



Brussels, 22 October 2019

Joint statement of the four EEB APEEEs requesting that overcrowding in the Brussels schools be urgently addressed

The Parents Associations of EEB1, EEB2, EEB3 and EEB4 deplore that the Belgian State has neither delivered on its 2010 promise to provide the needed infrastructure for a fifth school in Brussels by 2015 nor given any assurances to have a site ready by a specific date in the future. The current pupil population is an alarming 1000 pupils above the infrastructure capacity of 12,400, and the population is forecasted by the Central Office to increase by an additional 400-500 pupils each year over the next five years. The opening of the Berkendael primary campus has now resulted in a structural oversupply of primary pupils that will further exacerbate the existing problems in the overcrowded secondary departments of the Brussels schools.

We ask the Board of Governors to condemn this state of affairs. We believe that the Secretary General and the Commission should take responsibility and propose *Guidelines for the 2020-2021 Enrolment Policy* that effectively address the overcrowding by ensuring that the number of enrolled pupils matches the existing infrastructure capacity. This can be accomplished by creating additional capacity (e.g. via quick-build techniques) or through the prioritisation of Cat. 1 enrolment based on fair and transparent criteria. In our opinion, any restrictions on Cat. 1 enrolment would be deeply regrettable, but the safety of our children and the safeguarding of their education is paramount.

In all four EEBs, structural overcrowding has been identified as one of the most serious risks on the pedagogical risk registers with a very likely and high impact on teaching quality as well as on the safety and well-being of our pupils. Lack of appropriate space not only impacts the quality of teaching but also: daily planning, lunch periods and free-time breaks; availability of appropriate classrooms, laboratories and work spaces; use of facilities such as canteens and toilets; and 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 similar), the overpopulation could have fatal consequences, the liability for which would lie with the Belgian Authorities for their persistent refusal to remedy the known overpopulation as well as with the Office of the Secretary General for its lack of effective action in full knowledge of the situation.

We would like to stress that the quality of teaching and learning as well as the safety and well-being of pupils in the Brussels European Schools have a direct effect on the ability of the EU institutions to attract and retain qualified officials from all EU Member States. As the Office of the Secretary General has been unsuccessful over years in ensuring that the Belgian Federal Authorities meet their obligations to provide sufficient school capacity in Brussels, we request that the responsibility for negotiating with the Belgian Federal Authorities is passed to the European Commission, which is a signatory to the Convention for the European Schools and may therefore hold the Belgian Federal Authorities to account.

APEEEs of the European Schools in Brussels

[It is requested that the above statement be affixed in annex to the Guidelines for the 2020-2021 Enrolment Policy that go forward to the Budget Committee and Board of Governors.]