

Courtesy translation of the [original letter to President von der Leyen](#) regarding the fifth European School of Brussels.

Dear colleagues,

For information, here is a note sent to the President of the Commission ahead of a meeting of the Board of Governors of the European Schools next week.

A message that focuses more on current issues will hopefully in the near future be the subject of a cross-trade union and inter-Institutional approach in Brussels. This could in turn encourage other initiatives. I would be grateful for any comments and feedback.

Yours,

*Georges Vlandas,
President of Staff Committee,
European Commission, Brussels.*

Madame President,

The local Brussels Commission staff committee wishes to express to you its concern regarding the European schools in Brussels, a concern shared by all the trade unions and staff committees of the European institutions as well as by all the parents' associations. Joint action is being prepared on this matter..

However, given the imminent Board of Governors' meeting next week, which will involve deliberations on the situation of the European schools in Brussels, I would once again like to share with you our view of the situation as well as those of our colleagues.

First of all, let us remember that the European schools in Brussels only receive half of the school-age children of European civil servants, due to lack of space, on the one hand, and because of a growing inadequacy of the educational provision on offer (location of school sites, courses offered) as compared with the needs expressed by families. Let us further add that our schools are currently overcrowded. In addition, this raises the issue of site security. This first observation alone goes a long way towards explaining why the following staff concerns are important and why they must be urgently addressed.

The decision to build a 5th school, whose creation has been debated for years, has still not been taken. Its construction, once the site has been chosen, will take at least ten years to be built and fully operational. Therefore, the formal decision for its creation is a vital question for the future of the European education system in Brussels. It should also be noted that its creation is made all the more urgent as an annex was decided on for the Evere site in 2021, for nursery and primary, when the most pressing needs concerned the secondary school. If the 5th school is not built in time, where will the pupils from nursery and primary Evere site be able to go to school? At the Board of Governors meeting, we must ask for a quick decision on the creation of the 5th school. In the meantime, the Belgian Buildings Authority must commit to making the necessary short-term adaptations to existing sites (laboratories, canteens, gymnasiums, etc.) to deal with overcrowding while the 5th school is still under construction.

The Evere annex is due to open in September 2021. There are deep concerns about whether this timetable will be respected. All the questions relating to its premises and its equipment have *still* not received the hoped for answers. We must insist once more that this timetable be respected, that the school be guaranteed to open in September 2021 with adequate premises and equipment.

Finally, it is vital to adopt a more rational approach to the number of linguistic sections in our schools. We observe anomalous situations in which some language sections are overcrowded while some have a very small number of students. Apart from the inequality of treatment that this situation generates, it also compounds an already difficult budgetary situation, and indeed a wastage of resources. In addition, due to the low number of students, it has harmful educational effects on students in these sections in that it reduces their access to other optional courses. These practices must cease without adversely affecting the students currently in these sections since the closure of under-staffed classes would occur naturally as the students move up into the upper classes, with only the class they had left being closed, or even assigned to another language section. In the same way, it would also be necessary to review the equal distribution of the FR sections on all the sites in Brussels in order to preserve the educational project of the schools. Indeed, it does not seem desirable to us that certain sites have more than 60% of students in the FR section while others have only 30%.

The Commission is the main funder of our schools and we expect them to continue to be involved in their supervision to ensure that the budget meets the needs of our children. But the Commission must also guarantee to all the staff of our institutions a European education, of quality and excellence for all their children, in order to maintain the attractiveness of the European public service on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to allow for the education of thousands of young people with a true European spirit.

We are ready to meet with you, if this is possible, to discuss in further detail the subjects mentioned above.

We look forward to your response and to the opportunity to have a meeting with you on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

Georges Vlandas,
President of Staff Committee,
European Commission, Brussels.