



## European Schools

Office of the Secretary-General

Pedagogical Development Unit

Ref.: 2019-04-D-13-en-1

Orig.: EN

---

# Revision of the Decisions of the Board of Governors concerning the organisation of studies and courses in the European Schools

---

**Document approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting of 9, 10, 11 and 12 April 2019 in Athens<sup>1</sup>**

**This document cancels and replaces document 2011-01-D-33-en-9 approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting on 12, 13 and 14 April 2011 in Brussels.<sup>2</sup>**

**Amended by:**

Decision of the Board of Governors at its meeting of 16, 17 and 18 April 2013.<sup>3</sup>

Decision of the Board of Governors in its meeting of 3, 4 and 5 December 2013 and approved by Written procedure No 2014/13 on 14 May 2014.

Decision of the Board of Governors at its meeting of 17, 18 and 19 April 2018 in Tallinn.<sup>4</sup>

**Entry into force: 1 September 2019**

---

**This document repeals and replaces all the existing rules and decisions of the Board of Governors concerning:**

- a) the organisation of teaching and class/group creation, division or regrouping.
- b) the general regulations for language teaching
- c) the organisation of Other National Language (ONL) (Irish, Maltese, Finnish/Swedish) courses.

---

<sup>1</sup> Decisions of the BoG: 2019-04-D-12

<sup>2</sup> Decisions of the BoG: 2011-04-D-7

<sup>3</sup> Decisions of the BoG: 2013-04-D-15

<sup>4</sup> Decisions of the BoG: 2018-04-D-11

d) the primary cycle's harmonised timetable.

e) the organisation of SWALS (Students Without Language Section) teaching provision.

# 1. Organisation of studies: class sizes – grouping – division of classes – regrouping divided classes

The Annual School Plan determines the amount of teaching time allocated to the school, as well as the number of classes and groups to be created.

The Annual School Plan is approved annually by the Administrative Board.

The Administrative Board provides authority for cases where extra provision is proposed but will also legitimise any measures for a departure from the normal rules in order to enable schools to find local solutions and initiatives to reduce costs. The exceptions and derogations to group/class/options creation/division or grouping rules have to be approved by the Administrative Board of the school. The Budgetary Committee will be informed annually about the derogations from these rules.

The Annual School Plan is drawn up in the context of the overall pedagogical framework set by the Board of Governors and shall:

- show the total teaching time required to meet the needs of the school, i.e. a numerical estimate based on the forecast of the number of classes and teaching groups;
- show the cases where a departure from the normal rules was proposed;
- show the reduction in teaching periods;
- show groupings of classes/groups/options;
- show the courses which are organised in Language 2 or in the language of the host country;
- enable each school to put forward specific local projects and initiatives.

## 1.1. PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK RULES

### 1.2. Class/group sizes

Classes/groups shall have a maximum of 30 pupils.

### 1.3 Class/group creation rules:

#### a) Nursery

Nursery classes with more than 30 pupils shall be divided.

- If there are more than 15 children in a class, a half-time nursery assistant shall be appointed.
- If there are more than 25 children in a class, a full-time nursery assistant shall be appointed.

#### b) Primary

Primary classes/groups with more than 30 pupils shall be divided.

##### Exceptions:

- For 'European Hours', classes/groups with more than 25 pupils shall be divided.
- In Language 2, classes/groups with more than 25 pupils shall be divided

#### c) Secondary

Classes/groups with more than 30 pupils shall be divided.

Language 2, 3 and 4 groups with more than 28 pupils shall be divided. Subjects taught in working languages with more than 28 pupils shall be divided.

**Exceptions:**

- Science classes/groups, including laboratory work, with more than 25 pupils may be divided.
- ICT classes/groups should be organised according to the places available in the ICT classrooms.

**1.4. Minimum group/class/option sizes**

The minimum group/class/option size is seven pupils. In years 6 and 7 the minimum option size is five pupils.

**Exceptions:**

It is possible to create groups/classes and options with fewer than seven pupils in some exceptional cases (a, b, c, d, e, f, g):

**a) Compulsory courses for existing classes should be created, subject to 1.5****b) Other National Language groups;**

Other National Language groups shall be created with fewer than seven pupils in accordance with the ONL rules.

**c) Teaching of Ancient Greek for Greek pupils in the secondary school**

Greek pupils taking the Greek L1 course in secondary years 2 to 5 are entitled to receive complementary tuition in Ancient Greek consisting of two periods per week.

**d) Religion (Ref.: 2008-D-356-en-4)**

In principle, Religion courses are offered in L1 up to secondary year 2. As from secondary year 3<sup>5</sup>, Religion courses are in principle taught in L2.

If the threshold (seven pupils) for creating a group cannot be met, even after combining different groups vertically and horizontally, and the consequence would be that courses in certain Religions cannot be offered, it is within the autonomy of the school to find alternative solutions to facilitate the organisation of these Religion courses.

Examples are (this list is not exhaustive):

- to organise Religion courses in L2 in S1 and S2 also,
- to organise Religion courses in the language of the host country,
- to reduce the number of Religion lessons in the secondary cycle,
- to create mixed Religion groups (such as Protestant/Catholic), by way of exception.

---

<sup>5</sup> - A relatively small group of students coming from different countries but of one particular religious confession taught in Language 2 may be joined by students of this same religious confession, even when the Language 2 in question corresponds to the latter's Language 1.

- Where a group of students of the same religious confession is composed solely of students having their Language 1 in common, the course will be taught in that language.

## **e) Ethics**

In principle, Ethics courses are offered in L1 up to secondary year 2. As from secondary year 3<sup>6</sup>, Ethics courses are in principle taught in L2.

If the threshold (seven pupils) for creating a group cannot be met, even after combining different groups vertically and horizontally, and the consequence would be that courses cannot be offered, it is within the autonomy of the school to find alternative solutions to facilitate the organisation of these Ethics courses.

Examples are (this list is not exhaustive):

- to organise Ethics courses in L2 in S1 and S2 also,
- to organise Ethics courses in the language of the host country,
- to reduce the number of Ethics lessons in the secondary cycle subject to 1.5.

## **f) Educational Support courses**

**g) Groups/classes/options decided by the Administrative Board of the school** for a number of duly justified reasons (e.g.: infrastructure constraints, special school projects, other relevant pedagogical reasons, etc.)

## **1.5. Grouping of groups/classes**

### **a) Nursery**

Year 1 and Year 2 shall be grouped up to 30 pupils.

### **b) Primary**

Two consecutive classes, with a total of 25 pupils or fewer, shall be grouped. Three consecutive classes, with a total of 20 pupils or fewer, shall be grouped.

If the minimum number of seven pupils is not reached, pupils from consecutive classes/groups in a language section, or parallel groups/classes in different language sections, should be grouped, where timetable and pedagogical constraints so permit.

### **c) Secondary**

If the minimum number of seven pupils is not reached, pupils from consecutive classes/groups in a language section, or parallel groups/classes in different language sections, should be grouped, where timetable and pedagogical constraints so permit. The school should use all five weekly working days efficiently.

## **1.6. Regrouping divided classes/groups**

A divided group/class shall be regrouped from the beginning of the next school year if the combined number of pupils is below the number which would justify dividing the group/class.

---

<sup>6</sup> - A relatively small group of students coming from different countries but of one particular religious confession taught in Language 2 may be joined by students of this same religious confession, even when the Language 2 in question corresponds to the latter's Language 1.

- Where a group of students of the same religious confession is composed solely of students having their Language 1 in common, the course will be taught in that language.

## 1.7. Reduction in teaching time for small groups/classes/options

If a compulsory course (e.g.: L1, L2, Mathematics, etc.) or an option (e.g.: Economics, Art, etc.) in the secondary cycle is created for fewer than seven pupils (five pupils in years 6 and 7) and no grouping is possible (see 1.5), the periods allocated to the course shall be reduced in accordance with the table below:

Number of periods/week	Number of periods to be organised
6	4
5	4
4	3
3	2
2	2*

\* From secondary years 1 to 3, Religion and non-confessional Ethics periods should be reduced from two to one.

The reduction is not applicable to L1 courses in years 6 and 7 of the secondary cycle.

## 2. General regulations for language teaching in the European Schools

### Choice of language section in the nursery, primary and secondary

See General Rules, Article 47.e

### 2.1. Regulations for language teaching

- a. In the European Schools all pupils have to study at least three compulsory languages. It is possible also to choose a fourth language as an option in secondary year 4 and a fifth language as a complementary course in secondary year 6.

No language may be studied at more than one level simultaneously and different languages may not be studied at the same level simultaneously. Level means L1, L2, L3, L4 and L5.

- b. In the nursery school the regulations are as follows:

L1 is taught from the age of four years and is the language of the section in which the pupil is enrolled. For categories I and II pupils in a school with no section corresponding to their mother tongue, special SWALS rules are applicable. Special arrangements are in place for the teaching of the Other National Language (Irish and Maltese).

- c. For the primary school and in secondary years 1-5 the regulations are as follows:

L1 is taught from primary year 1 and is the language of the section in which the pupil is enrolled. For categories I and II pupils in a school with no section corresponding to their mother tongue, special regulations are applicable.

L2 is taught from primary year 1: it may only be DE or EN or FR and must be different from L1.

In secondary year 3, Human Science courses must be taught in L2 (DE, EN or FR) and may not be taught in L1.

In principle, as from secondary year 3, Religion courses and Ethics courses are taught in L2 (DE, EN or FR), as stated in points 1.4 d) and 1.4 e) above.

As from secondary year 4, History and Geography courses must be organised in the L2 (DE, EN or FR) and must not be taught in L1.

From year 4, economics, where this is chosen as an option, should normally also be taught in LII (DE, EN or FR). However, if an insufficient number of pupils have chosen economics, so that a course in this subject cannot be organised in their L2, it may be organised in the language of the host country of the school.

L3 is taught from secondary year 1; it may be any official language of the EU countries not being studied as L1 or L2. L3 in year 1 is a beginners' course.

L4 is taught as an option from secondary year 4; it may be any official language of the EU countries not being studied as L1, L2 or L3. L4 in year 4 is a beginners' course.

Special arrangements are in place for the teaching of Irish, Maltese, Finnish and Swedish as the Other National Language.

d. In secondary years 6-7 the regulations are as follows:

L1 is compulsory up to the Baccalaureate.

L2 is compulsory up to the Baccalaureate. The L2 is normally one of the working languages (DE, EN or FR) but pupils may request a different L2 for secondary years 6 and 7. This may be accepted subject to the rules relating to a change of L2 and to the rules governing the creation of groups.

The new L2 may be any official language of the EU countries not yet being studied as L2. The starting point of this new L2 will be a standard consistent with ten years of continuous and progressive teaching of the language, equivalent to the standards for the rest of the working languages

L3 is a 4-period option course and the teaching takes as its starting point a standard consistent with five years of continuous and progressive teaching of the language.

L4 is a 4-period option course and the teaching takes as its starting point a standard consistent with two years of continuous and progressive teaching of the language.

Special arrangements are in place for the teaching of the Other National Language (Irish, Maltese, Finnish and Swedish). There is a specific ONL syllabus for each of these languages.

L5 is a 2-period complementary course for beginners: pupils who have never embarked upon formal study of the language in question. It is not possible to take a Baccalaureate examination in L5.

It is possible for a pupil to choose as L3 in secondary years 2, 3, 4 or 6 or L4 in secondary year 6 an EU language which has not been studied previously in a European School, provided that the pupil has passed an attainment test (written and oral) at the required level, administered under the responsibility of the teacher concerned.

## 2.2. Change of languages

The provisions set out above under points **a** and **b** apply solely to requests for changes of Languages 2, 3 and 4.

Requests to change Language 1 will be dealt with in accordance with the arrangements laid down in Article 47(e) of the General Rules.

It should be remembered that determination of L1 at the time of the child's enrolment is definitive in principle.

A change of Language 1 may only be authorised by the Director for compelling pedagogical reasons, duly established by the Class Council and on the initiative of one of its members.

- a.** Normally, no changes are envisaged in language choices, except on entry to year 6, when the following changes are possible:
- change of L2
  - for a given language, change from a lower to a higher level (e.g. change from L4 to L3)
  - for a given language, change from a higher to a lower level (e.g. from L2 to L3) in justified cases.
- b.** Should a change of language at any age or level be requested, the decision lies with the Director, subject to the following conditions:
- The existence of a reasoned written request from the parents, guardians or from the pupil himself/herself if over the age of 18.
  - Deliberation and judgement by the Class Council on the request.
  - Clear evidence established by the School of the pupil's ability to follow the course requested. In the case of a change of L2, careful consideration must be given to the role of L2 as a medium for teaching other subjects. When a change of L2 is approved before year 6, the new L2 becomes the medium for the teaching of history, geography and economics. When a change of L2 is approved on entry to year 6, the old L2 remains the medium of teaching for history, geography and economics.
  - The absence of significant administrative obstacles to the change requested.
  - The applicant will be notified of the decision and the reasons for it.

## 2.3. Teaching of Ancient Greek for Greek pupils in the secondary school

Greek pupils taking the Greek L1 course may, from secondary years 2 to 5, receive complementary tuition in Ancient Greek consisting of two periods per week. These groups may be created with fewer than seven pupils. Greek pupils who choose the Ancient Greek option cannot take advantage of this complementary tuition.

## 2.4. Other National Language

The **Other National Language** (ONL) – Irish, Maltese<sup>7</sup>, Finnish/Swedish – must be taught to category I and II pupils from the nursery up to secondary year 7. For those pupils who request these courses, Finnish is taught to category I and II Finnish pupils in the Swedish section and Swedish is taught to Finnish-speakers in the Finnish section in those schools which have Finnish/Swedish sections.

---

<sup>7</sup> The Maltese pupils in Brussels are at the Brussels I School and the Maltese pupils in Luxembourg are at the Luxembourg II School.



The Other National Language Irish/Maltese is available for Irish/Maltese nationals enrolled in the English speaking section only.

There should be a specific syllabus for the ONL.

Other National Language groups shall be created with fewer than seven pupils.

In the nursery, the ONL is taught 3 x 30 minutes per week.

In primary years 1-2, the ONL is taught 3 x 30 minutes per week.

In primary years 3-5, the ONL is taught 2 x 45 minutes per week.

In secondary years 1-3, the ONL is taught 2 x 45 minutes per week.

Starting from secondary year 4 and up to secondary year 5, the ONL is a 4-period option. Pupils choosing the ONL cannot choose L4.

For secondary years 6 and 7, the ONL is a 4-period option. Pupils choosing the ONL cannot choose L4.

This decision will change the primary school harmonised timetable as follows:

### Primary school harmonised timetable

Subject	Years 1 and 2	Years 3, 4, 5
Mother tongue (SWALS L1)	8 hours (2 hours 30)	6 hours 45 (3 hours 45)
Mathematics	4 hours	5 hours 15
Language 2	2 hours 30	3 hours 45
Music Art Physical Education	5 hours	3 hours
Discovery of the World	1 hour 30	3 hours
European Hours		1 hour 30
Religion/Ethics	1 hour	1 hour 30
Recreation	3 hours 30	2 hours 30
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 hours 30</b>	<b>27 hours 15</b>
ONL - Irish/Maltese*	1 hour 30	1 hour 30
ONL - Finnish/ Swedish*	1 hour 30 <sup>8</sup>	1 hour 30
*ONL is taught during the school year day		

## 2.5. Use of languages

- a. In primary years 3-5, the subject 'European Hours' is taught to mixed language groups, generally in the pupil's L2 or in the language of the host country.
- b. In secondary years 1-5, art, music, ICT and physical education are taught to mixed language **groups in any language of the pupil's curriculum**<sup>9</sup>.

In secondary years 6-7, art, music (basic and option courses) and physical education are taught to mixed language groups **in any language of the pupil's curriculum or in any language the pupil can prove his/her competence to follow the course.**

<sup>8</sup> Decision of the Board of Governors: 2018-04-D-11.

<sup>9</sup> Entry into force 1st September 2019 (Gradual implementation from S1).

- c. As stated in point 2.1, in secondary year 3, Human Science courses must be taught in L2 (DE, EN or FR) and may not be taught in L1.

In principle, as from secondary year 3, Religion courses and Ethics courses are taught in L2 (DE, EN or FR), as stated in points 1.4 d) and 1.4 e) above.

As from secondary year 4, History and Geography courses must be taught in L2 (DE, EN or FR) and may not be taught in L1.

From year 4, economics, where this is chosen as an option, should normally also be taught in L2 (DE, EN or FR). However, if an insufficient number of pupils have chosen economics, so that a course in this subject cannot be organised in their L2, it may be organised in the language of the host country of the school.

- d. In secondary years 6-7, if the 4-period option course in history and geography cannot be organised in the pupil's working language (DE, EN, FR), the pupil may follow it in another working language provided that this is not the pupil's L1, with the Director's permission.
- e. With the approval of the Administrative Board, the school may organise the teaching of certain subjects (e.g., Ethics, Religion etc.) in the L2 or the language of the host country.

### 3. SWALS – mother tongue provision for pupils for whom there is no language section of their own in their school

SWALS are those pupils whose mother tongue/dominant language is an official language of an EU Member State (with the exception of Irish and Maltese) but for whom no language section in their mother tongue/dominant language (L1) exists in their school.

If one of the language sections of the European Schools corresponding to a category I or II pupil's mother tongue/dominant language is not open in the school, this pupil is entitled to tuition in his/her L1, working on the assumption that the School has at its disposal a duly qualified teacher, or can recruit one.

If one of the language sections of the European Schools corresponding to **category III** pupil's mother tongue/dominant language is not open in the school, this pupil is entitled to tuition in his/her L1, if a course already exists and if it does not create a new group. Should the course have to be terminated<sup>10</sup>, the category III pupils concerned would have to switch their L1 to their L2 and would have to choose a new L2. They would be allowed two years to catch up.

Category III pupils who were enrolled before 1 September 2011 and who learnt as L1 a language different from that of the section can continue with the same L1 up to the end of their schooling in order to ensure pedagogical continuity.

SWALS are normally enrolled in one of the working language (DE, EN, FR) sections. The language of the section is the pupil's L2. SWALS can also be enrolled in the language section of the host country on condition that no additional costs are created. Their L2 should be English, French or German.

At the European School, Munich, there are children whose mother tongue/dominant language is not an official language of an EU Member State but who are considered to have the same rights as SWALS.

In the nursery and primary cycles, L1 courses for SWALS shall be allocated a minimum of five periods per week.

In the secondary cycle, L1 courses for SWALS are organised according to the same rules as any other L1.

---

<sup>10</sup> Reduction is not applicable to L1 courses in years 6 and 7 of the secondary cycle.

At all levels, consecutive year groups may be combined in order to avoid reductions in teaching time.

SWALS are entitled to receive support when lack of knowledge of the language of the section in which they are enrolled is a barrier to communication, integration and learning. This support focuses on the acquisition of this language and thus facilitates these pupils' access to the curriculum and will be organized according to the "Policy on the Provision of Educational Support in the European Schools – 2012-05-D-14".