfurt	1517	56	0.04	1520	74	0.05	1588	74	0.05
Karlsruhe	842	59	0.07	857	63	0.07	881	71	0.08
Luxembourg I	3350	163	0.05	3346	207	0.06	3333	197	0.06
Luxembourg II	2599	116	0.04	2650	122	0.05	2645	115	0.04
Mol	733	55	0.08	690	58	0.08	680	50	0.07
Munich	2283	61	0.03	2235	85	0.04	2191	81	0.04
Varese	1316	117	0.09	1342	76	0.06	1352	91	0.07
Total	26877	1143	0.04	27176	1204	0.04	27708	1335	0.05

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021), based on the reports and statistical data by OSG (SEN and Facts and Figures Reports).

4.3.4.2. Current challenges faced by the students

Insufficient support and inclusivity, and especially when it comes to the needs of SEN students, have been pointed out by both students and parents in the open answers to the survey and during the interviews. Both stakeholder groups argue that the well-being of pupils is not adequately considered. Even though the ESS has undertaken some efforts to address the inclusion and well-being needs of its pupils as outlined in the previous sub-subsection, many students, and parents, as well as some teachers, were not satisfied with the outcomes. An in-depth analysis of the interviews and open answers to the survey questionnaire demonstrates that the most troublesome aspects affecting student well-being are:

- Bullying amongst pupils and, to some extent, teachers.** Instances of bullying across the ESS are alarming – many parents have pointed out that there have been nasty incidences of bullying both from pupils and teachers at the Schools. Unfortunately, parents and pupils argue that such incidences were not dealt with in an appropriate and acceptable manner, leading parents to withdraw children from the School, and, in especially unfortunate cases, resulted in pupil suicides. Although there are no precise figures of the number of suicides, parents and pupils claim that issues such as bullying and suicides at Schools have been “*swept under the carpet*” by School authorities

and more should be done to prevent such incidents and to address them if they do happen. For example, one parent reported that his child was mistreated in class by the teacher with physical and degrading punishments, which induced serious consequences, such as vomiting and anxiety attacks. However, when the case was communicated to School management, asking to investigate the teacher's actions or to make alternative arrangements for the pupil, no action was taken. School authorities argued that the child was a disruptive pupil with learning difficulties and that the parents were not following the School's communication policy. After obtaining second opinions from more teachers and even medical doctors, the parents argued that the child was not disruptive nor had learning difficulties. While the situation would require a more detailed assessment, such situations ought to have better avenues for solutions than those currently available. Many parents and teachers have called for more efficient and School-wide anti-bullying policies that would also include staff training on how to prevent or address bullying. To quote one parent, *"bullying, microaggression and inappropriate interpersonal behaviour by not only pupils but also teachers and other staff are an issue. More needs to be done to tackle these issues, notably sensitization, serious, regular training of the whole school community and mechanisms to allow for victims to speak out in confidence, without fear of exposure, stigma, or reprisals"*. The latter aspect, namely a safe channel where bullying and harassment could be reported anonymously by pupils, is especially important. This would allow School personnel to detect such instances in a timely manner, and hopefully, deal with situations before they escalate.

- **Demanding schedules.** The issue of overly academically oriented and highly demanding learning schedules has been raised by pupils, parents, and teachers alike. The workload was perceived as excessive and the curriculum too full. According to one teacher, *"It's too academic, too many exams, students are very isolated because their life is just school and studying. And it has become worse with COVID. We need to include more things that you cannot test. Really, we should have less in the syllabus, it's very stressful."* Likewise, pupils have pointed out that there isn't sufficient time to cover all the material required and consequently, content is rushed through in classes with little time for engagement, questions, and thinking about content. This, in turn, means that students must spend more time at home after School to catch up and go through the content themselves. As a result, pupils *"find it increasingly hard to properly connect with and genuinely enjoy the subject we have chosen to study."* Parents have expressed concerns, pointing out that *"the stress level on the children is extremely high and is frankly dangerous"*. Indeed, some parents pointed out that there have been suicides of pupils at the ES due to stress and anxiety over tests and exams. Eventually, a fair number of parents believe that *"Children in secondary are stressed too much by the system instead of being empowered and supported in their learning"*. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation, as some pupils missed classes and were later under a lot of pressure to catch up on their own.
- **Insufficient psychological support.** There is a very limited number of psychologists who are available for pupils' needs. For example, Brussels secondary Schools only have one or two psychologists for all the pupils and none of them are employed full time at the Schools. This makes access rather difficult. However, even when opportunities for consultations are available, students cannot always use them, especially in the last years of the secondary cycle. As one of the students put it in the survey about receiving psychological support, *"[it]is especially difficult since the school days are so long, we have very little university orientation – it is expected of us to do all research on our*

own or approach teachers during free periods, but in S7, I only have 3 free periods all week [i.e. three 45-minute periods without scheduled classes].” An additional challenge is that pupils need their parents’ consent to see a psychologist. This prevents pupils from seeking help as they would prefer doing this autonomously and independently of their parents – or even anonymously. Pupils should be able to approach a psychologist if they feel the need to, without, however, having to account to anyone – having to seek help can represent a stressful and embarrassing action for those concerned. Finally, pupils themselves are not always happy with the support provided. According to one pupil, *“there is no support for psychological problems for students as the school’s psychologist is trained to make us stable enough to go back to class [and does] not understand our emotions and solve issues. I have encountered psychological difficulties for the past two years and I’ve gotten no support from teachers or the administration.”* This is even more understandable, as students cannot discuss any matters with the psychologists that are not directly related to their education at the ES.

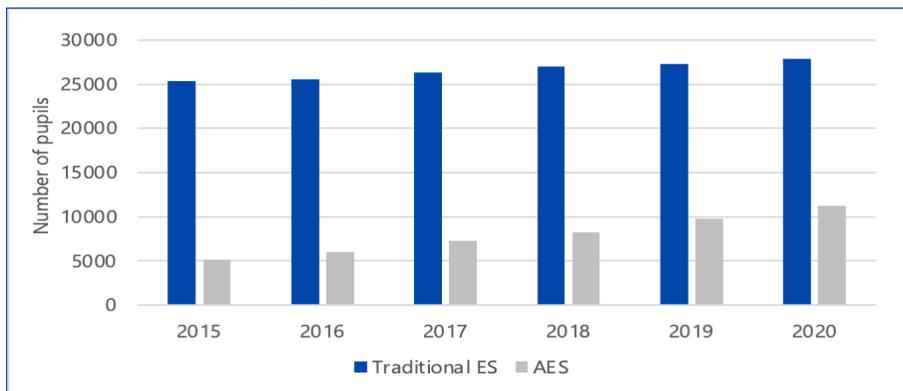
- **Limited time for lunch and breaks.** Currently, most pupils have relatively short lunchbreaks. For example, parents report that in some cases the lunchbreak lasts for only 15-20 minutes, which means that pupils eat very fast, often cold sandwiches rather than proper meals. Furthermore, in some instances pupils do not have a lunch break at all, going without eating for long periods of time. This has been pointed out as detrimental to a pupil’s physical and mental well-being. Breaks are also considered too short, especially in large Schools where pupils need to get around large buildings. This leaves little time to recover after classes, get a drink of water or even go to the bathroom. According to one parent, *“long lessons without sufficient breaks in between are old-fashioned and counterproductive. Lesson length should be 45 min max., with 15 min breaks in between”.* Pupils have commented on this as well. One pupil argued that *“education is important no doubt - but so are our breaks. I would give us more time to breathe in between classes! This way we get better results, and we don’t feel this constant pressure of being mentally awake all the time in fear of missing crucial information.”* Finally, many pupils reported that the lack of space for eating lunch, spending free periods, or simply socialising during break-times made School-life more stressful. For example, one pupil said that *“during lunch breaks students have to sit on the ground in the playground or on steps due to a lack of comfortable spaces for students to relax or even eat.”* Another pointed out that there are no “chill-out” rooms for younger pupils, who are in years S1-S5. Pupils also lack relatively calm and quiet spaces to spend their free periods
- **Poor oversight of pupils’ physical needs, including safety.** This includes three main aspects: canteen food, a lack of available nurses and a lack of effective drug prevention policies. First, concerns were raised by parents and pupils on the quality of the canteen food. The food was said to be unhealthy or ill-prepared, with pupils continuously leaving their portions uneaten. For example, one parent reported that children in kindergarten were served sugary food every day, while another said that a lot of food was thrown out because children did not eat it. In some Schools, efforts have been undertaken to change this but have been unsuccessful. Secondly, nurses are not always available at the Schools. This means that in case a pupil’s physical health is endangered, help might not be available. Third, drug prevention policies were criticised, and many parents believe more needs to be done to ensure that pupils do not consume alcohol or drugs or take up smoking.

4.4. Growth and expansion

This section looks at the challenges faced by the ESS when it comes to growth and expansion. It examines how the demand for new Schools has affected the system, and more specifically, how the system has been adapting via the establishment of AES. The main challenges for the current establishment and accreditation of the AES are covered, and the sustainability of the expansion model is analysed.

Traditional ES face a variety of systematic problems in effectively responding to EU enlargement, the introduction of new agencies in MSs, the growing number of languages and teacher retention. The demand and growing numbers of pupils within both ES and AES (ES 2020c) shows that the approach and quality of the ESS is very attractive to parents when choosing an educational path for their children (see Figure 20 below). All groups of surveyed stakeholders across the ESS – pupils, parents, teachers, administrative staff, and EU representatives – recognise that the ESS needs to expand to meet the changing demands and needs of EU citizens. Nevertheless, the process of opening new Schools is extremely slow. The number of traditional ES has remained at 13 since 2007, although the number of pupils between 2010 and 2020 has increased by approximately 5,000 pupils – an equivalent of more than 20% from the original number. The next ES opening is not scheduled until 2028 (EP 2021). The process is largely stalled by funding issues and logistical/organisational complications caused by the MSs in the BoG, which must unanimously approve the opening of a new School. Some MSs are reluctant to finance the opening of new Schools, and especially host MSs, as they are expected to cover infrastructure expenses. While the delayed opening of new traditional ES has stalled, the network of AES has been expanding considerably.

Figure 20: Number of pupils at traditional ES and AES, 2015-2020.



Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on the reports and statistical data by OSG. Annual Activity Report 2020 (art. 33.4 FR 2017).

Since 2005, a total of 20 AES have been established across the EU, and another five are currently candidates for accreditation. The recent expansion of the ESS through AES in various countries has resulted in more pupils in the EU being able to benefit from the ES curriculum and educational model process. Most stakeholders believe that expanding the ESS via the AES is a viable and promising pathway, especially as it enables opening up the system to children whose parents do not necessarily work for EU institutions. To quote one parent, *“accredited schools have a huge potential to expand the system and its benefits and to create economics of scale. So, the part of the mission statement that reserves the schools for the institutions’ officials <...> should be reconsidered to make the schools ubiquitous schools*

for Europe instead of chiefly schools for European officials.” Stakeholders claim that the AES significantly contribute to countering the exclusivity and perceived elitism of the traditional ES, yet it remains difficult to assess whether this is the case due to the lack of data.

At the same time, the accreditation of the AES is not a straightforward process, and it is not clear whether establishing more of them would diminish the need for establishing additional traditional ES in Brussels or Germany, as it did in Luxembourg. This is because the two types of European Schools are not seen as interchangeable but rather as complementary. More specifically, the AES meet the needs that Type I Schools cannot meet due to their specific nature, namely accepting children from wider backgrounds and opening the system to more significant inclusion across the ES (Gallas and Dumay, 2017).

Expansion and growth of the ESS (including through the enlargement of existing or the opening of new AES) were regarded as rather positive by a significant share of stakeholders in the survey, although almost a quarter of respondents remained neutral. Most notably, representatives from the AES were more positive with 31% saying that these developments were positive and 18.8% calling it very positive. Representatives of traditional ES remained more sceptical or neutral – almost a quarter of respondents from the ES (24%) had either negative or very negative views of these developments, and 22% were neutral. Possible reasons for these views are discussed below.

Table 38: Survey results: assessment of the ES System’s growth.

Survey results	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Expansion and growth of the system (incl. through enlarging the existing ones or opening new accredited European Schools).	374	11.3	915	27.7	735	22.2	458	13.9	307	9.3	516	15.6

Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Survey of stakeholders (non-students), N=3305.

Key challenges identified with the AES are as follows:

- **Accreditation procedures and pedagogical quality assurance in the AES require more rigorous oversight.** In the context of growth, there are still uncertainties on how to ensure the sustainable expansion of the system and guarantee that all AES meet the pedagogical requirements set out in accreditation agreements. Both the School and parent association representatives emphasise the importance of enshrining the primary mission of the ES in the trademark of the ESS so that the AES retains its quality of curriculum and is guided by a School philosophy based on European values. Otherwise, the risk is that an expansion of the system will be driven by profit considerations and that the brand “European School” will become meaningless. Pupils in both traditional ES and the AES should receive the same style and quality of education including equal opportunities in preparing for the EB. However, parent representatives from traditional ES as well as the AES have expressed concerns about the legal framework of AES and the quality assurance procedures. Stakeholders believe that AES is too rigorously subjected to national MS regulations and that this makes pedagogical quality assurance more complicated and lower in quality. The AES

are not, in contrast to traditional ES, audited by inspectors. They are instead audited by national assessment agencies or similar national bodies. This makes it difficult to ensure consistent pedagogical quality across the whole network, because quality standards differ across the MSs. Hence, and to improve the AES inspection system, parents have called for AES to be audited by regular ES inspectors rather than national agencies that are unfamiliar with the ESS. This could serve as an additional argument why permanent, full-time inspectors of the ES and the AES could be valuable for sustaining pedagogical quality across the ESS. The issue of pedagogical quality assurance has led some parents to claim that *"accredited schools are not bringing in any value: they underperform academically, hide their weaknesses and yet, have not contributed to a large outreach of the system."*

- **Difficulties assessing teacher competence and skill.** To provide the same level of education as traditional ES, the management of AES must ensure that locally recruited teachers meet the required standards. Unlike in traditional ES, teachers are not seconded to the AES. As a result, the AES face additional difficulties in hiring staff. Concerns have been raised whether AES management has the necessary competencies to evaluate and assess the quality of teachers' work, especially as management personnel may have had limited experience with traditional ES in the first place. Furthermore, teachers report a lack of collaboration amongst traditional ES and AES teachers, claiming that more exchanges about best practices regarding teaching materials and methods would be extremely valuable for ensuring the same quality level of teaching across the ESS. Finally, some AES teachers reported difficulty accessing the continuous professional development training that is offered online for teachers of traditional ES.
- **Ensuring native language teaching in AES for Category I pupils can be difficult.** The AES does not have to provide native language teaching for children whose parents do not work for EU institutions. However, the regulation on AES⁵⁸ clearly states that they must respect the same recruitment rules as Type I ES in case they admit pupils whose parents do work for EU institutions. In this case, the challenge all AES face is whether the pool of local staff who meet the EU's criteria for teaching specific languages is sufficient or whether they need to attract recruits from elsewhere. This difficulty is exacerbated by the lack of a requirement for teacher secondments. In some instances, especially when the number of pupils is very small for some languages, the AES have resorted to employing teachers from other MSs and had them give lessons remotely.
- **AES cause issues to traditional ES regarding teacher recruitment.** Both the ES and AES struggle with a lack of teachers, who would be able and willing to teach in international Schools. In this case, the AES compete with traditional ES to attract the best LRTs and AES are often able to offer better employment conditions. This puts traditional ES at a disadvantage. For instance, in the case of Luxembourg, there are four AES with a fifth one awaiting accreditation. These Schools compete for the same local teachers as two Type I Schools in the area. Representatives of these Type I ES claim that teacher retention has been challenging because many of the teachers choose to work in AES rather than ES, due to better employment conditions including salaries and employment contracts (i.e. contracts that are not limited to nine or even fewer years). The competitiveness of ES for LRTs has been tackled by increasing their salary by 37% in 2019. However, according to stakeholders of

⁵⁸ More information available at: <https://www.eursec.eu/Documents/2019-12-D-12-en-1.pdf>

the AES, if the system continues to expand at a rapid pace, the lack of teaching staff must be addressed. Otherwise, the sustainability of the system is at risk.

- The lack of teachers and specialists poses an additional challenge to ES when it comes to **ensuring the quality of education for SEN pupils**, or those in small language sections, because the number of teachers is especially small. However, when it comes to SEN pupils, the experience of Luxembourg ES has shown that AES are not pressured to accept pupils with special needs to the same extent as traditional ES. This results in large disparities across the system, with traditional ES having to pay larger costs for ensuring inclusivity and educational support for a very large number of SEN pupils. These disparities result in an unbalanced system, where traditional ES risk of becoming Schools for children whose parents do not have any other options. For example, this could apply to parents, whose kids have special needs, or those who cannot afford going to the AES due to budgetary constraints. One parent has already lamented that, *“Classical schools face strong competition in Luxembourg from accredited schools which offer better conditions in all respects, and which attract the best teachers. Classical schools are seen as poor relatives.”* The AES also have an advantage over traditional ES insofar as they are not required to have as many language sections. They only provide classes for L1 in certain languages, which can be attended online. This means that AES have fewer language sections making management and oversight easier than in ES.

Overall, all stakeholders within the ESS claimed that having more, yet smaller traditional ES might also solve some of the issues within large Schools, such as overcrowding, or overly complex management. At the same time, the expansion of the AES, while seen in a positive light, is not sufficient. Some have pointed out that, currently, there are multiple ES in Belgium, Luxembourg, or Germany, while most other EU countries have either recently set-up one or two AES, or have no Schools at all, even if those countries do have EU agencies or bodies. This, according to stakeholders, *“is sending a very negative message to the community”*. As such, many stakeholders call for more Schools and a more open and transparent admissions policy. However, at the same time, sustainability of the system needs to be ensured – Schools need to meet strict accreditation standards to not cause a devaluation of the EB, and Schools themselves must ensure that they have enough teachers who are able to teach the curricula according to expectations. Furthermore, the question of auditing needs to be resolved, as stated above, the AES are subject to national inspectors who are not necessarily familiar with the system and may therefore not be ideally placed to evaluate it.

5. CONCLUSIONS, REMAINING CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of our study, we conclude that the ESS is still in the process of formation as a unique secondary education system with many positive features, but also some that need improvement. Therefore, as a whole, the system cannot be presented as a 'showcase' model for the European Education Area, but some of its elements can certainly be presented as good practices to other Schools. These include the CLIL language learning approach, European inter-School sports competitions, some digitalisation practices (e.g. the BYOD project), local sustainability initiatives, and multi-stakeholder groups for ensuring students' well-being. These are discussed in greater detail in the table below.

Table 39 summarises all the key findings of this study in a four column format. The first column is used to track the number of respective conclusions and recommendations. To ensure steadfast improvement and sustainable development of the ESS, in the second column we have noted two kinds of recommendations that we have developed: cross-cutting recommendations that are relevant for both the educational and operational aspects of the ESS as well as targeted recommendations that address specific issues under either educational or operational dimensions. Every recommendation in Column three is based on and/or connected to a respective conclusion in Column two. All long-term recommendations have been marked with an additional *(asterisk) symbol. Apart from recommendations, we also provide suggestions for future research in Column four. We have made these suggestions only in cases where we believe that providing a more in-depth exploration of a certain good practice or challenge would be particularly relevant based on our study's conclusions.

Table 39: Summary of conclusions and recommendations.

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
Section 1: EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS			
Section 1.1. Pedagogical quality assurance			
1	Introduction of a competence-based system as well as of a new marking system is seen by all stakeholder groups as a step in the right direction . There is significant progress in the process of syllabus harmonisation. However, there is tangential evidence that the implementation of at least two competences – entrepreneurship and digital competences – is lagging (e.g. lack of references in the syllabi, complaints by parents' associations and students)	1.1. Closer attention should be paid to implementation of the competences of entrepreneurship and digital competences, esp. in light of the upcoming evaluation study by the OSG on the implementation of all competences ⁵⁹ . Both competences are becoming increasingly important due to and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are also essential for a children's post-school educational and professional development. Specifically, the curricula in the entire secondary cycle (esp. in the later years – S6/S7) should reflect both entrepreneurship and digital competences more clearly by specifying how exactly these competences are ingrained in class activities .	N/A. A pending comprehensive evaluation by the OSG (aimed at the implementation of the competence-based approach and a new marking system).
2	There is a persistent challenge of inconsistent application of the new marking system across different language sections and subjects . Furthermore, some teachers reported a major increase in their administrative workload as a result of the implementation of this new approach.	2.1. Some teachers still require additional training on the application of the new marking system because their marking methods still differ from language section to language section or subject to subject (owing to their national marking systems), which results in systemically lower grading in certain sections and higher retention rates. The training could be conducted online while open fora, also available for parents and management, could serve as a feedback loop and platform for the exchange of good practices. 2.2. To prevent linguistic biases, mixing teachers from different language sections by placing them into the examination boards of other language sections during the EB examination could also be considered.	

⁵⁹ As reported to the EP in February 2021, the OSG commissioned an independent evaluation of the implementation of both the competence-based approach and a new marking system that would be published in the course of 2022.

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
3	<p>The ESS already has a solid institutional basis for pedagogical quality assurance that could be further built upon. However, the existing quality assurance documentation produced in the early 2000s is somewhat outdated and needs to better reflect the realities of today (e.g. outline criteria and indicators pertaining to digitalisation and education for sustainable development).</p> <p>An important point needing clarification in the existing pedagogical quality assurance system is that responsibilities for monitoring teachers are divided between the Directors and inspectors, but there is a lack of clarity with regard to who holds the seconded teachers accountable between inspections.</p>	<p>3.1. The existing pedagogical quality assurance document should be updated methodologically by the BoG to make the indicators more measurable. It could also be updated qualitatively to better reflect current trends in digital education and hybrid learning (e.g. measure the digital competence of teachers). This measure will help to improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation of teachers' competences and pedagogical practices in individual Schools.</p> <p>3.2. To further improve compliance with provisions of the pedagogical quality assurance document, consider making at least some School inspections thematic and aimed at dealing with specific issues (e.g. language learning, student well-being, education for sustainable development, social inclusion, etc.), rather than conducting infrequent Whole School inspections only.</p> <p>3.3. Furthermore, the responsibility of holding the seconded teachers accountable between inspections should be clarified and delegated by the BoG to a specific stakeholder group (e.g. the Complaints Board by expanding its mandate). This measure could help resolve any emerging conflicts between teachers and other stakeholders (e.g. parents, students, other teachers) and feed into existing feedback loops.</p>	N/A
4	<p>The ESS has developed its own framework for the continuous professional development (CPD) of ESS teachers, but its scope remains somewhat narrow (i.e. only implementation of the new marking system and a competence-based approach with broader training topics missing from the CPD framework). The strategy for teachers' CPD should be developed further and become more systemic rather than random.</p>	<p>*4.1. The BoG, in co-operation with the BoG PDU and JBI, should build upon the existing framework of CPD in the ES to improve the quality of teaching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically, the scope of provided opportunities for CPD should be expanded to also include onboarding for all teachers upon the start of their work in the ESS, training in digital competences, training aimed at improving teaching qualifications and additional language training, training for teaching CLIL, etc. • Moreover, CPD should be conducted regularly, and frequency must be specified in the CPD framework document. • Training methods should vary and include both face-to-face, online, and hybrid formats (with the latter two options having become particularly relevant in light of the COVID-19 pandemic) and should involve administrative, infrastructural, 	<p>The experience of MA programmes accredited by the International Baccalaureate organisation could be explored further to establish similar programmes in the ESS.</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
		<p>and methodological support from the OSG, individual Schools, and national inspectors. It could also be adopted as formalised and certified training (e.g. training leading to an advanced degree or a professional certificate aimed at the provision of education in the ESS with a focus on multicultural and multilingual inclusive education).</p>	
5	<p>Some technical problems with the comparability of EB diplomas persist, which significantly undermine coherence and the consistency of the approach. This is largely due to responses from the involved MSs.</p>	<p>5.1. While an infringement procedure was launched by the EC, the comparability issue is symptomatic of a deeper communication problem that needs to be addressed. Developing and/or improving communication channels between national authorities and the ESS is of utmost importance. Specifically, this could involve proactively approaching and extensively explaining the ESS to representatives of the national ministries of education in greater detail.</p>	<p>If the problem persists, conducting targeted case studies of specific Member States where the problem is particularly evident, to better address the root causes.</p>
Section 1.2. European dimension of the curriculum			
1	<p>A very strong European dimension is present in the curricula both at primary and secondary levels. The ESS produces a variety of good practices such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) or common approaches to teaching certain subjects that should be fostered and built upon (e.g. geography, history). However, there are also some overlaps (e.g. repetition of the same topics) and potential unexplored synergies between different subjects that can further strengthen the European dimension (e.g. subject complementarity).</p>	<p>1.1. Future syllabi on inter-related subjects (e.g. such as history, geography, economics, political science) should be developed while taking into account potential synergies between them so as to produce complementarities in terms of learning modules rather than overlaps (e.g. streamlining teaching materials on the EU institutional structure, economics of the EU, referencing content from different classes rather than repeating, reporting any potential overlaps in the syllabi to teachers and inspectors).</p>	N/A
2	<p>In terms of instructional materials, teachers in subjects such as history and geography are still struggling with a lack of relevant, unified instructional materials (e.g. common</p>	<p>2.1. Initiatives aimed at developing unified instruction materials such as textbooks or didactic tools for common European subjects (e.g. history) should be monitored and supported by both central and School-level management under the coordination of the OSG (e.g. by commissioning such materials from commercial publishers). The materials that have already been developed at the level of the individual Schools should also be shared with the OSG and circulated to all</p>	N/A

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	European history books) and often have to develop those on their own.	ES/AES by School management and the central administration (e.g. through an online repository on the ESS website). This could contribute both to strengthening the European dimension in education through curriculum harmonisation and decrease the workload for teachers.	
3	The European dimension of the curricula is supported by various extracurricular activities such as Eurosport, various inter-School symposia, and exchange programmes. These could be mapped to have a more complete picture of how to better integrate the European dimension in the curricula.	<p>3.1. Ties between the ES and AES should be further expanded by aligning extra-curricular and inter-School academic events between the two as well as by further intensifying student exchange programmes. Strengthening these ties will allow not only for good practice exchanges between the Schools, but also for a wider range of educational opportunities for students in different countries.</p> <p>3.2. Consider introducing and further exploring extra-curricular volunteering as a method of strengthening children’s social competences. Furthermore, this might help an individual School to better integrate itself into its local community/improve its local image.</p>	Mapping extracurricular activities with a European dimension at levels that involve both ES/AES and even local schools.
Section 1.3. Language learning			
1	<p>The system of language learning was positively assessed by a dominant majority of stakeholders; the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach was cited as a good and desirable practice on numerous occasions by all stakeholder groups.</p> <p>The curriculum reform process is actively ongoing in the field of language learning, including the introduction of a competence-based approach (with additional updates of L3 syllabi still pending).</p> <p>However, the ESS CLIL approach has not been actively documented and shared outside of</p>	<p>1.1. CLIL experience of the ESS must be thoroughly documented as a good practice and should be widely shared with national systems and all other interested stakeholders. Since CLIL is universally endorsed by all stakeholder groups as an effective method of language learning as well as a key driver of the European dimension of high-school education, it has great potential for contributing to the further development of the EEA.</p> <p>1.2. Continue expanding the CLIL approach in L2/L3 so as to alleviate pressure on the recruitment system (e.g. support OSG initiatives to add the host country language as a potential choice for L2; and/or to proceed with starting to learn L3 in earlier secondary years).</p>	A more detailed assessment of the CLIL implementation in the ESS could be conducted internally by the OSG and/or individual Schools or by commissioning an external study.

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>the system. Furthermore, it still has the potential to grow further.</p>		
2	<p>The ESS has also been paying increased attention to issues faced by SWALS (students without a language section) with new institutional frameworks and tools emerging in recent years (incl. the introduction of a new Language Policy, intensified targeted educational support), but the needs of some multilingual children and families remain unsatisfied.</p>	<p>2.1. Consider introducing more flexibility in the dominant language selection for families. This is especially relevant for families of mixed backgrounds, or families who have permanent contracts in EU institutions, also SWALS. Examples from the AES with fewer sections may be taken.</p> <p>*2.2. Consider updating the language learning system to better reflect multi-lingual pupils' needs. A module system could be developed, where pupils accumulate credits for different levels of learning languages – for example, a bilingual pupil may learn two L1 at a high level, but not learn an L2. Alternatively, grouping pupils based on their ability in L2 and L3 (e.g. using CELF levels such as A1, A2, etc.) should also be considered in order to improve the cohesiveness of study groups. This could also be combined with integrating some digital solutions such as online language classes across different Schools (see the General Recommendations for more details).</p>	N/A
3	<p>Nevertheless, despite a strong endorsement of the quality of language learning by most stakeholder groups, there is a challenge regarding its quality in some areas. This challenge comes as the result mixing students from different age groups (rather than teaching by year/level) with the aim of addressing resource distribution. This leads to advanced students studying together with beginners, which makes it difficult to address different needs and skill levels. The problem is particularly pertinent in L1/L3, where the diversity of offered language choices is much broader than in L2 and, thus, the teaching of smaller EU languages</p>	<p>3.1. Digital solutions can be employed in the secondary cycle to address both the problem of teacher shortages across the board and dissatisfaction with the diversity of offered language options for L3/L4 as well as the L1 problem faced by the SWALS (e.g. through recorded lessons on a digital learning platform or through videoconferencing applications/ other specialised software).</p> <p>3.2. Furthermore, online or hybrid classes for L1, L3, and L4 could be offered to students as an option of studying a preferred L1, L3 or L4 in the secondary cycle. In such cases, student groups could be created based on the similarity of the students' language levels across different Schools (rather than based on the fact that they study within the same School despite their different language levels).</p>	<p>Explore pedagogical pathways to better harmonise the knowledge and language skills of less advanced students (e.g. paying close attention to potential gaps already in the nursery cycle by ensuring that all students learn at similar level vocabularies as well as different themes / subjects, which then serves as a foundation for the next years).</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>becomes an administrative issue for the Schools.</p> <p>A connected issue are the continuous complaints about the limited choice for L3/L4. These remain relevant especially for smaller Schools because they lack the financial and human resources to offer a wide array of languages to small student cohorts (compared to Brussels or Luxembourg ES).</p>		
4	<p>Ongoing staffing issues and the stagnating rates of secondments were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and forced the ESS to increasingly rely on LRT (locally recruited teachers) or non-native speakers. Brexit has further exacerbated the issue, which has made the secondment of native English speakers increasingly difficult, resulting in a huge drop of available native-speaker staff and thereby impacting negatively upon the learning of English at both L1 and L2.</p>	<p>*4.1. To partially relieve the system from the pressure of teacher shortages, resorting to the recruitment of non-native speakers could be considered for teaching subjects in L3 or L4 if a robust system for assessing the linguistic competences of the non-native speaker teachers were to be in place. Existing tools for measuring teaching capabilities could be leveraged for this (e.g. IELTS, TEFL or CELTA for English; Goethe professional certificates for German, etc.) in integration with the existing Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The system should verify the teachers' credentials together with their other pedagogical qualification before they join the ESS.</p>	N/A.
Section 1.4. Inclusive education			
1	<p>The ESS has developed a clear institutional framework and tools to improve the situation with inclusive education (e.g. Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education to address the needs of the SWALS and SEN students). There are some preliminary indicators showing improvements (e.g. a growing number of students receiving assistance, the growing amount of time spent</p>	N/A (to be covered by the evaluation by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education)	Careful attention should be paid not only to overall inclusion education but also to student needs and their well-being in the framework of the assessment by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>on assisting students). However, implementation of the measures mandated at the central level by the OSG is not entirely cohesive. An exchange of good practices is also still slow, partially due to the lack of central coordination. Furthermore, there is still much demand for greater inclusivity among SEN students.</p>		<p>Another topic that could be further explored is the perceived elitism of traditional ES and whether or not the situation is improving. So far, it remains difficult to assess this topic due to a lack of data.</p>
2	<p>The strategy to enhance inclusive education has inevitably led to an increasing number of students who have been identified as requiring more intensive or tailored forms of support. This in turn means that Schools require either additional human and financial resources or more innovative approaches to maximise the effectiveness of existent resources.</p>	<p>N/A (to be covered in the evaluation by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
3	<p>Educational choices available at the ESS remain limited – there is only one academic pathway with no vocational or other alternatives available so far. What this means is that the ESS is unable to cater for the more practically inclined students and that its inclusion policy is limited in this area.</p>	<p>N/A (to be covered in a separate study).</p>	<p>A broader study is needed that is aimed at students/parents/alumni on the topic of alternative educational choices to better understand the demand for VET-based and/or alternative education pathways.</p>
Section 1.5. Education for sustainable development			
1	<p>Sustainability topics now receive more attention from the central administration and individual Schools in light of sustainability initiatives pushed by students (both in educational and operational activities). Nevertheless, the current institutional framework for</p>	<p>1.1. The central administration should develop a common framework for integrating topics relating to environmental sustainability (e.g. similar to that aimed at teaching digital skills) along with a related action plan with concrete steps, which will be aimed at further harmonising both the curriculum and extra-curricular efforts to provide better education for sustainable development (ESD).</p>	<p>N/A</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>integrating topics relating to environmental sustainability remains rather weak at the level of central administration; there is no strategic document governing these issues.</p>		
2	<p>While some topics relating to environmental sustainability have been integrated into secondary cycle subjects, they are not yet reflected in the competences.</p> <p>The approach is also too decentralised and incohesive when compared to the primary cycle, and requires stronger horizontal integration across different subjects (e.g. economics, geography).</p>	<p>2.1. More linkages between the subject syllabi (e.g. biology, economics, geography) should be introduced in the secondary cycle to ensure the cohesiveness of the provided education for sustainable development. This could be done by taking stock of the existing approach or by linking different subjects in the primary cycle or by using good practices in some of the existing subjects (e.g. Discovery of the World).</p> <p>2.2. Consider integrating ESD-related topics and themes into the 8 competences framework (e.g. by introducing the competences of environmental awareness or green skills).</p>	N/A
3	<p>Individual Schools develop many good practices on their own (e.g. conducting extra-curricular events such as conferences or trips that relate to environmental sustainability). However, similar to the situation with inclusive education, existing good practices at the level of individual Schools do not receive enough attention and are not sufficiently promoted.</p>	<p>*3.1. ESD-related good practices existing in individual Schools should be thoroughly documented and shared within the ESS (between different ES and AES).</p> <p>3.2. Both the BoG and the OSG should pay closer attention to ESD-related topics; they should be moved higher up in discussion agendas.</p>	<p>ESD good practices in individual Schools should be documented thoroughly. Potential linkages of ESD with the operational aspects of the system's functioning can also be explored in a separate study (e.g. innovative cost-sharing solutions and/or sustainable innovations for individual Schools).</p>
Section 1.6. Sports and physical education (PE)			
1	<p>Overall, the sports & PE curriculum is adequate and has successfully integrated the key relevant competences (e.g. communication, collaboration) with no evidence of systemic quality challenges. Sports classes and</p>	<p>1.1. Extensive support for intra-School extracurricular activities such as Eurosport should be continued. The role of the AES in contributing to and organising Eurosport events should be strengthened further. Currently, all Eurosport events</p>	<p>Consider a thematic audit of sports and other infrastructural facilities with detailed school-specific recommendations on</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>competitions through Eurosport have become one of the main drivers of the European dimension and could be used for further integration of the ES with local School communities.</p> <p>However, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted sports classes negatively and also undermined the organisation of sports-related curricula (see section 3.7 on the COVID-19 impact). Furthermore, in some Schools, parents/students have expressed a wish for a greater diversity in the lists of offered sports activities.</p>	<p>until 2029 have been scheduled in traditional ES, which is somewhat unfair to the AES.</p> <p>1.2. Cooperation with other local (non-ES) schools in accessing their facilities could be explored (broadly consider the more detailed suggestions made in subsection 2.3.3., point 2). This would also help to address the alleged lack of diversity in sports activities as well as the image of the ESS in local communities. Using the existing School-level good practices of crowdfunding could be considered as an alternative (e.g. parents’ committees and teachers/management launching their own clubs with sports activities organised by local providers, which would be based on some form of paid membership).</p>	<p>how to improve them in financially sustainable ways.</p>
Section 1.7. COVID-19 impact			
1	<p>The pandemic has undermined both the teaching processes and extracurriculars (e.g. completely cancelling sports classes, creating challenges for teachers and students with weaker digital skills) as well as caused many administrative issues (e.g. increased workload for both teachers and staff due to a digital transition, confusion due to various regulations imposed at the School and national levels).</p>	<p>1.1. Additional support and the attention of decision-makers should be given to inter-School extracurriculars in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. continue organising some events in digital or hybrid formats; provide free testing for event participants) so as to alleviate the challenges caused by the (potential) cancellation of classes and/or extracurricular events.</p> <p>1.2. In cases of future similar crises, mental health support systems for both staff and students should be available both online and offline. Specifically, the ESS could utilise/institutionalise some already existing good practices such as online student and teacher support groups, systems for online psychological counselling, etc. Potential prophylactic courses and/or training on mental health issues should also be considered (in the case of the students, integration into some of the syllabi may be an option).</p>	<p>A detailed in-depth evaluation of the COVID-19 impacts and good practices is recommended once the active phase of the pandemic is over (incl. a comparative perspective involving national schools to better understand whether the ES/AES were better positioned to respond to the pandemic).</p>
2	<p>The pandemic exposed the infrastructural issue of “digital differentiation” with not all Schools being equally prepared to respond to</p>	<p>*2.1. Further strengthen and harmonise the existing ICT infrastructure across different Schools (both ES and AES) to close the “digital gap” by redistributing existing resources (i.e. identify the Schools where the ICT infrastructure needs</p>	<p>Consider a thematic audit of ICT and other infrastructural facilities with detailed School-specific</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>the pandemic due to the lack of a necessary infrastructure.</p> <p>At the same time, it has also significantly increased the digitalisation pace for the ESS (e.g. with remote learning becoming the norm; the levels of investment in ICT infrastructure significantly increasing; as well as most of the teachers, management, and students developing digital skills, etc.).</p>	<p>improvement; provide targeted administrative and/or financial assistance). To be aligned with changes in the ESS cost-sharing model.</p> <p>2.2. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the digital skills of the staff/teachers and provide full-board cohesive training (possibly linked with the teacher CPD system) aimed at improving these, if necessary. The training could include a broad variety of topics including usage of videoconferencing and presentation applications, online marking tools, database management, online learning platforms, etc. This kind of training would assist the staff when working in both online and hybrid settings.</p>	<p>recommendations on how to improve it in financially sustainable ways (see above).</p>
	<p>Section 2: OPERATIONAL ASPECTS</p>		
<p>Section 2.1. European Schools System's Identity: Mission and Objectives</p>			
1	<p>While still relevant, the mission does not stress certain values such as diversity, inclusion, cooperation, or tolerance. While an overarching European identity is ever-present in the Schools, its values are not properly, nor clearly articulated.</p>	<p>1.1. Expand and update the mission, principles, and objectives of the ESS, or alternatively, develop a text (e.g. the Charter) that would clearly outline the key values of the ESS and make the concept of a "European identity" less vague to parents and pupils. A comprehensive set of principles and values, such as the respectful treatment of individuals, tolerance and well-being, openness and inclusion, respect for the environment, responsibility, could be included.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
2	<p>The ESS does not sufficiently live up to its principles and objectives when it comes to providing truly multicultural and multilingual education. Currently, national language sections are constructed to mirror the national education offered in EU Member States for pupils with clearly defined national backgrounds, and language-learning is still oriented towards such children. However, many families whose children attend the ESS already live under different circumstances. Also, the</p>	<p>2.1. Update the mission, principles, and objectives of the ESS to better reflect the needs of multilingual children attending the ES and AES.</p> <p>2.2. Consider re-developing the approach to devising curricula in language sections that are attended by many SWALS students so that the learning content is less strongly based on a particular nation and could incorporate other national/cultural backgrounds. Examples from the AES with fewer sections may be taken.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	integration of SWALS under this type of system remains unsatisfactory.		
3	The ESS focuses on children of the staff of EU institutions. However, such exclusivity is perceived as overly elitist, and many believe it clashes with the European values of openness and inclusivity. Furthermore, with the opening of the AES, a focus on children of the staff of European institutions is no longer accurate, as other children also attend the Schools.	3.1. Consider revising the mission statement to better reflect the realities of the AES , while at the same time, keeping admission rules for traditional ES intact.	Further explore the topic of opening up the ES to the world outside of the ESS “bubble” (e.g. engagement with local communities in the host country, daytrips, local School exchanges, collaborative projects, sports activities).
Section 2.2. Governance of the ESS			
1	The current governance system is perceived as being overly complex, bureaucratic, and inefficient when it comes to decision-making. Most importantly, there is constant confusion and misunderstanding as to what are the roles and responsibilities of the central administration and individual Schools , and as a result, who is held accountable.	<p>1.1. Develop a scheme of responsibilities, accompanied by a scheme of delegation, that outlines the key broad areas of responsibility of each entity involved in the governance of the ESS and individual Schools and set clear channels of communication amongst them. It is also important to establish clear guidelines (esp. to parents; an FAQ format may be considered) who is accountable if certain situations arise, - firstly, whose responsibility it is to address/solve the issue, and secondly, what corrective mechanisms are already in place to ensure that those who oversee the solving of issues actually follow through.</p> <p>1.2. An overall simplification of decision-making and larger autonomy to separate entities/departments may be considered.</p> <p>1.3. Hold BoG meetings more often via digital means so that issues may be dealt with more promptly than they currently are.</p>	<p>1.1. The current governance system could be re-modelled altogether into a different entity (e.g. an international agency) that would no longer rely on the BoG in its current composition, nor the OSG. Reducing the number of stakeholders involved in decision-making could simplify the process and make it more efficient. However, more extensive research would be needed to assess what kind of model would be the most appropriate.</p> <p>1.2. Fully clarify all situations of voting at the BoG that require unanimity and explore possibilities for introducing a</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
			majority vote in some well-justified cases.
2	<p>There is a reported lack of checks and balances across the ESS in the current governance model, with a potential conflict of interest between the EC and the BoG, School Directors and the OSG, or inspectors and teachers. This results in a lack of transparency and a lack of accountability, especially when it comes to the BoG – it remains unclear who holds it accountable (esp. for ensuring pedagogical quality) and how decisions are followed-up.</p>	<p>*2.1. Introduce ethical walls (e.g. information barriers) or other means of separation between stakeholder groups that are involved in decision-making with potential conflicts of interest. Most significantly, this concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding, which should be separated from other areas of decision-making such as pedagogy or management. • School administrations (esp. Directors) and the OSG – the current system of the ESS needs to involve external actors who would hold impartial assessments of Directors and/or their administrative staff. • Selection and evaluation of teachers. A uniform system for hiring teachers should be introduced in all Schools, leaving selections either to School administrations or the OSG, while inspection may continue to be conducted by delegations from MSs. A standardisation of teacher contracts also needs to be established. <p>2.2. Consider developing a pedagogy quality assurance mechanism for the BoG, e.g. via the European Parliament (CULT) or the European Commission (DG EAC).</p>	Full audit of statistics available and recommended ways on how to ensure accessibility and user-friendliness of the current statistical data on the ESS and expansion by adding new statistical data (esp. statistical data on the AES as currently it is very much lacking).
3	<p>Members of the BoG and the OSG are reported to lack either sufficient knowledge or pedagogical competence to adequately oversee educational process across the ESS.</p>	<p>*3.1. Consider changing the current model of hiring employees for positions at the OSG, refocusing it towards a more impartial, competence-based system. For example, central appointment by a stakeholder body drawn from across MSs.</p> <p>3.2. Strengthen the PDU at the OSG to ensure that enough qualified personnel can provide support to teachers and staff across the ESS.</p>	Explore the opportunities for revising the role of MS delegations to the BoG and limiting their decision-making powers only to major issues.
4	<p>Certain stakeholders feel excluded from decision-making within the system, most notably the parents, who claim they have no say in any of its aspects. However, teacher representation is also unsatisfactory, while</p>	<p>4.1. Establish clear channels of communication between parents, teachers, the School administration/the OSG, and the BoG in case any issues arise and dedicate additional resources for providing guidance/support. A formalised mediation process could be developed. Digital means could be used for improving communication and collecting feedback (e.g. an online education platform that</p>	N/A

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>the AES are almost completely absent from decision-making.</p>	<p>Schools may use to post information, involve parents/teachers in decisions regarding the School, share educational materials).</p> <p>4.2. Ensure fair and adequate representation of all stakeholder groups in the decision-making process at central and School levels, including AES representatives.</p>	
5	<p>Despite improvements in the legal status of the ESS, only a very limited range of decisions may be appealed via the Complaints Board. The appeal process is reported to be lengthy and complex, and issues often remain unresolved in a timely manner, if at all.</p>	<p>5.1. Expand the mandate of Complaints Boards (e.g. include pedagogical, managerial and student well-being issues) and support it with additional resources.</p> <p>5.2. Alternatively, consider creating an Ombudsman/pre-Complaints Board so that in cases of conflict, parties could prevent legal processes. It could also take the form of a dedicated mediation panel drawn from all stakeholder groups who have received appropriate training, with neutral legal support and an external member. The panel could help to resolve cases that could not otherwise be easily resolved at the School level.</p>	<p>The option of establishing an Ombudsman is favoured by many parents, however it would require additional investigation as to what extent this would help address current problems.</p>
<p>Section 2.3.1. Management: Funding & HR policies</p>			
1	<p>The cost-sharing mechanism has led to two major issues the traditional ES face, namely 1) teacher shortages, and 2) poor infrastructure. MSs continuously fail to meet their obligations for secondments, while host MSs are not always willing to allocate the funds required for maintaining and upgrading the infrastructure of their Schools.</p>	<p>*1.1. In the longer-term, consider alternatives to the current cost-sharing model. Most importantly, 1) decisions on funding need to be independent from other decisions taken by the BoG and 2) a mechanism for a fair contribution from each MS needs to be developed. The latter could be based on a contribution-per-student, rather than contributing via secondments (which are also difficult to measure). This would also leave more room for School administrations to manage their budgets independently, as well as improve teacher working conditions (see below). Alternatively, the cost-sharing via secondment may be continued, however with appropriate means for ensuring that MSs meet their obligations (e.g. MSs, failing to meet their obligations for secondments, pay proportionate contributions-per-student).</p>	<p>It remains to be seen which funding cost-sharing model could be adopted instead of the current one, or how the model should specifically be improved. Further research and discussion are needed to assess suggested and other options to find the most suitable alternative to the current cost-sharing model.</p>
2	<p>A shortage of teachers is a major challenge across the Schools. Teaching positions are insufficiently attractive to potential candidates, especially locally recruited teachers, while MSs continuously fail to</p>	<p>*2.1. Strengthen the whole employment package to teachers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring equal employment conditions for all teachers when it comes to salaries, job security, and social benefits. 	<p>N/A</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>second teachers without significant implications. There are a number of issues with regards to working conditions for teachers and especially LRTs, that need to be resolved. Furthermore, the ESS training strategy for teachers is fragmented, while central guidelines are mostly focused on implementation of the new marking system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing better teacher support which, among others, may include onboarding, teaching materials, continuous teacher support via specific structures (e.g. teacher groups, assistants) and guidance on how to best implement specific content (e.g. the European dimension or work with subjects such as European hours). • Developing and implementing CPD in the ESS, covering numerous subjects including marking, digital skills, working with SEN pupils, teaching methods (see also section 1.4, point 4). This could also play a role in attracting more seconded teachers, who would see the ESS as a benefit to their careers rather than a break in them. 	
3	<p>Currently, many Schools struggle to fill vacant teaching posts, while the recruitment process is costly and difficult at least for most traditional ES.</p>	<p>3.1. To improve the situation on a temporary basis, the following measures could be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff for traditional ES could be recruited in a centralised fashion by the EC or the OSG. This would facilitate the process and offer employment contracts in places where they are most needed. • MSs sometimes do not second teachers due to the linguistic requirements. A centralised system could introduce an additional certification or tests upon recruitment to ensure that all teachers are able to work in another language, if relevant. 	N/A
4	<p>The cost-sharing mechanism has led to limited numbers of support staff at the Schools, such as counsellors or psychologists.</p>	<p>4.1. Ensure that sufficient funding is foreseen for additional support staff (also see section 2.3.4, point 3).</p>	N/A
Section 2.3.2. Management: the School administration process			
1	<p>There is a lack of qualified staff for management positions and limited investment into middle-management at the School level.</p>	<p>1.1. Strengthen the middle-management layer within Schools by introducing management-level training for all managerial positions as well as by hiring more deputy Directors and/or introducing the role of Departmental Coordinators to assist School Directors.</p>	<p>Investigate developing an alternative centralised hiring mechanism (similar to the one for teaching posts) for management positions in the Schools to be based on experience and</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
		1.2. Consider introducing a system to ensure better feedback loops for administrative positions , e.g. by tying management salaries/promotion conditions to the levels of satisfaction expressed by teachers and/or parents.	competence rather than on MS willingness/ ability to send candidates. This could increase transparency across the ESS.
2	There is strong dissatisfaction with the institute of Administrative Boards. It is perceived as a formality in the decision-making process, and the process is overly rigid as well as lacking transparency.	2.1. Strengthen the Schools' Administrative Boards by ensuring a broader involvement of parents and students and introducing a follow-up/ accountability mechanism for adopted decisions.	N/A
3	A significant share of parents, students, and teachers feel that their complaints are not heard and argue that communication in the ESS does not work effectively. The Schools often provide too little information, nor in a timely or acceptable manner.	3.1. Improve communication channels between teachers and administrative staff. This may be done in several ways, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a structure that would enable regular meetings between administrative staff and teachers (e.g. for specific subjects, language sections, years, etc.). • Set-up a channel where issues and problems may be communicated and referred to appropriate persons for solving them. • Communicate about decisions made by administrative personnel, the Administrative Boards, the OSG or the BoG in a regular manner, as well as issues that are on the priority list for a School to resolve. 3.2. Improve communication channels between the School and pupils' parents. This may be done in several ways, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding more regular meetings amongst School management, teachers, and parents. • Ensuring the better integration of new pupils and their parents at the School by providing an information package to parents (about governance, decision-making, etc.) that is easy to read and includes a section on FAQ and a contact point for any remaining questions. 	N/A

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing an entity that could address various complaints and issues raised by parents, without needing to necessarily address them to School Directors or need going to the OSG or the Complaints Board. • Communicate about decisions made by administrative personnel, the Administrative Boards, the OSG, or the BoG in a regular manner, as well as about issues that are on the priority list for a School to resolve. 	
4	<p>Unclear roles in School administration have caused tensions amongst teaching staff and parents and have led to transparency issues in relation to procurement procedures and admissions processes.</p>	<p>4.1. Develop a clear scheme of roles and responsibilities that parents, teachers, and students may use when looking for the right person to approach regarding any issues. A single point of contact for any issues of an undetermined nature should also be indicated.</p> <p>4.2. Develop a clear scheme of accountability, where it is clear who is responsible for guaranteeing that expectations are met, and, in case there is a lack of follow-through, has the right to implement certain measures.</p> <p>*4.3. Introduce a more decentralised management approach in Schools by splitting up central management into departments, and ensuring they are sufficiently autonomous to make decisions and address concerns.</p> <p>4.4. Clarify rules of admissions for CAT II and CAT III pupils and ensure they are implemented in a unified manner across the whole ESS.</p>	N/A
Section 2.3.3. Management: Infrastructure and facilities (incl. digitalisation)			
1	<p>Conditions for a School's infrastructure and facilities are very heterogeneous across the ESS, depending on the willingness of the host MS to cooperate and finance infrastructure maintenance work and upgrades.</p>	<p>1.1. Provide the OSG and/or a School's management with their legal and other rights, including a sufficient budget to at least carry out necessary and relatively straightforward maintenance work, such as various repairs at the Schools.</p> <p>1.2. Consider exploring alternative funding models to ensure that a School's infrastructure be upgraded in a timely and efficient manner (see section 2.3.1., point 1). Ideally, it should entail more autonomy for individual Schools to manage their own needs.</p>	<p>Alternatives to financing School infrastructures should be explored, as currently some MSs (esp. Belgium and Germany) must cover larger costs than other countries since they have more Schools. Different approaches, where Schools may autonomously decide on where to</p>

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
			invest money, need to be considered and properly evaluated. Approaches could consider: (1) a concession principle, based on a public-private partnership; also (2) alternative options for opening new Schools by, for example, having buildings rented centrally by the OSG, rather than being provided by the host MS.
2	Lack of space negatively affects the quality of education and pupil readiness to learn.	2.1. Invest in more and higher quality common spaces , where pupils could spend their free time in safe and comfortable places. 2.2. Set-up agreements with nearby Schools to share facilities (see also section 1.6, point 1). This could also bring more mutual cooperation in the area of sports (e.g. holding inter-School competitions amongst teams or similar).	N/A
3	The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digital infrastructure for delivering quality education. While the overall ESS response was effective, it also showed that there remain certain barriers when it comes to delivering digital learning (e.g. the transition to digital varies across Schools and, in some cases, the absence of online schooling was partly due to low digital skills among the teachers).	3.1. Continue investing and supporting the digital infrastructure, while distributing investments more evenly across different Schools to close existing “digital gaps” ; this should be implemented along with the development of “digital skills” of staff in the framework of the CPD strategy (see also section 1.1, point 4). *3.3. The OSG should expand the centralised Digital Education Action plan to include coordinated digital infrastructure needs, and possibly centralised purchases of hardware or software (similar to how the transition to MS Teams was carried out).	N/A
Section 2.3.4. Management: Policies guaranteeing the well-being of students			
1	Bullying and harassment amongst pupils, which is in some cases undertaken by teachers across the ESS, is alarming. Incidences	1.1. Expand anti-bullying efforts to include not only the good practice KiVa initiative at the primary School level, but also a programme for secondary school. The programme should be accompanied by support measures , such as channels to	Consider exploring various existing and/or new structures at the School management level to

No.	Conclusions	Related recommendation(s)*	Suggestions for future research
	<p>of unfortunate events are a cause for concern to pupils and parents.</p>	<p>anonymously report bullying or abuse, support structures that could address ongoing issues, training for pupils as well as staff on how to deal with and prevent bullying, etc.</p> <p>1.2. Improve pastoral care in the secondary cycle to include community-building and strengthening activities amongst pupils to provide them with a sense of stability and belonging.</p>	<p>deal with reported abuse, harassment, and bullying among students.</p>
2	<p>There is a perceived lack of educational support staff, such as psychologists or councillors who could help students whenever they need in an appropriate manner. In addition, the pandemic and the lockdowns that followed have severely exacerbated the mental health issues that both staff and children are facing.</p>	<p>2.1. Increase the provision of educational and psychological support for pupils and teachers across the ESS (also see section 2.3.1, point 4).</p> <p>2.2. Improve the quality of educational and psychological support for pupils by introducing a possibility to access help anonymously (without the parents' consent) and ensuring that more extensive issues be covered (or if not, that adequate referrals to other support sources are made).</p> <p>2.3. Consider establishing regular support-groups or training courses on emotional and mental health for pupils and teachers.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
3	<p>Unbalanced schedules and a demanding workload without adequate attention given to the emotional and physical well-being of pupils remains an issue.</p>	<p>3.1. Consider revising timetables for a more optimal balance between break times and classes, ensuring sufficient time for rest and lunch.</p> <p>3.2. Ensure adequate educational support for pupils who struggle to attain expected goals. This is especially relevant for SEN pupils, whose educational needs may be different from those of other pupils. Attainment goals for SEN pupils need to be revised and adjusted.</p> <p>3.3. Enable the sharing of good practices between Schools to ensure student well-being through the mechanism of benchmarking.</p>	<p>The emotional and physical well-being of less-academically inclined students may be undermined by the one and only academic path offered by the ESS. Thus, exploring alternative education pathways is very important for students' well-being (see section 1.4, point 3).</p>

Section 2.4. Growth and expansion			
1	<p>The number of pupils is growing faster than the number of staff and the number of traditional ES, creating a long-term challenge for the ESS.</p>	<p>*1.1. Expanding and promoting the system through the AES should be adapted as a policy priority. Thus, more efforts should be invested into accelerating the AES accreditation process (e.g. through standardisation).</p>	<p>Full audit of statistics available for AES, ways to ensure accessibility and user-friendliness of the current statistical data and expansion by adding new data on AES.</p>
2	<p>There is some evidence pointing towards the fact that the AES standards are too heavily influenced by national systems, thus, also impacting the quality of provided education.</p>	<p>2.1. Pedagogical quality assurance should be more strongly ensured both for the existing AES and the new AES. Specifically, ESS inspectors should be more proactively involved in monitoring pedagogical quality at the AES (e.g. by producing guidelines or fulfilling advisory/ co-inspection functions).</p> <p>2.2. Cooperation between the AES and ES should be promoted and avenues for best practice exchange (e.g. bench-learning, see general recommendations below) developed. This is especially relevant for ensuring teaching competence – teachers may use a common platform for peer learning, at the same time bringing more consistency across the ESS.</p> <p>2.3. Teacher competence development should be undertaken at the system level – the ESS needs a long-term CPD strategy that would be implemented uniformly across traditional ES and the AES. This would bring more uniformity to the system (see also section 1.4, point 4).</p>	N/A

* Longer-term recommendations, that may take 5-10 years to implement, are marked with an asterisk (*) right next to them. Otherwise, recommendations are considered to be short-to-medium term, i.e. up to five years to implement.

Source: Visionary Analytics (2022).

Finally, below we present a general list of cross-cutting recommendations. As in the table above, long-term recommendations are marked with an asterisk(*):

1. Different aspects of **digitalisation** of the pedagogical system should be explored in greater detail by the OSG and School-level management. Digitalisation of the ESS could help to address various challenges that the system faces such as:
 - a. Further investment in automatisisation/digitalisation of the assessment systems (e.g. through testing software such as Viatique™) based on existing good practices. Such efforts could help to reduce the administrative workload for teachers, improve the efficiency of their work and leave them with more time for training and pupil support.
 - b. The problem of L1/L3 accessibility through blended/online classes.
 - c. Improving the efficiency and speed of marking, while further reducing the administrative burden for teachers.
 - d. Connecting students from different ES and AES through blended/online classes.
 - e. Strengthening students' digital competences (in the framework of the 8 competences approach).
 - f. Decreasing pressure on existing infrastructures in overcrowded Schools.
 - g. Alleviating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - h. Addressing concerns expressed for the BoG more promptly via more regular digital meetings.
 - i. Improving communication amongst a School's administrative staff on the one side and parents and teachers on the other.
 - j. Developing a more efficient/centralised system for hiring teachers and staff to fill vacancies across the ESS.
2. * **Bench-learning**⁶⁰ could be introduced as a good practice sharing approach for both educational and operational areas. Specifically, the sharing of good practices both at the individual School and central administration level must be thoroughly documented, circulated and constantly updated throughout the whole ESS in many areas including:
 - a. Pedagogical quality assurance (e.g. sharing educational and didactic materials between individual Schools).
 - b. Inclusion and student well-being (e.g. School-level institutional initiatives and functional policies).
 - c. Response to COVID-19 (e.g. online support groups).
 - d. European dimension (e.g. developing didactic materials for subjects with a European dimension in AES/ES).
 - e. Education for sustainable development (e.g. School-level ESD modules or extracurriculars).
 - f. Continuous professional development of teachers (e.g. exchange of pedagogical practices, tools for professional development, peer learning and support).
 - g. School management and communication processes (e.g. the inclusion of parents in decision-making, communication on decisions made).

⁶⁰ Bench-learning is defined as a process for creating a systematic and integrated link between benchmarking and mutual learning activities. Bench-learning complements benchmarking in a number of aspects: (1) Knowledge – benchmarking focuses on a quantitative comparison of best-in-class indicators with other participants, while bench-learning focuses on qualitative learning from participants and creating new knowledge and insights together; (2) Duration – benchmarking means punctual/prompt comparison, while bench-learning involves ongoing knowledge sharing over a longer period of time; (3) People – benchmarking focuses on comparing numbers; people involved might not have direct contact in physical conversations, while bench-learning connects people via physical or online events and creates trust to share deep experiences; (4) Time – benchmarking focuses on a comparison of numbers that describe past events, while bench-learning is based on a constant sharing from past and present experiences; it also involves the creation of new knowledge and a comparison of future initiatives. For more details see here: <https://www.opensym.org/os2016/proceedings-files/c201-scheerer.pdf>

3. All levels of the system (incl. the BoG, the OSG, School management and teachers) could benefit more from **a clearer division of responsibilities; specification of their roles and areas of accountability;** as well as the development of **clearer feedback channels** between them. Specifically, we recommend:
 - a. Draft matrixes with a clear division of the responsibilities of stakeholders both at the level of central administration and individual Schools.
 - b. Draft organisational charts for a better understanding and visualisation of responsibilities.
 - c. Ensure that responsible stakeholders may also be held accountable, i.e. develop a clear structure of who must ensure that all responsibilities are followed-through, and the mechanisms for doing so.
 - d. Introduce clear guidelines on how and whom to contact in case specific, yet common, issues arise (e.g. bullying at school, underperforming teachers, unsatisfactory decisions by school management, etc.) both in individual schools and the central administration.
4. * Pedagogical quality assurance could be further strengthened by introducing additional measures for **continuous teacher professional development**, which should become a part of a broader ESS strategy on continuous teacher professional development. This could also help to attract teachers with better career prospects. Specifically, training in the following areas could be most relevant for:
 - a. Onboarding and specific ESS-related issues.
 - b. Application of the new marking system and competence-based learning.
 - c. Digital skills.
 - d. Working with SEN students.
 - e. CLIL.
 - f. Managerial/leadership trainings (for Directors and BoG members, teachers with administrative responsibilities).
5. * **Opening up of the system** should continue not only through the opening up of the new AES but also through integration of the existing ES/AES into the local environment by, for example:
 - a. Using the existing extracurricular activities to extract (e.g. Eurosport, academic symposia).
 - b. Leveraging co-operation in the common usage of sports facilities with local Schools.
 - c. Cooperating on ESD-related initiatives both in educational and operational dimensions.
 - d. Establishing networks between ES/AES management and local Schools' management.
 - e. Establishing pupil exchange programmes between ES and AES, or even ordinary Schools as a learning and experience exercise for pupils.

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ANNEX I. SURVEY ANALYSIS

An online survey was one of our main data collection methods. This Annex presents the main features of the survey, the strategies applied to achieve a higher response rate and high data quality. The Annex also contains aggregated answers to questions not extensively presented in the main report.

GENERAL FEATURES OF THE SURVEY

The survey on the European School system was open for responses from 25 October, 2021 to 25 November, 2021. The purpose and main features of the survey are presented in Table 40 below.

Table 40: Purpose and main features of the survey

Survey	Purpose	Target group	Number of responses (*before the data cleaning process)	Number of responses (*after the data cleaning process)	Response rate (*after the data cleaning process)
Survey on the European School System	Collect data from key stakeholders in the European School System to complement information gathered through interviews and the literature review	The main stakeholders in the European School System: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Alumni • Parents • Teachers • Members of School Administrations • Members of the Central Administration Office of the Secretary-General (OSG) • Inspectors • Policy Officials 	10 751 (3 559 complete and 7 192 partial)	5 392 (3 538 complete and 1 854 partial)	3.1% of students; 9.7% of parents; 26.4% of teachers; 22% of members of the OSG; 42.6% of inspectors were covered in the survey

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Note: The response rate for other than the mentioned stakeholders' groups cannot be calculated because there is a lack of data on the real population within these groups.

**Data cleaning strategies are presented in this Annex below.*

APPLIED STRATEGIES FOR A HIGH RESPONSE RATE

We applied several strategies to ensure a **higher response rate**:

- The questionnaire was programmed in three official EU languages - English, French and German. This strategy also provided non-English speaking respondents an opportunity to participate in the survey.

- The questionnaire was as short and concise as possible. Most questions used the Likert scale and were mandatory to answer. The remaining questions, which required open answers, were optional. This allowed respondents who did not have a particular opinion to skip them.
- The questions did not contain unnecessary abbreviations or overly complex technical terms. When necessary, they also included a brief explanation of the concepts used or the relevant context.
- Respondents had the option to complete the survey in more than one attempt. This allowed respondents to finish the survey if this was not possible in one attempt and to provide more comprehensive answers rather than closing the survey mid-progress.
- Significant attention was paid to preparing the questions for students. We sought to formulate questions as simply as possible so that they would be easier to understand. We also programmed the questions for students using user-friendly and playful questioning tools (e.g., slider-type questions).

APPLIED STRATEGIES FOR HIGH DATA QUALITY

Our survey collected 10,751 responses. (3,559 complete and 7,192 partial). After the quality assurance and data cleaning processes, the remaining number of responses was **5,392** (3,538 complete and 1,854 partial). We applied several strategies to **ensure the high quality** of collected data:

- 1,600 responses were deleted because respondents did not consent to their answers being used in the study.
- 9 responses from primary education pupils were deleted as they were not the target group for this survey.
- Respondents who answered only the first 5 introductory questions and did not answer the remaining questions were excluded: 3,748 (364 students and 3,384 non-students).
- Two additional responses were deleted during the quantitative analysis. These answers were interpreted as obviously wrong (e.g., the respondent talks about illegal things, the student identifies as a School Director).

Additional data re-categorisation strategies:

- Q1: the new answer option “Alumni” was added. All of the respondents who indicated that they were former students in the “other” answer category were added to the “Alumni” category during the data cleaning process.
- Q1: all the specified “other” answer options, such as former teacher, former inspector, former parent, etc., were indicated in the related – teacher, inspector, parent – answer categories. However, we used the text 'ex' in the additionally created data column to show that in these cases the status indicates a former position.
- Q4: the new answer option - "Class representative" was added during the data cleaning process. The specified 'other' answer options ('class representative') among students and non-students were added to this new answer category during the data cleaning process.

- Q4: all the 'other' specified answer options were double-checked and categorised where it was possible e.g., in cases where respondents indicated a EU-based institution (e.g. EUIPO/ EIB/ EPO/ ECB/ ESM/ EU/ LISA/ EU/ EP/ EEAS/ EESC), their responses were assigned to the category 'EC representative'.
- Q4: A respondent was only classified as an "EC Representative" or "National Government Representative" if "Political Officer" was selected as the answer to Q1. Otherwise, the selected answer category was changed to "None".

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY ON THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS SYSTEM

The results of this survey have been integrated into the study findings and can be seen in the report. In addition, below we present aggregated answers to all the survey questions. The presentation of any further data follows the structure of the actual questionnaire (see Table 41).

Table 41: Structure of the survey

Section	Questions	Table
Introduction questions	1) You are filling in this questionnaire primarily as a(n):	Table 42
	2) Please indicate what year of education you currently attend?	Table 43
	3) Please indicate what year of education your (if more than one – the youngest) child currently attends?	Table 44
	4) Please identify your institutional affiliation, if any. Multiple answers are possible.	Table 45
	5) What type of European School do you attend?	Table 46 (type of school) Table 47 (city) Table 48 (country)
The European School System's identity: mission and objectives	6) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the mission statement of the European Schools provided below? The mission of the European Schools is to provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils. They are aimed primarily at children of the staff of European institutions.	Table 49
	7) Please assess the extent to which each individual objective of the European Schools is personally relevant to you.	Table 50
	8) Please assess each of the following objectives of the European Schools individually on whether they sufficiently reflect in practice the identity of European Schools.	Table 51
Educational aspects of the European School System	10) How would you assess the current situation in the following areas of education provided by the European School System?	Table 52 (non-students) Table 53 (students)
	11) How would you assess the progress made by the European School System on educational aspects in the past five years?	Table 54 (non-students) Table 55 (students)
	12) Please assess whether the following educational aspects of the European Schools should or should not be considered 'good practices' in the European educational area, for example in other EU Member States. A 'good practice' is an experience that proved to work well and produced good results, and thus deserves to be shared with others.	Table 56

Section	Questions	Table
Operational aspects of the European School System	15) How would you assess the current situation in the following areas of the European School System's operation?	Table 57 (non-students) Table 58 (students)
	16) How would you assess the progress made by the European School system on its operational aspects over the past five years?	Table 59 (non-students) Table 60 (students)
	17) Please assess whether the following operational aspects of the European Schools should or should not be considered 'good practices' in the European Educational Area, for example in other EU Member States? A 'good practice' is an experience that proved to work well and produced good results, and thus deserves to be shared with others.	Table 61

Source: Authors' own elaboration

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS

Table 42: Q1. You are filling in this questionnaire primarily as a(n):

Total	Number of respondents		
	Total answers (N)	Complete answers (N)	Partial answers (N)
Student (secondary level S1-S7)	663	422	241
Alumni	11	3	8
Parent	3,842	2,554	1,288
Teacher	693	450	243
Member of a School Administration	103	55	48
Member of the Central Administration (Office of the Secretary-General)	19	12	7
Inspector	23	16	7
Policy Official	16	11	5
Other	24	17	7

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 43: Q2 (students). Please indicate what year of education you currently attend?

Total (students)	N	%
Secondary education 1 (S1)	15	2.3
Secondary education 2 (S2)	44	6.6
Secondary education 3 (S3)	59	8.9
Secondary education 4 (S4)	99	15.0
Secondary education 5 (S5)	105	15.9
Secondary education 6 (S6)	177	26.7
Secondary education 7 (S7)	163	24.6
Total	662	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 44: Q3 (parents). Please indicate what year of education your (if more than one – the youngest) child currently attends?

Total (parents)	N	%
Early education (Nursery) 1	204	5.3
Early education (Nursery) 2	261	6.8
Primary education 1	383	10.0
Primary education 2	333	8.7
Primary education 3	299	7.8
Primary education 4	305	7.9
Primary education 5	341	8.9
Secondary education 1	300	7.8
Secondary education 2	299	7.8
Secondary education 3	259	6.7
Secondary education 4	291	7.6
Secondary education 5	233	6.1
Secondary education 6	180	4.7
Secondary education 7	150	3.9

Total (parents)	N	%
Total	3838	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 45: Q4. Please identify your institutional affiliation, if any. Multiple answers are possible.

Total	N	%
Board of Governors member or observer	24	0.4
Student Council representative	73	1.3
Parents Association representative	444	8.2
Representative of the Office of the Secretary-General	18	0.3
Staff Committee representative	55	1.0
School Director	21	0.4
Joint Teaching Committee representative	40	0.7
Joint Board of Inspectors	20	0.4
European Commission representative	5	0.1
National government representative	4	0.1
Class representative	32	0.6
Other	61	1.1
None	4633	85.3
Total	5430	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 46: Q5. What type of European School are you part of?

	Students		Non-students		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Traditional European Schools	520	78.4	4190	88.6	4,710	87.3
Accredited European Schools	53	8	341	7.2	394	7.3
I don't know my type of school	90	13.6	147	3.1	237	4.4
Both	n/a	n/a	53	1.1	53	1
Total	663	100	4731	100	5394	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 47: Q5. Please select the city in which your school is located.

Traditional European Schools						
City	Students		Non-students		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Brussels	219	42.1	2,253	53.8	2,472	52.5
Mol	16	3.1	93	2.2	109	2.3
Frankfurt	56	10.8	326	7.8	382	8.1
Karlsruhe	17	3.3	77	1.8	94	2
Munich	66	12.7	396	9.5	462	9.8
Varese	28	5.4	167	4	195	4.1
Luxembourg	91	17.5	674	16.1	765	16.2
Bergen	16	3.1	93	2.2	109	2.3
Alicante	11	2.1	111	2.6	122	2.6
Total	520	100	4190	100	4710	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 48: Q5. Please select the country in which your school is located.

Accredited European Schools						
Country	Students		Non-students		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Belgium	4	8.0	12	3.7	16	4.3
Denmark	10	20.0	32	9.9	42	11.2
Estonia	6	12.0	38	11.7	44	11.8
Finland	4	8.0	34	10.5	38	10.2
France	19	38.0	102	31.5	121	32.4
Germany	1	2.0	19	5.9	20	5.3
Italy	5	10.0	22	6.8	27	7.2
Netherlands	1	2.0	65	20.1	66	17.6
Total	50	100	324	100	374	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Note: the table does not include Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, or Slovenia as N is too small/ 0 in these cases

THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM’S IDENTITY: MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

Table 49: Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the mission statement of the European Schools provided below? *The mission of the European Schools is to provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils. They are aimed primarily at children of the staff of European institutions.*

Total	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Do not know		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
The mission statement of the European Schools is still relevant today.	1,899	35.2	2,212	41.0	585	10.8	391	7.2	129	2.4	178	3.3	5,394	100
The mission statement sufficiently reflects the identity of European Schools.	1,179	21.9	2,426	45.1	844	15.7	556	10.3	132	2.5	243	4.5	5,380	100
The mission statement contributes to the development of a European identity and the spirit of European citizenship among students.	1,398	26.1	2,202	41.1	860	16.0	519	9.7	172	3.2	213	4.0	5,364	100
The mission adequately reflects the values of diversity and inclusion (for example, for students with disabilities or students without a language section).	794	14.8	1,568	29.3	1,132	21.1	1,075	20.1	457	8.5	329	6.1	5,355	100
The mission statement should be updated.	1,047	19.6	1,450	27.1	1,550	29.0	611	11.4	235	4.4	451	8.4	5,344	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 50: Q7. Please assess the extent to which each individual objective of the European Schools is personally relevant to you.

Total	Very relevant		Relevant		Neither relevant nor irrelevant (neutral)		Not relevant		Not relevant at all		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1. Give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – the bedrock for their development as European citizens.	1968	36.8	2299	43.0	644	12.0	249	4.7	133	2.5	52	1.0	5345	100
2. Provide a broad education of high quality from nursery level to university-entrance.	3665	68.7	1236	23.2	230	4.3	102	1.9	56	1.0	45	0.8	5334	100
3. Develop high standards in the mother tongue and in foreign languages [namely, first (L1), second (L2), third (L3) and fourth (L4) languages].	3183	59.6	1626	30.5	287	5.4	142	2.7	65	1.2	34	0.6	5337	100
4. Develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout the entire period of schooling.	3001	56.3	1758	33.0	348	6.5	119	2.2	57	1.1	49	0.9	5332	100
5. Encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of human sciences.	2485	46.6	2049	38.4	481	9.0	170	3.2	69	1.3	77	1.4	5331	100
6. Encourage creativity in music and the plastic arts and an appreciation of all that is best in a common European artistic heritage.	1855	34.8	2115	39.7	853	16.0	299	5.6	133	2.5	79	1.5	5334	100
7. Develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities.	2216	41.6	2147	40.3	589	11.0	218	4.1	109	2.0	54	1.0	5333	100
8. Offer pupils professional guidance on their choice of subjects and on career/university decisions in their later years of secondary school.	2734	51.4	1672	31.4	447	8.4	171	3.2	100	1.9	200	3.8	5324	100
9. Foster tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond.	3336	62.7	1394	26.2	341	6.4	131	2.5	67	1.3	54	1.0	5323	100
10. Cultivate pupils' personal, social, and academic development and prepare them for the next stage of education.	3281	61.7	1467	27.6	309	5.8	127	2.4	68	1.3	63	1.2	5315	100
11. Provide Education for Sustainable Development with a cross curriculum approach in line with European and international documents.	2137	40.2	1866	35.1	762	14.3	193	3.6	112	2.1	249	4.7	5319	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 51: Q8. Please assess each of the following objectives of the European Schools individually on whether they sufficiently reflect in practice the identity of European Schools.

Total (non-students)	Reflects very well		Reflects well		Neutral		Does not reflect		Does not reflect at all		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1. Give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – the bedrock for their development as European citizens.	854	18.3	2047	44.0	1054	22.6	420	9.0	113	2.4	169	3.6	4657	100
2. Provide a broad education of high quality from nursery level to university-entrance.	868	18.7	2048	44.0	924	19.9	479	10.3	117	2.5	217	4.7	4653	100
3. Develop high standards in the mother tongue and in foreign languages [namely, first (I1), second (I2), third (L3) and fourth (L4) languages].	1254	27.0	1981	42.6	693	14.9	426	9.2	138	3.0	160	3.4	4652	100
4. Develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout the entire period of schooling.	825	17.7	2100	45.2	934	20.1	365	7.8	102	2.2	324	7.0	4650	100
5. Encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of human sciences.	781	16.8	1962	42.2	1073	23.1	344	7.4	75	1.6	416	8.9	4651	100
6. Encourage creativity in music and the plastic arts and an appreciation of all that is best in a common European artistic heritage.	554	11.9	1646	35.4	1362	29.3	591	12.7	195	4.2	302	6.5	4650	100
7. Develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities.	531	11.4	1801	38.8	1321	28.4	577	12.4	190	4.1	227	4.9	4647	100
8. Offer pupils professional guidance on their choice of subjects and on career/university decisions in their later years of secondary school.	461	9.9	1153	24.8	1238	26.6	447	9.6	207	4.5	1143	24.6	4649	100
9. Foster tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond.	788	17.0	1850	39.8	1022	22.0	556	12.0	207	4.5	224	4.8	4647	100
10. Cultivate pupils’ personal, social, and academic development and prepare them for the next stage of education.	623	13.4	1657	35.7	1198	25.8	504	10.8	177	3.8	488	10.5	4647	100
11. Provide Education for Sustainable Development with a cross curriculum approach in line with European and international documents.	482	10.4	1371	29.5	1373	29.5	457	9.8	182	3.9	784	16.9	4649	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

Table 52: Q10. How would you assess the current situation in the following areas of education provided by the European School System?

Total (non-students)	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Learning pupil's mother tongue/dominant language (referred to as L1).	1411	32.6	1936	44.7	571	13.2	234	5.4	101	2.3	74	1.7	4327	100
Foreign language learning (pupil's first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively).	1076	24.9	1861	43.0	672	15.5	411	9.5	155	3.6	149	3.4	4324	100
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of teaching and learning.	563	13.0	1841	42.6	1092	25.3	569	13.2	179	4.1	76	1.8	4320	100
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of marking and assessment.	406	9.4	1551	35.9	1337	31.0	589	13.7	178	4.1	254	5.9	4315	100
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); coherent European approaches to history and the arts).	575	13.3	1751	40.5	1047	24.2	399	9.2	142	3.3	405	9.4	4319	100
Inclusion policies and their implementation, which refers to the current Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education; adequate options for students without a language section (SWALS) and students with special needs; improvements in the infrastructure for students and staff, etc.	325	7.5	1069	24.8	998	23.1	642	14.9	355	8.2	928	21.5	4317	100
Education on sustainable development (for example, awareness of green issues among pupils or of an environmentally friendly consciousness).	440	10.2	1627	37.7	1328	30.7	401	9.3	150	3.5	373	8.6	4319	100
Integration of digital skills in lessons (into the curriculum).	464	10.7	1612	37.3	1086	25.2	608	14.1	248	5.7	299	6.9	4317	100
Preparation for further education and the world of work (for example, through offering new types of diplomas).	237	5.5	678	15.8	1154	26.8	563	13.1	252	5.9	1416	32.9	4300	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 53: Q10 (students). How would you assess the CURRENT SITUATION of how the European Schools provide education for their students? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your European School’s perspective.

Total (students)	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Language learning in your mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1.	218	39.2	184	33.1	99	17.8	30	5.4	23	4.1	2	0.4	556	100
Language learning in your first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively.	193	34.7	157	28.2	123	22.1	51	9.2	25	4.5	7	1.3	556	100
The way teachers teach students at the School.	58	10.5	179	32.3	188	33.9	74	13.3	26	4.7	30	5.4	555	100
The way teachers assess students at the School.	61	11.0	145	26.1	195	35.1	99	17.8	39	7.0	16	2.9	555	100
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European Hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); European approaches to history and the arts).	150	27.1	164	29.6	120	21.7	51	9.2	36	6.5	33	6.0	554	100
Making sure everyone is included fairly at the Schools, for example students without a language section and students with special educational needs.	113	20.4	126	22.7	119	21.5	67	12.1	42	7.6	87	15.7	554	100
Education on ecological issues and the environment.	106	19.1	132	23.8	136	24.5	110	19.8	48	8.6	23	4.1	555	100
Integration of digital skills in lessons.	86	15.5	151	27.2	141	25.4	103	18.6	53	9.5	21	3.8	555	100
Preparation for further education and the world of work.	79	14.2	129	23.2	130	23.4	103	18.6	69	12.4	45	8.1	555	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 54: Q11. How would you assess the PROGRESS MADE by the European School system on educational aspects in the past five years?

Total (non-students)	Very significant progress		Significant progress		Average progress		Minor progress		Minimal or no progress		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Language learning (pupil's mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1).	160	4.3	403	11.0	805	21.9	318	8.6	665	18.1	1329	36.1	3680	100
Language learning (pupil's first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively).	148	4.0	388	10.6	785	21.4	359	9.8	709	19.3	1286	35.0	3675	100
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of teaching and learning.	123	3.3	391	10.6	706	19.2	405	11.0	830	22.6	1218	33.2	3673	100
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of marking and assessment.	114	3.1	381	10.4	670	18.3	385	10.5	842	23.0	1273	34.7	3665	100
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); coherent European approaches to history and the arts).	115	3.1	377	10.3	744	20.3	380	10.4	618	16.9	1433	39.1	3667	100
Inclusion policies and their implementation, which refers to the current Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education; adequate options for students without a language section (SWALS) and students with special needs; improvements in the infrastructure for students and staff, etc.	129	3.5	345	9.4	547	14.9	374	10.2	672	18.3	1605	43.7	3672	100
Education on sustainable development (for example, awareness of green issues among pupils or of an environmentally friendly consciousness).	183	5.0	606	16.5	739	20.2	470	12.8	388	10.6	1278	34.9	3664	100
Integration of digital skills in lessons (into the curriculum).	268	7.3	674	18.4	660	18.0	477	13.0	476	13.0	1110	30.3	3665	100
Preparation for further education and the world of work (for example, through offering new types of diplomas).	91	2.5	234	6.4	525	14.4	320	8.8	636	17.4	1839	50.5	3645	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 55: Q11 (students). How would you assess the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools in providing education to their students while you have been at the school? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your European School’s perspective.

Total (students)	Very significant progress		Significant progress		Average progress		Minor progress		Minimal or no progress		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Language learning in your mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1.	103	22.0	93	19.8	132	28.1	45	9.6	47	10.0	49	10.4	469	100
Language learning in your first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively.	99	21.1	108	23.0	122	26.0	50	10.7	48	10.2	42	9.0	469	100
The way people teach students at the school.	40	8.5	109	23.3	136	29.1	60	12.8	61	13.0	62	13.2	468	100
The way people assess students at the school.	41	8.8	96	20.5	132	28.2	85	18.2	65	13.9	49	10.5	468	100
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); European approaches to history and the arts).	87	18.6	74	15.8	119	25.4	60	12.8	42	9.0	86	18.4	468	100
Making sure everyone is included fairly at the schools, for example students without a language section and students with special educational needs.	81	17.3	96	20.5	117	25.0	48	10.3	41	8.8	85	18.2	468	100
Education on ecological issues and the environment.	82	17.5	124	26.5	105	22.4	57	12.2	58	12.4	42	9.0	468	100
Integration of digital skills in lessons.	93	19.9	114	24.4	111	23.7	66	14.1	43	9.2	41	8.8	468	100
Preparation for further education and the world of work.	51	10.9	99	21.2	93	19.9	84	17.9	71	15.2	70	15.0	468	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 56: Q12. Please assess whether the following educational aspects of the European Schools should or should not be considered ‘good practices’ in the European educational area, for example in other EU Member States. A ‘good practice’ is an experience that proved to work well and produced good results, and thus deserves to be shared with others

Total (non-students)	Should definitely be considered a good practice		Should probably be considered a good practice		Neutral		Should probably not be considered a good practice		Should definitely not be considered a good practice		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Language learning (pupil’s mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1).	1866	51.0	783	21.4	751	20.5	149	4.1	112	3.1	3661	100
Language learning (pupil’s first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively).	2133	58.3	877	24.0	419	11.5	136	3.7	94	2.6	3659	100
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of teaching and learning.	1416	38.7	795	21.7	976	26.7	284	7.8	187	5.1	3658	100
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of marking and assessment.	1143	31.3	819	22.4	1181	32.3	312	8.5	198	5.4	3653	100
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2).	1457	39.8	1244	34.0	711	19.4	152	4.2	94	2.6	3658	100
Inclusion policies and their implementation, which refers to the current Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education; adequate options for the students without a language section (SWALS) and students with special needs; improvements in the infrastructure for the students and staff, etc.	1064	29.1	881	24.1	1090	29.8	265	7.3	354	9.7	3654	100
Education on sustainable development (for example, development of green skills among pupils or of an environmentally friendly consciousness).	1190	32.5	1046	28.6	1046	28.6	242	6.6	132	3.6	3656	100
Integration of digital skills in lessons (into the curriculum).	1367	37.4	973	26.6	813	22.2	316	8.6	185	5.1	3654	100
Preparation for further education and the world of work (for example, through offering new types of diplomas).	1204	33.0	728	19.9	1183	32.4	247	6.8	291	8.0	3653	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

Table 57: Q15. How would you assess the current situation in the following areas of the European School System’s operation?

Total (non-students)	Should definitely be considered a good practice		Should probably be considered a good practice		Neutral		Should probably not be considered a good practice		Should definitely not be considered a good practice		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Language learning (pupil’s mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1).	1866	51.0	783	21.4	751	20.5	149	4.1	112	3.1	3661	100
Language learning (pupil’s first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively).	2133	58.3	877	24.0	419	11.5	136	3.7	94	2.6	3659	100
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of teaching and learning.	1416	38.7	795	21.7	976	26.7	284	7.8	187	5.1	3658	100
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of marking and assessment.	1143	31.3	819	22.4	1181	32.3	312	8.5	198	5.4	3653	100
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European Hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2).	1457	39.8	1244	34.0	711	19.4	152	4.2	94	2.6	3658	100
Inclusion policies and their implementation, which refers to the current Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education; adequate options for the students without a language section (SWALS) and students with special needs; improvements in the infrastructure for the students and staff, etc.	1064	29.1	881	24.1	1090	29.8	265	7.3	354	9.7	3654	100
Education on sustainable development (for example, development of green skills among pupils or of an environmentally friendly consciousness).	1190	32.5	1046	28.6	1046	28.6	242	6.6	132	3.6	3656	100
Integration of digital skills in lessons (into the curriculum).	1367	37.4	973	26.6	813	22.2	316	8.6	185	5.1	3654	100
Preparation for further education and the world of work (for example, through offering new types of diplomas).	1204	33.0	728	19.9	1183	32.4	247	6.8	291	8.0	3653	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 58: Q15 (Students). What are your views regarding the CURRENT SITUATION of how the European Schools work on a day-to-day basis? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your European School’s perspective.

Total (students)	Very positive		Positive		Neither good nor bad		Negative		Very negative		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
The European Schools seem to be run well by those in charge.	74	16.4	115	25.6	140	31.1	76	16.9	37	8.2	8	1.8	450	100
There seems to be enough money in the European Schools to make sure that students have what they need.	132	29.4	94	20.9	100	22.3	66	14.7	42	9.4	15	3.3	449	100
The European Schools cope well with international and multicultural issues.	117	26.1	119	26.5	101	22.5	44	9.8	23	5.1	45	10.0	449	100
There are enough places at the European Schools for everyone who wants to go there.	54	12.0	67	14.9	67	14.9	83	18.5	107	23.8	71	15.8	449	100
The European Schools have good class and good communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities.	118	26.3	131	29.2	110	24.5	55	12.2	32	7.1	3	0.7	449	100
The European School system is being allowed to grow to become as big as it needs to be.	100	22.3	85	18.9	72	16.0	54	12.0	34	7.6	104	23.2	449	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 59: Q16. How would you assess the progress made by the European School system on its operational aspects over the past five years?

Total (non-students)	Very significant progress		Significant progress		Average progress		Minor progress		Minimal or no progress		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Governance model of the whole system, which consists of an international and inter-institutional Board of Governors represented by a Secretary General, whose office coordinates different Schools.	59	1.8	161	4.9	421	12.9	257	7.9	654	20.0	1719	52.6	3271	100
Financing model (how the European School system is financed).	56	1.7	120	3.7	348	10.6	228	7.0	683	20.9	1837	56.1	3272	100
International and multicultural environment of the European Schools' day-to-day operations (for example, the diverse backgrounds of both staff and pupils).	137	4.2	315	9.6	680	20.8	328	10.0	459	14.0	1353	41.4	3272	100
European Schools' management by the Directors (incl. their HR policies as well as practical implementation of the objectives of the European Schools).	90	2.8	234	7.2	457	14.0	323	9.9	757	23.1	1411	43.1	3272	100
European Schools' infrastructure (for example, the number of available places at schools; quality of class and communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities).	143	4.4	302	9.2	463	14.2	382	11.7	925	28.3	1057	32.3	3272	100
Expansion and growth of the system (incl. through enlarging the existing ones or opening new accredited European Schools).	124	3.8	347	10.6	462	14.1	364	11.1	598	18.3	1377	42.1	3272	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 60: Q16 (Students). How would you assess the progress made by the European School system on its operational aspects since you started at the school? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your European School's perspective.

Total (students)	Very significant progress		Significant progress		Average progress		Minor progress		Minimal or no progress		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
The European Schools seem to be run well by those in charge.	56	13.4	75	17.9	113	27.0	58	13.9	58	13.9	58	13.9	418	100
There seems to be enough money in the European Schools to make sure that students have what they need.	75	17.9	67	16.0	109	26.1	51	12.2	47	11.2	69	16.5	418	100

Total (students)	Very significant progress		Significant progress		Average progress		Minor progress		Minimal or no progress		Do not know/ Not applicable		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
The European Schools cope well with international and multicultural issues.	64	15.3	94	22.5	107	25.6	40	9.6	33	7.9	80	19.1	418	100
There are enough places at the European Schools for everyone who wants to go there.	48	11.5	49	11.7	70	16.7	71	17.0	88	21.1	92	22.0	418	100
The European Schools have good class and good communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities.	89	21.3	106	25.4	95	22.7	50	12.0	43	10.3	35	8.4	418	100
The European School system is being allowed to grow to become as big as it needs to be.	81	19.4	63	15.1	64	15.3	41	9.8	34	8.1	135	32.3	418	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

Table 61: Q17. Please assess whether the following operational aspects of the European Schools should or should not be considered ‘good practices’ in the European Educational Area, for example in other EU Member States? A ‘good practice’ is an experience that proved to work well and produced good results, and thus deserves to be shared with others.

Total (non-students)	Should definitely be considered a good practice		Should probably be considered a good practice		Neutral		Should probably not be considered a good practice		Should definitely not be considered a good practice		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Governance model of the whole system, which consists of an inter-national and inter-institutional Board of Governors represented by a Secretary General, whose office coordinates different Schools.	285	8.9	485	15.1	1534	47.9	413	12.9	487	15.2	3204	100
Financing model (how the European School system is financed).	260	8.1	421	13.1	1690	52.8	370	11.6	462	14.4	3203	100
International and multicultural environment of the European Schools’ day-to-day operations (for example, the diverse backgrounds of both staff and pupils).	1275	39.8	1022	31.9	694	21.7	101	3.2	112	3.5	3204	100
European Schools’ management by the Directors (incl. their HR policies as well as practical implementation of the objectives of the European Schools).	375	11.7	582	18.2	1423	44.4	409	12.8	414	12.9	3203	100

Total (non-students)	Should definitely be considered a good practice		Should probably be considered a good practice		Neutral		Should probably not be considered a good practice		Should definitely not be considered a good practice		Total N	Total %
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
European Schools' infrastructure (for example, the number of available places at schools; quality of class and communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities.	677	21.1	677	21.1	931	29.1	472	14.7	445	13.9	3202	100
Expansion and growth of the system (incl. through enlarging the existing ones or opening new accredited European Schools).	523	16.3	612	19.1	1352	42.2	325	10.1	392	12.2	3204	100

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25)

OPEN ANSWERS ANALYSIS

Table 62: Open answers to Question 6 (by category, non-student respondents).

The mission of the European Schools is: “To provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils. They are aimed primarily at children of the staff of European institutions”. What do you think about the mission statement? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your perspective on European Schools in general.

Should you have any further comment(s) regarding the above, please provide them here (optional answer):

Open answers by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%
1. Mission statement is accurate/sufficient	21	1,60%	1	1,69%
2. Diversity of student population/growth/AES	188	14,35%	10	16,95%
3. There is a need to update the mission statement to reflect quality and ES approach better	131	10,00%	4	6,78%
4. Inclusion	315	24,05%	9	15,25%
5. Individual development/responsibility/citizenship	72	5,50%	0	0,00%
6. Broad values-related statements	56	4,27%	1	1,69%
7. European and global dimension	93	7,10%	8	13,56%
8. Mission is not implemented well	56	4,27%	1	1,69%
9. ES concept	31	2,37%	1	1,69%
10. Cultural identity and languages	234	17,86%	14	23,73%
11. Host country education	29	2,21%	0	0,00%
12. Administration and management	34	2,60%	1	1,69%
Other	50	3,82%	9	15,25%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25). NAs, Do not knows and similar answers excluded.

Table 63: Open answers to Question 7 (by category).

How much do each of the following objectives correspond to your experience at the European School? Tell us your opinion by moving the sliding scale next to each objective. Please respond from your European School’s perspective.

Should you have any further comment(s) regarding the above, please provide them here (optional answer):

Open answers by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	N
1. Cultural identity	47	5,18%	6	6,82%
2. Broad pedagogical quality assurance & high-quality education topics	185	20,37%	15	17,05%
3. Languages	138	15,20%	12	13,64%
4. ICT & STEM	75	8,26%	2	2,27%
5. European and global perspective	75	8,26%	7	7,95%
6. Creativity	11	1,21%	4	4,55%
7. Sports and healthy lifestyle	36	3,96%	6	6,82%
8. Professional guidance	33	3,63%	5	5,68%
9. Tolerance, cooperation, community	95	10,46%	2	2,27%
10. Social and academic development	99	10,90%	12	13,64%
11. Educational for sustainable development	35	3,85%	2	2,27%
Other	70	7,71%	15	17,05%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25). NAs, Do not knows and similar answers excluded.

Table 64: Open answers to Question 9 (by category).

Text for non-students: Please use this space to provide any other comments that you might have regarding the identity of European Schools (optional answer).

Text for students: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the objectives of the European Schools and what they mean to you (optional answer)?

Open answers by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	N
1. Cultural identity	80	8,70%	4	10,53%
2. Broad pedagogical quality assurance & high-quality education topics	180	19,57%	6	15,79%
3. Languages	188	20,43%	2	5,26%
4. ICT & STEM	41	4,46%	3	7,89%
5. European and global perspective	50	5,43%	5	13,16%
6. Creativity	18	1,96%	2	5,26%
7. Sports and healthy lifestyle	58	6,30%	0	0,00%
8. Professional guidance	23	2,50%	1	2,63%
9. Tolerance, cooperation, community	58	6,30%	6	15,79%
10. Social and academic development	66	7,17%	1	2,63%
11. Educational for sustainable development	26	2,83%	1	2,63%
Other	132	14,35%	7	18,42%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25). NAs, Do not knows and similar answers excluded.

Table 65: Open answers to Question 10 (by category, non-student respondents).

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the CURRENT SITUATION of how the European Schools provide education for their students (optional answer)?

Open answers by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	N
1. Pedagogical quality assurance	657	44,57%	53	55,79%
2. European dimension	47	3,19%	3	3,16%
3. Language learning	408	27,68%	21	22,11%
4. Inclusive education	138	9,36%	5	5,26%
5. Education for sustainable development	44	2,99%	5	5,26%
6. Sports & PE	23	1,56%	3	3,16%
7. Covid-19	46	3,12%	1	1,05%
Other	111	7,53%	4	4,21%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25). NAs, Do not knows and similar answers excluded.

Table 66: Open answers to Question 11 (by category).

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools in providing education for their students (optional answer)?

Open answers by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%
1. Pedagogical quality assurance	260	38,52%	17	45,95%
2. European dimension	7	1,04%	0	0,00%
3. Language learning	112	16,59%	6	16,22%
4. Inclusive education	41	6,07%	3	8,11%
5. Education for sustainable development	19	2,81%	2	5,41%
6. Sports & PE	7	1,04%	0	0,00%
7. Covid-19	61	9,04%	2	5,41%
Other	168	24,89%	7	18,92%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25). NAs, Do not knows and similar answers excluded.

Table 67: Open answers to Question 12 (by category, non-student respondents).

Please briefly describe a specific good practice of which you are aware.

Open answers of non-students by category	Answer categories (in total and as a share)	
	N	%
1. Pedagogical quality assurance	688	26,39%
2. European dimension	302	11,58%
3. Language learning	913	35,02%
4. Inclusive education	193	7,40%
5. Education for sustainable development	147	5,64%
6. Sports & PE	29	1,11%
7. Covid-19	43	1,65%
Other	292	11,20%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25). NAs, Do not knows and similar answers excluded.

Table 68: Open answers to Question 13 (by category, non-student respondents).

When reflecting on the **EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS** of the European School system in the next five to ten years, please think of and list future challenges that are the most important, in your opinion. You may list some of the aspects discussed above and/or any additional ones that you may have.

Open answers by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%
1. Pedagogical quality assurance	1504	49,46%	237	64,23%
2. European dimension	171	5,62%	5	1,36%
3. Language learning	575	18,91%	56	15,18%
4. Inclusive education	275	9,04%	15	4,07%
5. Education for sustainable development	211	6,94%	8	2,17%
6. Sports & PE	46	1,51%	13	3,52%
7. Covid-19	75	2,47%	1	0,27%
Other	184	6,05%	34	9,21%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25). NAs, Do not knows and similar answers excluded.

Table 69: Open answers to Question 15 (by category).

Text for non-students: If you were in charge of the European Schools, what would you change in how they provide education for their students?

Text for students: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the CURRENT SITUATION of how the European Schools work on a day-to-day basis? (optional answer)

Open answers of non-students by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%
1. Identity, mission, objectives	99	3,61%	2	2,15%
2. Governance	411	14,99%	2	2,15%
3. Management/ school administration	625	22,80%	6	6,45%
4. Management/ funding & HR	355	12,95%	14	15,05%
5. Management/ Infrastructure and facilities	844	30,79%	55	59,14%
6. Management/ student well-being	145	5,29%	8	8,60%
7. Growth	211	7,70%	6	6,45%
Other	51	1,86%	0	0,00%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25). NAs, Do not knows and similar answers excluded.

Table 70: Open answers to Question 16 (by category).

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools in how they work on a day-to-day basis? (optional answer)

Open answers by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%
1. Identity, mission, objectives	8	1,90%	4	18,18%
2. Governance	32	7,60%	1	4,55%
3. Management/school administration	72	17,10%	2	9,09%
4. Management/funding & HR	48	11,40%	1	4,55%
5. Management/ Infrastructure and facilities	101	23,99%	7	31,82%
6. Management/student well-being	16	3,80%	0	0,00%
7. Growth	49	11,64%	1	4,55%
Other	95	22,57%	6	27,27%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25).

NAs, Do not knows, and similar answers excluded.

Table 71: Open answers to Question 17 (by category, non-student respondents).

Please assess whether the following operational aspects of the European Schools should or should not be considered ‘good practices’ in the European Education Area (https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en), for example in the other EU Member States? A ‘good practice’ is an experience that proved to work well and produced good results, and thus deserves to be shared with others.

Please briefly describe a specific good practice of which you are aware.

Open answers of non-students by category	Answer categories (in total and as a share)	
	N	%
1. Identity, mission, objectives	580	31,71%
2. Governance	45	2,46%
3. Management/school administration	219	11,97%
4. Management/funding & HR	144	7,87%
5. Management/Infrastructure and facilities	299	16,35%
6. Management/student well-being	62	3,39%
7. Growth	184	10,06%
Other	296	16,18%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25).

NAs, Do not knows, and similar answers excluded.

Table 72: Open answers to Question 18 (by category, non-student respondents).

Text for non-students: When reflecting on the OPERATIONAL ASPECTS of the European School system in the next five to ten years, please think of and list future challenges that are the most important in your opinion. You may list some of the aspects discussed above and/or any additional ones that you may have.

Text for students: If you were in charge of the European Schools, what would you change in how they operate on a day-to-day basis?

Open answers of non-students by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%
1. Identity, mission, objectives	141	4,06%	31	9,06%
2. Governance	254	7,31%	9	2,63%
3. Management/school administration	487	14,01%	67	19,59%
4. Management/funding & HR	891	25,63%	32	9,36%
5. Management/Infrastructure and facilities	873	25,11%	100	29,24%
6. Management/student well-being	131	3,77%	41	11,99%
7. Growth	559	16,08%	17	4,97%
Other	141	4,06%	45	13,16%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25).

NAs, Do not knows, and similar answers excluded.

Table 73: Open answers to Question 19 (by category).

Please use this space to provide any other comments you might have regarding the operational aspects of the European School system (optional answer).

Open answers by category	Answers of non-students (in total and as a share)		Answers of students (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%
1. Identity, mission, objectives	31	9,06%	3	6,52%
2. Governance	9	2,63%	1	2,17%
3. Management/school administration	67	19,59%	10	21,74%
4. Management/funding & HR	32	9,36%	7	15,22%
5. Management/Infrastructure and facilities	100	29,24%	11	23,91%
6. Management/student well-being	41	11,99%	4	8,70%
7. Growth	17	4,97%	0	0,00%
Other	45	13,16%	10	21,74%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25).

NAs, Do not knows, and similar answers excluded.

Table 74: Open answers to Question 20 (by category, student respondents).

Please use this space to provide any other comments that you might have regarding the European Schools (optional answer).

Open answers of students by category	Answer categories (in total and as a share)	
	N	%
1. Identity, mission, objectives	6	10,91%
2. Governance/Management	9	16,36%
3. Inclusion/Well-being	10	18,18%
4. Management/Infrastructure and facilities	7	12,73%
5. Pedagogical quality assurance/ Broad educational	20	36,36%
6. Management/student well-being	1	1,82%
7. Growth	0	0,00%
Other	2	3,64%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25).
NAs, Do not knows, and similar answers excluded.

Categorical analysis of “Other” responses to Questions 10 and 11

Table 75: “Other” answers to Question 10 (responses by category and assessment).

How would you assess the **CURRENT SITUATION** in the following areas of education provided by the European School System? (Positive assessments only)

Other answers by category	Positive assessment (in total and as a share)		Neutral assessment (in total and as a share)		Negative assessment (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Pedagogical quality assurance	55	47,83%	31	55,36%	326	44,90%
2. European dimension	16	13,91%	5	8,93%	42	5,79%
3. Language learning	12	10,43%	3	5,36%	84	11,57%
4. Inclusive education	5	4,35%	6	10,71%	57	7,85%
5. Education for sustainable development	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	3	0,41%
6. Sports & PE	8	6,96%	4	7,14%	30	4,13%
7. Covid-19	6	5,22%	3	5,36%	66	9,09%
Other	4	3,48%	1	1,79%	17	2,34%
Total (by assessment)	106	-	53	-	625	-

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25).
NAs, Do not knows, and similar answers excluded.

Table 76: "Other" answers to Question 11 (responses by category and assessment).

How would you assess the **PROGRESS MADE** by the European School system on educational aspects in the past five years? (Neutral responses only)

Other answers by category	Positive assessment (in total and as a share)		Neutral assessment (in total and as a share)		Negative assessment (in total and as a share)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Pedagogical quality assurance	12	44,44%	9	50,00%	91	39,57%
2. European dimension	3	11,11%	2	11,11%	17	7,39%
3. Language learning	0	0,00%	1	5,56%	19	8,26%
4. Inclusive education	2	7,41%	0	0,00%	10	4,35%
5. Education for sustainable development	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	2	0,87%
6. Sports & PE	0	0,00%	2	11,11%	14	6,09%
7. Covid-19	5	18,52%	2	11,11%	21	9,13%
Other	2	7,41%	1	5,56%	6	2,61%
Total (by assessment)	24	-	17	-	180	-

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25).

NAs, Do not knows, and similar answers excluded.

Table 77: "Other" answers to Questions 10 and 11 (by category, "Do not know" responses).

How would you assess the **PROGRESS MADE** by the European School system on educational aspects in the past five years?

How would you assess the **CURRENT SITUATION** in the following areas of education provided by the European School System?

Other answers by category	Categories (in total and as a share)	
	N	%
1. Pedagogical quality assurance	6	60,00%
2. European dimension	2	20,00%
3. Language learning	0	0,00%
4. Inclusive education	0	0,00%
5. Education for sustainable development	0	0,00%
6. Sports & PE	0	0,00%
7. Covid-19	2	20,00%
Other	0	0,00%

Source: Survey on the European School system (2021 10 25 – 2021 11 25).

ANNEX II. INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

EXPLORATORY INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Main objective: to identify the main broad problem/challenge areas that the ESS currently faces or that might become relevant in the future.

Suggested exploratory interview questions:

- 1) How would you overall assess the current state of the European Schools System?
- 2) In your opinion, what are the key resurfacing educational challenges that the European Schools face today? Why?
 - a. pedagogical quality assurance and quality of the curriculum
 - b. teaching of languages
 - c. European dimension of the education
 - d. Inclusion incl. inclusive education
 - e. Education for sustainable development.
 - f. COVID
 - g. Any other systemic educational challenges? Why?
- 3) In your opinion, what are the **key resurfacing horizontal and operational challenges** that the European Schools face today? Why?
 - a. Identity of the ES in a changing world in terms of objectives or mission
 - b. Governance
 - c. Financing
 - d. Management (incl. school administration and infrastructure)
 - e. Growth of the European Schools system (e.g. AES)
 - f. Any other horizontal and operational challenges incl. systemic ones? Why?

Follow-up questions, if not addressed:

 - g. Specifically, how relevant is the current **mission** of the European Schools?
 - h. How relevant are the current **objectives** of the European Schools?
- 4) Would you like to **add anything** to the questions discussed above?

FULLY-FLEDGED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Main goal: to collect information about the key challenges that the ESS faces and form a strong evidence-based basis for recommendations to address these challenges.

Notes about the project (for interviewees):

- Title: The system of European Schools: state of play, challenges, and perspectives
- The study will be published, in first half of 2022

Notes about interviews:

- All of the interviews will be semi-structured and, therefore, some of the questions could be tailored to individual respondents (e.g. based on the selection of challenges that the respondent is aware of). However, the template below will serve as a broad guiding framework for the interviews.
- Interviews may contain a number of questions clarifying an interviewee's survey answers. These are not provided below and should be drafted when preparing for an interview.

PART 1: SCHOOLS' IDENTITY

1. Do you think that the mission and objectives (listed in the last page) of the European Schools are relevant and up to date? Why (not)?
2. How has the identity of the European Schools changed in the past five to ten years in your view?

PART 2: EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS

Filtering question: What do you think are the most relevant issues/challenges in relation to how European Schools **provide education to their students today**?

Language learning:

3. Do you think that the teaching of national languages (L1) is of high quality in the European Schools? Is the system inclusive enough (esp. with regard to SWALS students)? If not, how can it be improved?
4. Do you think that the teaching of first, second and/or third foreign languages (L2, L3, L4 respectively) is of high quality in the European schools? Why (not?) Do you think it can be improved? If yes, how?

Pedagogical quality assurance:

5. How would you assess the quality of teaching and learning at the European Schools? Are there any challenges or good practices that could be replicated at the national level?
6. How would you overall assess the European Schools' approach to pedagogical quality assurance (i.e. teaching and learning standards; inspection system)?
7. As you likely know, the ESS has recently switched to a competence-based approach⁶¹. This includes the introduction of Eight Key Competences, Common European Framework of

⁶¹ In a competence-based education framework, students demonstrate their learned knowledge and skills in order to achieve specific predetermined "competencies", which focus on outcomes and real-world performance.

Reference for Languages (CEFR), and a Framework of Digital Competences. This approach aims to improve the quality of provided education by refocusing from teaching to active learning. The aforementioned measures were also complemented by the introduction of a new marking system. We would like to ask you some questions about their implementation and effects:

- How well is the approach (incl. the eight key competences and CEFR) integrated across the curricula? What have been the main challenges and barriers of integrating these concepts into day-to-day education?
 - What are the main advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
 - How should this approach be developed further in the future?
8. How can one ensure sufficient comparability of the European Baccalaureate with other national diplomas across different EU Member States? Should the European Schools offer alternative diploma options (e.g. more VET-oriented diplomas)? Why (not)?
 9. What should be the short-term (1-2 years) and medium-term (i.e. 5 years) pedagogical vision for the European Schools especially with regard to pedagogical aims and principles of the provided education?

European dimension in curriculum:

10. How aware are you of the European dimension of the European curriculum (e.g. European Hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); coherent European approaches to history and the arts)? How is it manifested? Do the European Schools effectively contribute to the shaping of European citizenship and European identity among their students? If not, how could this be improved?
11. In your opinion, can the learning model used in the European Schools' system be universalised and extended to the educational systems of other Member States? Particularly with respect to learning subjects in foreign languages (L2, L3)?

Student well-being:

Note: The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education carries out evaluation studies of inclusion policies commissioned by the OSG of the European Schools. Questions pertaining to inclusive education will be covered in that study. Our study will, instead, focus on ESS policies guaranteeing a student's well-being.

12. To what extent is the ESS system of safeguarding all pupils adequate? How could it be improved? *If the interviewee struggles to understand the concept of 'well-being', provide the following explanation: Here we refer to relevant codes of conduct, oversight of a pupil's well-being and mental health, the screening of staff appointments, as well as the prevention of bullying, sexual harassment, incl. among pupils.*

COVID-19 impact:

13. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the educational process at the European Schools and students' well-being? What are the 'lessons learned' that are important to the European Schools system as a whole?

Education for sustainable development:

14. How would you assess the current approach of the European Schools to education for sustainable development? Can it be improved? How?

Sports curriculum:

15. How would you assess the situation of the sports curriculum at the European Schools? Are there any avenues for potential improvement?

PART 3: OPERATIONAL ASPECTS

Filtering question: What do you think are the most relevant issues/challenges in relation to how European Schools **operate on a day-to-day basis nowadays?**

Governance:

16. Do you think the current governance model of the European Schools is fit for purpose? If not, how could it be improved/modernised?
17. The Complaints Board of the European Schools is becoming increasingly influential in addressing legal disputes in the Schools' framework and is officially recognised as a court by the European Court of Justice. To what extent do you think this alleviates the issue of the insufficiently clear legal status of European Schools? Are there any other actions required that could help to improve the situation?

Funding:

18. Are you well acquainted with the financing model of the European Schools' system? If yes, do you think it can be improved to ensure the long-term sustainability of the system of European Schools?

Management:

19. Are there any systemic issues or problems that you see in the administration processes of individual Schools? (e.g. with regard to internal control systems, communication with teachers).
20. As you may know, the European Schools rely both on locally recruited teachers, and on the national governments of the individual Member States seconding teachers from their national education systems. Do you think that this approach to recruiting teachers is sustainable? Why (not)? How can it be improved?
21. How would you assess the Schools' infrastructure? Is it adequate? Are there any important/necessary improvements? (e.g. in the areas of digitalisation, sports infrastructure, additional facilities, etc).
22. How does the international and multicultural environment of the European Schools (e.g. the diverse backgrounds of both staff and students) affect their day-to-day operations? Can something be improved in this respect?
23. How should the existing operational system (e.g. with regard to daily management, infrastructure, etc.) be adjusted in the short-term (1-2 years) and medium-term (5 years) in order to better accommodate the changing pedagogical vision at the European Schools?

Growth (incl. infrastructure and Accredited European School accreditation process)

24. What is your assessment of the European Schools System's growth? How should the European Schools' System look like in the future? How can their growth be fostered (e.g. through opening new European Schools and/or Accredited European Schools, through additional investment into the infrastructures of existing schools or some other means)?

25. How would you assess the admissions policy of the European Schools? Has it improved in recent years (e.g. with the introduction of an online application system in 2020-2021) or stayed the same? Is it sufficiently transparent and accountable?
26. How would you assess the current accreditation process of the new Accredited European Schools? Do you think it can be accelerated? How?

ANNEX III. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY ON THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

Dear member of the European School system,

Welcome to our survey on the European School system! This survey is part of a study entitled “The system of European Schools: state of play, challenges, and perspectives” commissioned by the European Parliament (see [the EP support letter](#)) and carried out by [Visionary Analytics](#), a private research organisation. The study aims to assess current and future challenges for the system of European Schools and to provide specific policy recommendations on how to address or prevent these challenges. Your participation in this survey will provide us with useful insights into these questions. The survey is open to all types of stakeholders who are a part of the system of European Schools, including secondary cycle students.

The survey is anonymous unless you choose to provide your personal details (not requested from students). In either case, the answers that you provide will not be linked to your name or to the organisation that you represent. We will present only the aggregated results of the survey, thus ensuring the anonymity of you and your organisation. Information regarding data protection is provided in our [GDPR policy](#).

* Asterik refers to a mandatory (required) question.

Please mark if you consent with the use of your personal data in the study:* *[] I agree that my opinions expressed in this survey can be anonymously cited or otherwise used for the purposes of illustrating findings of this study.*

It will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to fill in the survey. You can save your progress by using the ‘save and continue’ toolbar at the top of the page and may complete the survey in more than one attempt. It is available in the three official languages of the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools – English, French and German. We kindly ask you to complete this survey by 25 November 2021.

If you have questions about the survey or the study, please contact us by email at ESS@visionary.lt.

If possible, please circulate this survey to relevant people you know including students, parents, teachers, members of School Administrations, members of the Central Administration (Office of the Secretary-General), inspectors and policy officials.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Kind regards,
Visionary Analytics team

INTRODUCTION (Sample Questions)

1) You are filling in this questionnaire primarily as a(n):*

- Student
- Alumni
- Parent
- Teacher
- Member of a School Administration
- Member of the Central Administration (Office of the Secretary-General)
- Inspector
- Policy Official
- Other, please specify: _____

If you are filling in this survey as a student in a European School, please answer the questions that you can and do not worry about leaving out some questions if you do not feel comfortable answering them.

2) Please indicate what year of education you currently attend?*

- Secondary education 1 (S1)
- Secondary education 2 (S2)
- Secondary education 3 (S3)
- Secondary education 4 (S4)
- Secondary education 5 (S5)
- Secondary education 6 (S6)
- Secondary education 7 (S7)
- Primary education

3) Please indicate what year of education your (if more than one – the youngest) child currently attends?*

- Early education (Nursery) 1
- Early education (Nursery) 2
- Primary education 1
- Primary education 2
- Primary education 3
- Primary education 4
- Primary education 5
- Secondary education 1
- Secondary education 2
- Secondary education 3
- Secondary education 4
- Secondary education 5
- Secondary education 6
- Secondary education 7

4) Please identify your institutional affiliation, if any. * Multiple answers are possible.

- Board of Governors member or observer
- Student Council representative
- Parents Association representative
- Representative of the Office of the Secretary-General
- Staff Committee representative
- School Director
- Joint Teaching Committee representative
- Joint Board of Inspectors
- European Commission representative
- National government representative
- Other, please specify: _____
- None

5) What type of European School do you attend?*

- I attend a traditional European School (a list is provided here: <https://www.eursec.eu/en/European-Schools/locations>)
- I attend an accredited European School (a list is provided here: <https://www.eursec.eu/en/Accredited-European-Schools/locations>)
- I don't know my type of school

5) What type of European Schools are you a part of?*

- Traditional European Schools (the list is provided here: <https://www.eursec.eu/en/European-Schools/locations>)
- Accredited European Schools (the list is provided here: <https://www.eursec.eu/en/Accredited-European-Schools/locations>)
- Both
- I don't know my type of school

Please select the city in which of your school is located:*

- Brussels
- Mol
- Frankfurt
- Karlsruhe
- Munich
- Varese
- Luxembourg
- Bergen
- Alicante

Please select the country of in which your school is located:*

- Belgium
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Ireland
- Italy
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Slovenia

Thank you for stopping by, however, we are not collecting answers from your group at this time.

THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM'S IDENTITY: MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

6) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the mission statement of the European Schools provided below? *The mission of the European Schools is to provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils. They are aimed primarily at children of the staff of European institutions.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
The mission statement of the European Schools is still relevant today.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The mission statement sufficiently reflects the identity of the European Schools.	()	()	()	()	()	()
The mission statement contributes to the development of a European identity and the spirit of European citizenship among students.	()	()	()	()	()	()
The mission adequately reflects the values of diversity and inclusion (for example, for students with disabilities or students without a language section).	()	()	()	()	()	()
The mission statement should be updated.	()	()	()	()	()	()

6) The mission of the European Schools is: “To provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils. They are aimed primarily at children of the staff of European institutions”. What do you think about the mission statement? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your perspective on European Schools in general. *

I think that the mission statement of the European Schools is still relevant today. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
 Do not know

I think that the mission statement sufficiently reflects the identity of European Schools. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
 Do not know

I think that the mission statement contributes to the development of European identity and spirit of European citizenship among students. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
 Do not know

I think that the mission adequately reflects the values of diversity and inclusion (for example, for students with disabilities or students without a language section). 1 _____ [] _____ 5
 Do not know

I think that the mission statement should be updated. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
 Do not know

I do not understand the mission statement. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
 Do not know

Should you have any further comment(s) regarding the above, please provide them here (optional answer):

7) Please assess the extent to which each individual objective of the European Schools is personally relevant to you.*

	Very relevant	Relevant	Neither relevant nor irrelevant	Not relevant	Not relevant at all	Do not know/Not applicable
1. Give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – the bedrock for their development as European citizens	()	()	()	()	()	()
2. Provide a broad education of high quality from nursery level to university-entrance	()	()	()	()	()	()
3. Develop high standards in the mother tongue and in foreign languages [namely, first (L1), second (L2), third (L3) and fourth (L4) languages – Visionary Analytics explanation]	()	()	()	()	()	()
4. Develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout the entire period of schooling	()	()	()	()	()	()
5. Encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of human sciences [‘human sciences’ include compulsory history and geography subjects and optional economics and politics subjects – Visionary Analytics explanation]	()	()	()	()	()	()
6. Encourage creativity in music and the plastic arts and an	()	()	()	()	()	()
7. Develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities	()	()	()	()	()	()
8. Offer pupils professional guidance on their choice of subjects and on career/university decisions in their later years of secondary school	()	()	()	()	()	()

	Very relevant	Relevant	Neither relevant nor irrelevant	Not relevant	Not relevant at all	Do not know/Not applicable
9. Foster tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond	()	()	()	()	()	()
10. Cultivate pupils' personal, social, and academic development and prepare them for the next stage of education	()	()	()	()	()	()
11. Provide Education for Sustainable Development with a cross curriculum approach in line with European and international documents.	()	()	()	()	()	()

7) How much do each of the following objectives correspond to your experience at the European School? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each objective. Please respond from your European School's perspective.*

1. European Schools give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – this is important for their future development as European citizens. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
2. European Schools provide a high-quality education from nursery level to university-entrance. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
3. Students achieve high standards in their mother tongue and in foreign languages at European Schools. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
4. Students develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout the entire period of schooling at European Schools. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
5. European Schools encourage a European and global perspective overall, and particularly in the study of the human sciences in subjects such a history, geography, economics, and politics. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
6. European Schools encourage creativity in music and the arts, and an appreciation of all that is best in what we think of as the European artistic heritage. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
7. At European Schools, students develop physical skills and an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
8. European Schools offer pupils professional guidance on their choice of subjects and on career/university decisions in their later years of secondary school. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
9. European Schools foster tolerance, cooperation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know

10. European Schools cultivate pupils' personal, social, and academic development and prepare them for the next stage of education. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
 [] Do not know

11. European Schools provide education for sustainable development with a cross curriculum approach in line with European and international documents. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
 [] Do not know

Should you have any further comment(s) regarding the above, please provide them here (optional answer):

8) Please assess each of the following objectives of the European Schools individually on whether they sufficiently reflect in practice the identity of European Schools.*

	Reflects very well	Reflects well	Neutral	Does not reflect	Does not reflect at all	Do not know/Not applicable
1. Give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – the bedrock for their development as European citizens	()	()	()	()	()	()
2. Provide a broad education of high quality from nursery level to university-entrance	()	()	()	()	()	()
3. Develop high standards in the mother tongue and in foreign languages [namely, first (I1), second (I2), third (L3) and fourth (L4) languages – Visionary Analytics explanation]	()	()	()	()	()	()
4. Develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout the entire period of schooling	()	()	()	()	()	()
5. Encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of human sciences ['human sciences' include compulsory history and geography subjects and optional economics and politics subjects – Visionary Analytics explanation]	()	()	()	()	()	()
6. Encourage creativity in music and the plastic arts and an appreciation of all that is best in a common European artistic heritage	()	()	()	()	()	()
7. Develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities	()	()	()	()	()	()

	Reflects very well	Reflects well	Neutral	Does not reflect	Does not reflect at all	Do not know/Not applicable
8. Offer pupils professional guidance on their choice of subjects and on career/university decisions in their later years of secondary school	()	()	()	()	()	()
9. Foster tolerance, co-operation, communication, and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond	()	()	()	()	()	()
10. Cultivate pupils' personal, social, and academic development and prepare them for the next stage of education	()	()	()	()	()	()
11. Provide Education for Sustainable Development with a cross curriculum approach in line with European and international documents.	()	()	()	()	()	()

9) Please use this space to provide any other comments that you might have regarding the identity of European Schools (optional answer):

9) Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the objectives of the European Schools and what they mean to you (optional answer)?

EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM - HOW EUROPEAN SCHOOLS PROVIDE EDUCATION FOR THEIR STUDENTS

10) How would you assess the CURRENT SITUATION in the following areas of education provided by the European Schools System?*

	Very positive	Positive	Neither good nor bad	Negative	Very negative	Do not know/ Not applicable
Learning pupil's mother tongue/dominant language (referred to as L1)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Foreign language learning (pupil's first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of teaching and learning	()	()	()	()	()	()
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of marking and assessment	()	()	()	()	()	()
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); coherent European approaches to history and the arts)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Inclusion policies and their implementation, which refers to the current Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education; adequate options for students without a language section (SWALS) and students with special needs; improvements in the infrastructure for students and staff, etc.	()	()	()	()	()	()
Education on sustainable development (for example, awareness of green issues among pupils or of an environmentally friendly consciousness)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Integration of digital skills in lessons (into the curriculum)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Preparation for further education and the world of work (for example, through offering new types of diplomas)	()	()	()	()	()	()

10) How would you assess the CURRENT SITUATION of how the European Schools provide education for

their students? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your European School's perspective. *

- Language learning in your mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Language learning in your first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The way teachers teach students at the School 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The way teachers assess students at the School 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); European approaches to history and the arts) 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Making sure everyone is included fairly at the schools, for example students without a language section and students with special educational needs 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Education on ecological issues and the environment 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Integration of digital skills in lessons 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Preparation for further education and the world of work 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the CURRENT SITUATION of how the European Schools provide education for their students (optional answer)?

EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS SYSTEM - HOW EUROPEAN SCHOOLS PROVIDE EDUCATION FOR THEIR STUDENTS

11) How would you assess the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools system on educational aspects in the past five years?*

	Very significant progress	Significant progress	Average progress	Minor progress	Minimal or no progress	Do not know/ Not applicable
Language learning (pupil's mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Language learning (pupil's first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of teaching and learning	()	()	()	()	()	()
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of marking and assessment	()	()	()	()	()	()
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); coherent European approaches to history and the arts)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Inclusion policies and their implementation, which refers to the current Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education; adequate options for students without a language section (SWALS) and students with special needs; improvements in the infrastructure for the students and staff, etc.	()	()	()	()	()	()
Education on sustainable development (for example, development of green skills among pupils or of an environmentally friendly consciousness)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Integration of digital skills in lessons (into the curriculum)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Preparation for further education and the world of work (for example, through	()	()	()	()	()	()

	Very significant progress	Significant progress	Average progress	Minor progress	Minimal or no progress	Do not know/ Not applicable
offering new types of diplomas)						

11) How would you assess the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools in providing education to their students while you have been at the school? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your European School’s perspective (optional answer).

- Language learning in your mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Language learning in your first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The way people teach students at the School 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The way people assess students at the School 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); European approaches to history and the arts) 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Making sure everyone is included fairly at the schools, for example students without a language section and students with special educational needs 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Education on ecological issues and the environment 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Integration of digital skills in lessons 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- Preparation for further education and the world of work 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools in providing education for their students (optional answer)?

12) Please assess whether the following educational aspects of the European Schools should or should not be considered 'good practices' in the European educational area, for example in other EU Member States. A 'good practice' is an experience that proved to work well and produced good results, and thus deserves to be shared with others.*

	Should definitely be considered a good practice	Should probably be considered a good practice	Neutral	Should probably not be considered a good practice	Should definitely not be considered a good practice
Language learning (pupil's mother tongue/dominant language referred to as L1)	()	()	()	()	()
Language learning (pupil's first, second, third and fourth foreign languages referred to as L2, L3, L4, L5 respectively)	()	()	()	()	()
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of teaching and learning	()	()	()	()	()
Pedagogical quality assurance: quality of marking and assessment	()	()	()	()	()
European dimension of the curriculum (for example, European hours; teaching of subjects in a first foreign language (L2); coherent European approaches to history and the arts)	()	()	()	()	()
Inclusion policies and their implementation, which refers to the current Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education; adequate options for the students without a language section (SWALS) and students with special needs; improvements in the infrastructure for the students and staff, etc.	()	()	()	()	()
Education on sustainable development (for example, development of green skills among pupils or of an environmentally friendly consciousness)	()	()	()	()	()
Integration of digital skills in lessons (into the curriculum)	()	()	()	()	()
Preparation for further education and the world of work (for example, through offering new types of diplomas)	()	()	()	()	()

Please briefly describe a specific good practice of which that you are aware.*

13. When reflecting on the EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS of the European Schools system in the next five to ten years, please think of and list future challenges that are the most important, in your opinion. You may list some of the aspects discussed above and/or any additional ones that you may have.*

13. If you were in charge of the European Schools, what would you change in how they provide education for their students?*

14. Please use this space to provide any other comments that you might have regarding the educational aspects of the European School system (optional answer):

OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM - HOW EUROPEAN SCHOOLS OPERATE ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS

15) How would you assess the CURRENT SITUATION in the following areas of the European Schools System's operation?*

	Very positive	Positive	Neither good nor bad	Negative	Very negative	Do not know/ Not applicable
Governance model of the whole system, which consists of an inter-national and inter-institutional Board of Governors represented by a Secretary General, whose office coordinates different schools.	()	()	()	()	()	()
Financing model (how the European School system is financed).	()	()	()	()	()	()
International and multicultural environment of the European Schools' day-to-day operations (for example, the diverse backgrounds of both staff and pupils).	()	()	()	()	()	()
European Schools' management by the Directors (incl. their HR policies as well as practical implementation of the objectives of the European Schools).	()	()	()	()	()	()

	Very positive	Positive	Neither good nor bad	Negative	Very negative	Do not know/ Not applicable
European Schools' infrastructure (for example, the number of available places at schools; quality of class and communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities.	()	()	()	()	()	()
Expansion and growth of the system (incl. through enlarging the existing ones or opening new accredited European Schools).	()	()	()	()	()	()

15) What are your views regarding the CURRENT SITUATION of how the European Schools work on a day-to-day basis? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your European School perspective. *

- The European Schools seem to be run well by those in charge. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- There seems to be enough money in the European Schools to make sure that students have what they need. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The European Schools cope well with international and multicultural issues. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- There are enough places at the European Schools for everyone who wants to go there. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The European Schools have good class and good communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The European School system is being allowed to grow to become as big as it needs to be. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the CURRENT SITUATION of how the European Schools work on a day-to-day basis? (optional answer)

OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM - HOW EUROPEAN SCHOOLS OPERATE ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS

16) How would you assess the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools system on its operational aspects over the past five years?*

	Very significant progress	Significant progress	Average progress	Minor progress	Minimal or no progress	Do not know/ Not applicable
Governance model of the whole system, which consists	()	()	()	()	()	()

of an international and inter-institutional Board of Governors represented by a Secretary-General whose office coordinates different Schools.						
Financing model (how the European School system is financed).	()	()	()	()	()	()
International and multicultural environment of the European Schools' day-to-day operations (for example, the diverse backgrounds of both staff and pupils).	()	()	()	()	()	()
European Schools' management by the Directors (incl. their HR policies as well as practical implementation of the objectives of the European Schools).	()	()	()	()	()	()
European Schools' infrastructure (for example, the number of available places at schools; quality of class and communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities).	()	()	()	()	()	()
Expansion and growth of the system (incl. through enlarging the existing ones or opening new accredited European Schools).	()	()	()	()	()	()

16) How would you assess the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools system on its operational aspects since you started at the School? Tell us your opinion by moving the Sliding Scale next to each statement. Please respond from your European School's perspective (optional answer).

- The European Schools seem to be run well by those in charge. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- There seems to be enough money in the European School system to make sure students have what they need. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The European Schools cope well with international and multicultural issues. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- There are enough places at the European School for everyone who wants to go there. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The European Schools have good class facilities and good communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know
- The European Schools system (namely, the whole group of European schools) is being allowed to grow to become as big as needed. 1 _____ [] _____ 5
[] Do not know

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the PROGRESS MADE by the European Schools in how they work on a day-to-day basis? (optional answer)

17) Please assess whether the following operational aspects of the European Schools should or should not be considered 'good practices' in the European Educational Area (https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en), for example in the other EU Member States? A 'good practice' is an experience that proved to work well and produced good results, and thus deserves to be shared with others.*

	Should definitely be considered a good practice	Should probably be considered a good practice	Neutral	Should probably not be considered a good practice	Should definitely not be considered a good practice
Governance model of the whole system, which consists of an international and inter-institutional Board of Governors represented by a Secretary-General whose office coordinates different Schools.	()	()	()	()	()
Financing model (how the European School system is financed).	()	()	()	()	()
International and multicultural environment of the European Schools' day-to-day operations (for example, diverse backgrounds of both staff and pupils).	()	()	()	()	()
European Schools' management by the Directors (incl. their enrolment and HR policies as well as practical implementation of the European Schools' objectives).	()	()	()	()	()
European Schools' infrastructure (for example, the number of available places at Schools; quality of class and communal (gyms, study halls, etc.) facilities).	()	()	()	()	()
Expansion and growth of the system (incl. through enlarging the existing ones or opening new accredited European Schools).	()	()	()	()	()

Please briefly describe a specific good practice of which you are aware.*

18) When reflecting on the OPERATIONAL ASPECTS of the European Schools system in the next five to ten years, please think of and list future challenges that are the most important in your opinion. You may list some of the aspects discussed above and/or any additional ones that you may have. 'Operational aspects' may include the above-mentioned areas such as the governance of European Schools, their financing, Schools' environment and day-to-day operations, Schools' management, Schools' infrastructure, expansion and growth of the system and others.*

18) If you were in charge of the European Schools, what would you change in how they operate on a day-to-day basis? *The day-to-day operation of the European Schools may include the above-mentioned aspects such as how the schools are run, funded, how they cope with international and multicultural issues, how many places and what facilities the Schools have, whether the European School group is allowed to grow and others.**

19) Please use this space to provide any other comments you might have regarding the operational aspects of the European Schools system (optional answer):

CLOSING QUESTION

20) Upon completion of this survey, we may need to contact you to clarify your answers and/or obtain additional information from you on some select aspects. Please provide us with your contact details for a possible follow-up:*

- Name, surname: _____
- Organisation: _____
- Telephone: _____
- E-mail: _____
- I do not wish to be contacted

20) Please use this space to provide any other comments that you might have regarding the European Schools (optional answer):

Thank You!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

This study examines the progress that the European Schools System has made during the past decade and overviews its state of affairs as of 2022. The educational dimension of the study focuses on questions related to teaching and learning, while the operational one concentrates on the administrative and managerial sides of the system. The study pinpoints the key challenges that the system currently faces and provides tailored recommendations on how to overcome them.

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