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# Annual Activity Report 2023 of the Office of the Secretary General

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Approved by the Board of Governors of the European Schools at its Meeting on 10-12 April 2024 in Parma (Italy)

<p><b>Budgetary Committee</b> Meeting on: 5-6 March 2024</p> <p><u>Proposal:</u></p> <p>The Budgetary Committee is invited to give a favourable opinion to the proposed Annual Activity Report 2023 of the Office of the Secretary-General.</p> <p><b><u>Conclusion:</u> The Budgetary Committee expressed a favourable opinion on the Annual Activity Report 2023 of the Office of the Secretary-General.</b></p>	Ref.: 2024-01-D-16-en-1
<p><b>Board of Governors</b> Meeting on: 10-12 April 2024</p> <p><u>Proposal:</u> The Board of Governors is invited to approve the Annual Activity Report 2023 of the Office of the Secretary-General.</p> <p><b><u>Conclusion:</u> The Board of Governors approved the Annual Activity Report 2023 of the Office of the Secretary-General.</b></p>	Ref.: 2024-01-D-16-en-2
<p><b>Final version approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting on 10-12 April 2024 in Parma</b></p>	Ref.: 2024-01-D-16-en-3

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## 1. Mission statement

The European Schools are educational institutions set up in the European Union's Member States.

The purpose of the Schools is to educate together children of the staff of the European communities.

Convention defining the statute of the European Schools

The mission of the European Schools is to provide all pupils with multilingual broad education of high quality from early education to secondary school, and to equip upper secondary pupils to adult life and form a basis for further learning.

Decision of the Board of Governors

## 2. Introduction

According to art. 33.2 of the Financial Regulation (FR) each School and the Office of the Secretary-General shall draw up an Annual Activity report.

The objective of the Annual Activity report of the Office of the Secretary-General (AAR OSG 2023) is to present to the stakeholders a report for the calendar year 2023 on the overall management of the Office, including pedagogical, financial and administrative aspects. It presents a summary of the ongoing activities of each unit as well as the achievements of objectives set for 2023. It also concludes on budget implementation, sound financial management and the internal control system.

### 3. Quality assurance in pedagogy

#### Achievements in ongoing business

##### A. Pedagogical Development Unit

The Multi-Annual Plan (MAP) and the priorities of the Irish and Italian presidencies provided the framework for the main unit activities for 2023. The following summary of achievements is by no means exhaustive and is restricted to the priorities that outline the pedagogical development of the system.

During its meeting in Dublin (April 2023), the Board of Governors approved the proposal to reinforce the Pedagogical Development Unit by creating two new seconded and one AAS post, so that the unit can fulfil its role in facilitating and coordinating professional development of the educational staff as well as supporting data driven decision-making. As a result of the selection process, the Digital Media Officer (AAS post) already started their tenure in November 2023 and the Coordinator for CPD (seconded post) was selected in December 2023 and can join the unit in February 2024. The post for the Educational Data Analyst will be re-published, as the first round of selection has not been successful.

The profile of another AAS post has been changed to meet the growing expectations of the unit. The new assistant's tasks are, among others, to coordinate Erasmus + actions at system level and facilitate projects and calls for tenders for different projects. The new assistant joined the unit in November 2023.

##### 1) Follow-up of the priorities of the Irish Presidency (2022-2023)

The PDU intensively supported the webinars on pedagogical reflection, created by four major Irish Higher Education Institutions. As a result, over 630 ES teachers registered to view the four pre-recorded webinars.

Another priority of the Irish Presidency, the Citizenship Actions for All Programme (CAAP), was established in eight schools during the pilot phase (i.e. 2022-2023). A working group was mandated and started its activities to propose a suitable framework which would allow those secondary pupils (s4-s6) to pursue one or both of the previously well-established Work Experience Programme (WEX) and the new CAAP. The decision on this proposal is expected to be taken by the Joint Teaching Committee in February 2024.

## **2) Activities to implement the priorities of the Italian Presidency (2023-2024)**

In order to support the Italian Presidency's priority of the "Reflection on the future of the European Schools system", an extraordinary Joint Board of Inspectors was organised in December 2023.

The Italian Presidency also proposed some other priorities, such as "Reinforcing Pedagogical Best Practices", designing a "Teacher Career Framework" and organizing a Teacher's Forum. The objectives related to these topics will be realised in 2024, but the preparatory work has already been undertaken in 2023.

## **3) Curricular changes**

In the course of 2023, significant advancements were achieved in key areas, building upon the approval of curricular proposals in December 2022.

- The syllabus of the General Science Course for s6-s7 was developed in 2023 and will be approved by the Joint Teaching Committee in February 2024; it will enter into force in September 2024 with the name of "Science, Technology and Society".
- In spring 2023, the Complementary Course "Sustainability and Active Citizenship" was conceived, approved, and has been actively integrated into multiple schools' curricula since September 2023. The initiative includes training activities, educational materials and collaborative efforts with the JRC and EPO.
- The creation of the new ICT 4-period option started in 2023 and is in progress.
- The working group responsible for the creation of a Cross-Curricular Project on research and academic writing met on two occasions and made significant progress. The work will continue in 2024.

In this context of the curriculum, it is worth noting that a new version of the document "The European School Curriculum: Structure and Organisation of studies and courses" (2019-04-D-13) was created and approved by the Board of Governors. This document gives a comprehensive overview of the curriculum, including its main characteristics, the description of the subjects, organization of courses (class sizes, groupings and conditions for creating groups/classes).

## **4) Further development of the Language Policy of the European Schools**

As regards the rules for teaching Other National Languages (ONL Irish, Maltese, Swedish and Finnish), the Board of Governors agreed that ONL should be available for those pupils who are entitled to learn it, regardless of the language section they are enrolled in.

Besides the aforementioned change, some sections (rules) of the Language Policy were disambiguated in the latest version of the document.

The procedure for adopting L2 HCL was also made more flexible and simpler, especially for Accredited European Schools.

## **5) Continuous Professional Development**

In alignment with the recommendations outlined in the European Parliament study and as articulated in the MAP, dedicated efforts have been directed towards enhancing the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offer for educational staff, particularly focusing on cross-curricular topics. This initiative aims to strengthen the integration of Key Competences into the curriculum and ensure their presence within classrooms.

The PDU, in cooperation with the Educational Support Coordinator, started work on online training sessions. Two sessions were organised: one on “Inclusion and accessibility” (open to ES and AES staff, involving 395 participants), and another session on “Universal Design for Learning” (for 41 ES staff). These initiatives were considered as a pilot project, where an online platform for training was used. The results of the pilot are being analysed and further plans are being developed for 2024.

A series of 9 webinars (in English, French and German) was also delivered. Regular information related to CPD events and resources were published on the Pedagogical Development SharePoint and communicated to the schools.

In-situ and online training courses were organised on request of individual schools (e.g. AES Parma, online training initiated by the Dutch delegation) on topics such as the Welcome Guide, Value-driven education, Harmonised Pedagogical Planning, etc.

Online professional communities on MS Teams were managed and created where necessary, and regular support to AES access staff was provided.

The PDU also supported the Working Group Induction of teachers to develop the Welcome Guide (second edition in 2023) and various induction documents and multimedia material (still under production).

## **6) Assessment**

The PDU supported the activities of the working groups Assessment Primary and Secondary in their respective priorities. The new assessment tools and new marking scheme in the Primary cycle required coordination and negotiation between the PDU and the ICT Unit.

The Assessment Secondary Working Group has finalised the document on Summative Assessment in s4-s6, which is submitted to the BIS and Joint Teaching Committee in February 2024.

### **7) PISA-Based Test for the European Schools**

In March 2023, an in-situ workshop was organised for the PISA coordinators of each school. During this workshop, schools presented their posters and exchanged ideas on how the results of the PISA school reports were used and what action plans were created to use the report as a means for improvement. The second aim of this meeting was to offer training for the teachers by OECD experts.

### **8) Preparation for the procurement of online tools and projects**

In cooperation with the ICT Unit, a roadmap of different projects has been developed. The PDU started to observe different solutions in preparation for the upcoming procurement processes in the following areas:

- Online platform for CPD with off-the shelf content – pilot training was organised on Educational Support.
- Platform for online examination and assessment – started in 2023 (ongoing in 2024), in collaboration with the BAC Unit.
- Specifications for a Pupils' Portfolio and Learning Management System for the Nursery/Primary Cycle.
- Specifications for a Learning Management System in the Secondary Cycle – an in-situ workshop was organised for this purpose.

### **9) Simplification of some workflows, documents, etc.**

Following the simplification and rationalisation of different documents such as the Language Policy and the Curriculum (see references above), the PDU started to work on other workflows as well.

- A proposal to increase (index) the daily allowances for inspectors and other members of different boards was prepared by the PDU. During this work, an analysis of the data on the meetings of working groups was made available to the boards, including the Budgetary Committee and the Board of Governors. The analysis demonstrated that there had been a significant drop in the number of in-situ meetings, and as such, a reduction in expenditure related to travel costs and allowances was also observed. Nevertheless, some proposals are currently being prepared in order to increase the efficiency of meetings.



- The PDU developed and implemented a new workflow for organising working group meetings. As from September 2023, inspectors are requested to use an online form to initiate a meeting, instead of sending individual emails to the unit. This innovative semi-automated workflow facilitates the preparation of meetings for all parties concerned while, at the same time, it supports the collection of data on the activities of working groups.
- The document “Pedagogical Development and Quality Assurance” was published online with the intention of transforming it into a database, in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Steering Committee.
- The documentation of the board meetings (BIP, BIS, JBI and Joint Teaching Committee ) was simplified by shortening the "Conclusions" document, by enhancing collaboration within the unit and a more effective distribution of the tasks.

#### **10) Main activities supporting the Boards of Inspectors and working groups**

During 2023, the Pedagogical Development Unit organised and coordinated the following. The PDU plays a major role in the Central Planning Committee. It is responsible for the creation and sending of the planning calendar, launching surveys to plan the activities of inspectors and liaising with the other units concerned.

The following list is not exhaustive and outlines the most significant activities:

- Ten regular (major) pedagogical meetings: two meetings of the Board of Inspectors (Nursery and Primary), three meetings of the Board of Inspectors (Secondary), three meetings of the Joint Board of Inspectors (including the extraordinary JBI in December) and two meetings of the Joint Teaching Committee. The unit supported the Inspectors’ Discussion Forums in February and October.
- Meetings of working groups and in-service training courses. A good number of working group meetings took place on-site at the Office of the Secretary-General and in some schools. See the evolution of meetings and costs over the course of three years:

Year	Number of WG days in situ	Of which hybrid	Number of participants entitled to daily allowance	Number of daily allowances	Total cost of allowances
2019	215	0	203	774	€ 136.069
2022	103	27	141	381	€ 62,936
2023	112.5	15.5	107	316.5	€ 55,640

- The adoption of several syllabuses. Close cooperation with the Quality Assurance Steering Committee.
- On-site Whole School Inspections, as planned.
- Induction sessions for new inspectors and regular assistance with SharePoint and MS Teams.
- Logistical support for the organisation of the *Latinum Europaeum* examination at the end of year s5.
- Support for the Presidency for the organisation of the pedagogical meetings.
- Planning and budgeting all the inspectors' activities.
- Monitoring, controlling and checking invoices sent by experts, inspectors (expert participation in working groups, INSETs, inspections, etc.).

## 11) Memoranda, Information Notes, Reports and Statistical Analyses

Report on school failures and repeat rates in the European Schools – 2022-2023.

Information notes and Memoranda on several subjects, including Primary Assessment tools, School books, use of software / calculator, etc.

## **12) Advising European Schools and Accredited European Schools on regulatory and pedagogical matters**

Frequent queries from school management, teaching staff, parents, pupils and external partners on various matters, e.g.

- Interpretation and application of regulations (General Rules, Organisation of Studies, Language Policy).
- Advising on pedagogical considerations raised in the conformity files or expression of interest files if requested by Accredited European Schools colleagues in the Office of the Secretary-General.
- Requests from the school management.
- Curriculum- and assessment-related questions.
- Dealing with a growing number of requests received directly from Accredited European Schools.

## **13) Main activities of the IT PEDDA working group**

- Joint work with the IT ADMIN working group.
- Strategic reflection on SMS replacement (SMS advisory board).
- Strategic reflection on LMS for CPD and schools; workshop on LMS specifications.
- Support to the Digital Portfolio pilot at ES WOL-EVE.
- Support to the online examination and assessment pilot (with the BAC unit).
- Support to the Working Group on ICT 4 periods in s6-s7.
- Support to the Coordinator for Educational Support as regards assistive technologies to be used in assessment.
- Follow-up on the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) programmes in schools: survey on BYOD and WiFi deployments in schools (report in January 2024).
- Support to the SG as regards the suspension of MS365 accounts in nursery and p1-p2 (Memorandum 2023-07-M-7).

- Continued development of the online professional communities for European Schools and Accredited European Schools.
- Cooperation with the Accredited European Schools team to maintain the online notebook for Accredited European Schools staff. Continuous review on how to support Accredited European Schools' access to the European Schools online platforms.
- Reflection on Digital Credentials and Open Badges in cooperation with the European Baccalaureate Unit.
- Continued support for the assessment working group on the digital portfolio.

#### **14) Other business**

The PDU has supported the Writing Fest activities in for online tools, workflows and communication.

### **B. European Baccalaureate Unit**

In 2023, the European Baccalaureate Unit organised and ran the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the European Baccalaureate (EB).

The 2023 European Baccalaureate session was successfully organised for 2,652 candidates from 13 European Schools and 12 Accredited Schools.

The second half of the 2023 year was dedicated to preparation of the 2024 European Baccalaureate session. A total of 2,947 candidates are currently registered for a total of 14,799 written examinations and 8,841 oral examinations. More detailed information will be provided next year after the session is over.

#### **Follow-up on the implementation of the New Marking System**

In 2023 the European Baccalaureate Unit had to follow up on the implementation of the new marking system at European Baccalaureate level. The 2022–2023 school year and the 2023 European Baccalaureate session have been using the new marking system for s7 for the third time, but only for the second time in a full (regular) European Baccalaureate session, so this has given us a better perspective of the results.

## **Article 13 of the Arrangements for Implementing the Regulations for the European Baccalaureate (AIREB): Additional written examination**

For the 2023 EB session, the European Baccalaureate Unit analysed 52 requests based on Article 13 of the Arrangements for Implementing the Regulations for the European Baccalaureate, which states that candidates may be allowed to sit an additional written examination in an optional subject and sets out the conditions under which this may be granted. In total, 50 requests were accepted and 6 candidates withdrew their request before the examinations. Therefore, 44 additional written examinations were taken in the 2023 European Baccalaureate session under Article 13.

### **Online correction of the European Baccalaureate scripts**

The European Baccalaureate Unit prepared the Viatique platform, which was used for the seventh time (including its partial use for the September 2020 European Baccalaureate session) to correct the scripts of the European Baccalaureate 2023 session online. The platform (under the constant supervision of the European Baccalaureate Unit) is used to:

- enhance the security of the script-correction process;
- streamline and modernise logistics at the schools and correction centres;
- correct scripts anonymously, with the exception of Music and Art;
- manage third corrections;
- increase correctors' responsiveness by giving them direct access to the scripts to be corrected;
- offer a system for storing scripts that facilitates their consultation by requesters;
- automate the transfer of marks to the schools' databases;
- offer correctors a comfortable and easily accessible correction tool;
- offer a live statistical view of the status of corrections.

In 2023, Viatique was also used by the 13 European Schools and 3 Accredited Schools in order to correct the long written Pre-Baccalaureate examinations of the 2022–2023 school year. The schools decided to digitise all their examinations to be corrected online (scientific and literary subjects). This additional examination session was also supported by the European Baccalaureate Unit.

### **The European Baccalaureate examinations**

The European Baccalaureate examinations are prepared by the secondary cycle inspectors, assisted by teams of external experts. For the 2023 European Baccalaureate session, around 200 experts participated in the drafting of around 300 examination papers (150 main papers and 200 reserve papers). Each examination paper was accompanied by suggested answers, assessment criteria, marking instructions and a marking grid. The European Baccalaureate Unit provides constant support to all the secondary inspectors and experts (including issuing invitations, booking meeting

rooms/organising online meetings, dealing with payments, calculating costs) and helps with the layout of the examination papers.

The European BaccaLaureate Unit is responsible for printing and distributing the examination papers to the schools. Printing and shipping are done by external companies, but the examination papers are packed by the staff of the European BaccaLaureate Unit at the premises of the Office of the Secretary-General.

The European BaccaLaureate Unit organised 13,234 written and 7,914 oral examinations in 2023 (which required the participation of 322 correctors and approximately 261 oral examiners, plus the participation of all s7 teachers with pupils enrolled for the European BaccaLaureate session).

Of the 13,234 scripts, 333 scripts were submitted for a third correction, another process coordinated by the European BaccaLaureate Unit. The first and main reserve session took place in June, the second reserve session was in September.

### **University observation of written examination papers**

Every year the European BaccaLaureate Unit is also responsible for organising the external audit (university observation) of some of the examination papers. For the 2023 European BaccaLaureate session, the following examination papers were audited externally and were found to be fit for purpose:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Mathematics 3P
- Mathematics 5P
- Physics
- Art education
- Language 2 English
- Geography
- Economics

### **Special arrangements for pupils with Special Education Needs**

Article 15 and Annex IX of the Arrangements for Implementing the Regulations for the European BaccaLaureate permit candidates with special educational needs to apply for special arrangements when sitting their examinations. This procedure is organised by the European BaccaLaureate Unit, which serves as a link between the schools and the inspector responsible for the special arrangements. For the 2023 European BaccaLaureate session, appropriate arrangements were made for 275 candidates.

## **Appeals**

The European Baccalaureate Unit has also handled 40 administrative appeals (20 resulting from the Pre-Baccalaureate examinations and 20 from the main session of the Baccalaureate examinations), offering support and assistance to the Chair of the 2023 European Baccalaureate session. Three of the appeals were also submitted as contentious appeals, which required the additional support of the European Baccalaureate Unit to provide the legal services used in preparing the file.

## **European Baccalaureate audit**

In 2021 the European Baccalaureate Unit underwent an audit by the European Commission Internal Audit Service. Five recommendations were given and an action plan was worked out. The European Baccalaureate Unit will continue working with other units at the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools to comply with the recommendations over the next few years. In 2023, further progress was made in fulfilling the recommendations.

For further information please see the chapter entitled Results of internal and external audits.

## **New developments**

In 2023 the European Baccalaureate Unit continued to work on the terminology database (ESTER), which is a comprehensive compendium of terms used in the European School system in three languages: English, French and German.

The European Baccalaureate Unit also worked, in cooperation with the Pedagogical Development Unit, on establishing a pilot project in the area of online assessment. In this respect, cooperation was established with the company TAO in order to prepare s5 examinations in L3 and L4 using the online assessment tool.

## **Report on European Baccalaureate 2023**

More can be found in document 2023-06-D-32-en-5 – Report on European Baccalaureate 2023, approved by the Board of Governors in December 2023 (available here: <https://www.eursec.eu/Documents/2023-06-D-32-en-5.pdf>)

## C. Educational support and inclusive education

### 1. Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education

#### i. Junior Laureate Certificate Doc. Ref. 2022-04-D-6

Following its approval by the Board of Governors in December 2022, in 2023 the Junior Laureate Certificate was translated into 23 languages in collaboration with the European Schools inspectors. The ICT team, in collaboration with the ES&IE coordination, set up the school management system (SMS) to automatically issue the certificate.

#### ii. Organisation of Classes including pupils benefiting from Intensive support A (ISA)- Ref. Doc. 2022-08-D-14

In 2023, the Educational Support Policy working group further discussed the different proposals on the organisation of classes and a concrete proposal was finalised. The proposal will be submitted to the decision-making boards in the first semester of 2024.

### 2. Parallel activities

#### i) Analysis of allocation and expenditure of the Educational Support budget

In 2023, the Office of the Secretary-General Internal Control Unit, in collaboration with the Educational Support and Inclusive Education (ES&IE) coordination, and the Directors of the Schools, discussed the information available in the budget circular. Following their analysis, additional clarifications were added to the document to ensure a consistent understanding..

#### ii) List of validated assistive technology tools to be used in assessment situations

In February 2023, the Joint Board of Inspectors approved the first list of validated tools to be used in assessment situations, including the Baccalaureate exams. Subsequently, the list was updated in October 2023.

#### iii) Gifted pupils in the European Schools

In October 2023, the Joint Teaching Committee approved the guidelines for identification of and response to the learning needs of gifted pupils in European Schools.



**v) Guidelines on how to write accessible written assessments Doc. Ref. 2022-09-D-12**

In October 2023, the Joint Teaching Committee approved the guidelines on how to write accessible written assessments. The guidelines were disseminated among schools and to inspectors.

**3. Training Activities in the Area of Inclusion and Educational Support**

During 2023, several training activities were put in place at central level in Inclusion and Educational Support, addressing various professionals:

- i) Training on Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).** A new session of the 25-hour online teacher in-service training on Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning was started in September 2023. The course was developed by two internal experts for the benefit of teachers in the European Schools.
- ii) Decentralised Training** on the implementation of the revision of the Policy and Procedural Document on the provision of Educational Support and Inclusive Education. Following the revision of the Policy and Procedural Document, the Educational Support inspectors and the Central Coordinator for Educational Support carried out the decentralised training in all the European Schools until May 2023. More than 1,500 participants in all schools took part in the different sessions for the various professional groups at school level: management, educational support coordinators, educational support staff, teachers, nurses and psychologists and non-teaching staff.
- iii) Online training course on Inclusion and Accessibility**

In 2023, the Educational Support coordination in collaboration with the Pedagogical Development Unit prepared an online training course on Inclusion and Accessibility for pedagogical staff. Internal and external experts developed the course that had a duration of 25 hours. The course was made available to participants from the whole European Schools network (including the Accredited European Schools). This course also served to pilot an online training platform. More than 200 trainees followed the first session of the course (chosen by the schools from among more than 600 applicants). A second session of the course started in October 2023 for 180 participants.

#### **4. Regular Activities in Educational Support and Inclusive Education developed at system level**

##### **i) Educational Support Policy (ESP) Working Group Meetings and consultation**

In 2023, three meetings of the Educational Support Policy (ESP) working group were held (in January, May and September). Additionally, the ESP Working Group and other relevant working groups were consulted regarding the different areas in development.

##### **ii) Statistical Report on Educational Support and Inclusive Education**

In 2023, the Educational Support inspectors and the Educational Support and Inclusive Education coordination presented the Statistical Report for the 2021-2022 school year to the Board of Governors and started preparing the Statistical Report for 2022-2023.

##### **iii) Support for management, Educational Support Coordinators and parents**

During 2023, the Educational Support and Inclusive Education coordination was asked by various stakeholders to provide support regarding the implementation and interpretation of the various regulations in the context of Educational Support and inclusive education.

##### **iv) Participation in the EC DG EAC Working Groups and collaboration with the European Institutions' Inclusion and Diversity units/Social Services.**

In June 2023, the Central Coordinator for Educational Support and Inclusive Education was appointed and participated actively as a representative of the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools in Working Groups *Pathways to School Success* and *Equality and Values*, set up by the European Commission's Directorate-General of Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

The Educational Support and Inclusive Education coordination collaborated with the various services of the European Institutions in charge of inclusion, diversity and disability to provide information on the organisation of Educational Support and Inclusive Education in the European Schools.

## D. Achievement of the pedagogical objectives (school years 2022/23 and 2023/24)

Priority 1	Embedding of the 8 Key Competences (KC) in the pedagogical planning
Main steps	<p><u>2022/23 school year:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Subject referents and coordinators share and discuss good practices across schools, coordinated by the sub-working group.</li> <li>- The PDU publishes good practices on its Intranet.</li> <li>- Support for schools in the application of documents 2020-01-D-60, 2020-01-D-61, 2020-06-D-33, 2020-11-D-40, 2022-01-D-50, etc.</li> </ul> <p><u>2023/2024 school year:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The sub-working group and the PDU continue to share best practices to support schools.</li> <li>- Continued support for schools (if needed, further information events, workshops, online resources) in the application of documents 2020-01-D-60, 2020-01-D-61, 2020-06-D-33, 2020-11-D-40, 2022-01-D-50, 2023-01-D59.</li> </ul> <p>Evaluation of teachers against their pedagogical planning will be postponed to September 2024 (following the decision of the Joint Teaching Committee in February 2023).</p>
Achievements	Pedagogical planning was largely implemented according to the decision of the Joint Teaching Committee . Schools dealt with this topic during pedagogical days.
Result of performance indicators	<p>2022/23 and 2023/24 school years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed/Achieved.</li> </ul>
Further necessary steps	During January-April 2024, a targeted, pre-recorded training material will be created and shared. Creation by the PDU (Production team: CPD Coordinator, Digital Pedagogical Coordinator and Media Officer).

<b>Priority 2</b>	<b>PISA for Schools (Phase 2)</b>
Main steps	<p><u>2022/23 school year:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finalization of phase 1.</li> <li>- Implementation planning/identification of tasks (May-June 2022).</li> <li>- Implementation plan discussed with schools (September 2022).</li> </ul> <p><u>2023/24 school year:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workshop organized in March 2023 with the participation of PISA coordinators and other representatives of schools.</li> <li>- OSG and WG working on the follow-up report.</li> </ul>
Achievements	<p>Schools devised their respective responses/action plans to the School Report.</p> <p>Workshop and training for PISA coordinators took place in March 2023.</p>
Result of performance indicators	<p><u>2022/23 and 2023/24 school years:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Action plans by each school.</li> <li>– Training material / Online Professional Community for PISA for the European Schools.</li> </ul>
Further necessary steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Action Plans (to be collected and evaluated by the Working Group during spring 2024).</li> <li>– Group Report to be analysed.</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 3</b>	<b>Implementation of the remaining recommendations of the Educational Support Evaluation Report and implementation of the Action Plan Educational Support and Inclusive Education</b>
Main steps	<p><u>2022/23 school year:</u></p> <p>Put in place decentralized training re the implementation of the revised Educational Support Policy and Procedural Document.</p> <p>Review the situation of the specialized Support Assistants.</p> <p>From the Action Plan Educational Support and Inclusive Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start the development of harmonised criteria for evaluation of Educational Support provision.</li> <li>- Start the consultation on the specifications for the improvement of the current electronic system of recording, provision, progress, and assessment of pupils with additional/special educational needs.</li> </ul>

	<p><u>2023/24 school year:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a procurement policy to purchase accessible teaching material and assistive material - Areas for common market are identified. Set up a framework contract.</li> <li>- Adapt the threshold for a maximum number of pupils in cases where a class has several pupils receiving ISA. Review the decision of the BOG and give autonomy to the Administrative Boards of the schools.</li> <li>- Analyse concrete barriers in the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and prepare a proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o to introduce some flexibility to the curriculum with the aim of allowing more pupils with educational needs to be promoted</li> <li>o Review in this context the criteria for promotion and progression with the aim of allowing pupils with minor modifications of the curriculum or for those, who cannot attend some subject/s because of their disability, to be promoted.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Develop an alternative leaving certificate for pupils with modified curriculum who are not promoted but progressed.</li> <li>- Follow up on the analysis of Educational Support budget.</li> </ul>
Achievements	<p><b>In 2022-2023</b></p> <p>The decentralized training regarding the implementation of the revised Educational Support Policy and Procedural Document has been carried out and a comprehensive report has been submitted to the relevant boards.</p> <p>From the Action Plan Educational Support and Inclusive Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The development of harmonised criteria for evaluation of Educational Support provision has been initiated in the context of the Statistical Report.</li> <li>- The consultation on the specifications for the improvement of the current electronic system of recording, provision, progress, and assessment of pupils with additional/special educational needs has been initiated. The consultation process, coordinated by the ICT unit has been finalized.</li> <li>- The revision of the situation of the specialized Support Assistants – the revision of the situation of the specialized support assistants was postponed until 2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>In 2023-2024</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The follow-up on the analysis of Educational Support budget has been carried out.</li> <li>- Regarding the adaptation of the threshold for a maximum number of pupils in cases where a class has several pupils receiving ISA, revision of the decision of the BOG to give autonomy to the Administrative Boards of the</li> </ul>

	<p>schools, a concrete proposal will be submitted to the relevant decision-making bodies in February 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The other actions are still in development.</li> </ul>
Result of performance indicators	<i>Number of implemented recommendations in comparison to number of recommendations.</i>
Further necessary steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The harmonised criteria for evaluation of Educational Support provision needs to be further developed with the collaboration of the data analyst that is expected in the OSG.</li> <li>- The situation of specialized support assistants will be initiated in 2024.</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 4</b>	<b><u>Implementation of the Board of Governors' decisions related to curricular changes</u></b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation plan made for each of the five curricular proposals.</li> <li>- Sub-working groups start working on the implementation of the decisions.</li> <li>- Where relevant, external partners will be involved (in syllabus development, training etc.).</li> <li>- Creation of syllabuses and making training plans.</li> </ul>
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESD course: syllabus has been approved and subject is being delivered in some schools (as from Sept 2023).</li> <li>- Science course to replace Bio 2p: new syllabus is being developed.</li> <li>- ICT 4 p course: ditto.</li> <li>- CCP: working group started and progressed. First reports expected in October 2024.</li> </ul>
Further necessary steps	<p>Continuing the work on the proposals. Possible review of the earlier cycles (Nursery/Primary).</p>

Priority 5	<b>School Management System: preparation for the replacement of the School Management System (SMS, &gt;2023)</b>
Main steps	Prepare for the replacement of SMS (by modules): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Full migration of the master data from SMS to Master Data Management</li> <li>– Educational support solution: requirement analysis, prepare business case, tender specifications, and conduct tender (see also procurement objectives)</li> <li>– Reporting module migration and modernisation, introduction of data analytics and BI: assessment of requirements and available solutions, prepare business case</li> <li>– Timetabling solution: requirement analysis, prepare business case, examine possible solutions/providers</li> <li>– Standalone BAC module: prepare business case, examine possible solutions/providers</li> </ul> Invoicing module: see objective on page 19 related to simplification measures of the Budget sub-WG
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BI Modernisation: pre-study DONE &amp; the scope has been identified</li> <li>- Master Data Management: first phase <i>DEVELOPMENT of the solution</i> has been completed</li> <li>- Timetabling solution: backlog               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PO needed</li> <li>• IT support needed for the integration</li> <li>• Requirements' gathering necessary</li> </ul> </li> <li>- LMS: workshop DONE – requirements' analysis ongoing</li> <li>- BAC module: preparation of in-house development or procurement</li> <li>- EIP (Digitalised and Centralised Invoicing) in progress with SAP consultancy</li> <li>- SMS core: requirements collected</li> <li>- Data Integration solutions/platform: backlog</li> </ul>
Further necessary steps	Meeting of the Programme's Steering Committee in January Nomination of the Project & System Owners Report for the Budgetary Committee & the Board of Governors Communication Plan of the SMS Replacement Programme – Programme Manager & Business representatives

## 4. Accredited European Schools

The activities of the Accredited European Schools team are extremely varied. They are framed around the annual cycle of audits and the signing of accreditation agreements. The following text focuses on the main aspects.

### 1. Accreditation and re-accreditation

In April 2023, as a result of the positive audits carried out in Autumn 2022, the Secretary-General was mandated to sign the following accreditation agreements:

- 2 for the Baccalaureate cycle (s6-s7)
- 1 initial accreditation for n-s5
- 2 renewals for n-s5
- 3 renewals for n-s7

This means that, in 2023, one new school officially became an Accredited European School and two existing schools gained accreditation to provide education up to and including the European Baccalaureate level.

### 2. Audits

In Autumn 2023, seventeen audits were organised and carried out. These audits included:

- One initial audit for n-s5
- Four initial audits for the Baccalaureate cycle (s6-s7)
- Five audits for renewals for n-s5
- Seven audits for renewals for n-s7

The audit visits took place between weeks 39 and 50 and used 17 teams of inspectors, sometimes supported by external experts. In total, for the pre-audit reports and the audits, twenty inspectors and twelve experts were involved. The audits took place in fourteen schools, across eight member states.

### 3. Training sessions

New experts were recruited in spring 2023 in order to manage the large number of audits planned to take place in autumn 2023. Training sessions were run with all experts to explain the pre-audit process. Training sessions were also run for directors and inspectors. After the training sessions, the necessary resources for the inspectors and experts were uploaded to separate OneDrive folders so that they are easily accessible at all times. Feedback from the inspectors and the experts suggest that these resources, developed by the AES team, are extremely useful and frequently used.

### 4. Reforms

The AES Working Group was relaunched under the Irish Presidency and has continued its work under the Italian Presidency. The original mandate covers seven points, the most discussed of which have been compliance, quality assurance, and cost neutrality.



Whilst the suggestions on compliance received positive comments, the suggested ideas related to Quality Assurance could not find the full support of the Board of Governors.

The work will continue to find an approach that is acceptable to all stakeholders whilst also following the recommendations in the CULT committee report (2022/2149(INI)) that call for *“a re-evaluation of AES to assess ways of extending the scope of the ESS to all Member States by putting in place more flexible procedures and requirements for the accreditation of schools while improving quality assurance and inspection”*.

The current cost neutrality agreement has been in place since the 1 January 2020. The annual work of calculating the amounts, notifying the necessary parties, and ensuring that the debit notes are sent out to the correct people increases as the number of schools increases and as the AES team tries to adapt to requests from individual schools and delegations. The topic of the total contributions by the AES has been discussed in the AES Working Group and a proposal will be sent to the Board of Governors in April 2024.

## **5. New schools**

In April 2023, the Conformity File for one new school was approved, ensuring that this school could open its doors in September 2023.

In addition to the new Dossiers of Conformity approved, support has been given to two of the more established schools to create updated Dossiers of Conformity to conform to the template introduced in 2020 and to the updated 2020 Regulations on Accredited European Schools.

One General Interest File was approved in December 2023. The plan is that this school will open in September 2024, once its Dossier of Conformity is written and approved.

This means that, at the end of 2023, there were 23 accredited schools and three in the process of accreditation.

## **6. Resources for teachers and management**

To ensure that the management teams of the AES receive all the necessary memoranda and information, and that these documents are easily accessible to newer AES, the AES team runs and maintains an MS TEAM exclusively for the management teams of the AES. As well as guaranteeing that all essential documents reach their intended audience, this TEAM encourages collaboration between the management teams.

Encouraging teachers to be more involved in the European Schools network is also important. The AES team ensures that all AES teachers are members of their relevant Professional Communities and have access to the AES Teachers' Handbook. This resource was created two years ago and is an encyclopaedia of information for AES teachers. It is regularly updated, and access is open to all AES teachers. The AES team also piloted a 'buddy' system, linking experienced European Baccalaureate teachers with their colleagues in an AES with a newly opened Baccalaureate cycle. This scheme was so successful that it will be extended in the future.

## **7. Advice and consultation**

The AES team also deals with a wide range of queries from a number of stakeholders including OSG colleagues, school management, teaching staff, parents, EU agencies, the Commission, delegations etc. Responses cover an array of topics including:

- Interpreting the Regulations on Accredited European Schools
- Clarification of the role of the OSG in the running of the AES
- Highlighting pertinent areas of the General Rules and the Language Policy
- Enrolment and recruitment questions
- Funding agreements
- Cost neutrality
- Alterations to Dossiers of Conformity
- Payments for audit-related work
- Enrolment in, and access to, training sessions
- Data, statistics and contact details
- Mediation and problem solving

## **5. Quality assurance in administration and finance**

### **Achievement in the ongoing business**

#### **A. Budget of the Office of the Secretary-General**

The provisional budget implementation for the Office of the Secretary-General for 2023 was EUR 18,221,605, representing a 18% increase with respect to 2022.

Expenditure relating to seconded staff in 2023 was slightly higher than in 2022 and can be explained by the salary adjustments applied in 2023. Expenditure relating to administrative and ancillary staff rose substantially in relation to 2022. The corresponding 4.0% increase can be explained by the salary increases applicable to Belgian personnel. Overall, expenditure relating to staff in 2023 was EUR 10.1 million, which is 4.2% higher than in the previous year.

As regards other administrative expenditure, attention should be paid to the significant increase (102%) in ICT expenditure, which is explained mainly by the rising costs in materials and licenses and by the Cloud integration project.

The substantial increase in Buildings expenditure (22%) reflects the price increases in energy-related expenditure for the OSG premises.

The budget item 'OSG' includes a number of components relating to activities which are conducted for the benefit of the European School system as a whole. The main components are the translation of documents for the different committees and interpretation services; reimbursement of costs relating to meetings of the Board of Governors, Budgetary Committee and Boards of Inspectors; expenditure relating to the conduct of European Baccalaureate examinations and litigation costs, as well as costs relating to the payment of experts. Budget implementation in 2023 rose by 12% in relation to 2022. The main driver behind this increase was the rising cost of the Baccalaureat process due to the increasing number of Accredited schools and pupils undergoing those exams.

Miscellaneous administrative expenditure includes staff mission expenditure, office equipment and supplies, training of administrative and ancillary staff, telephone costs and expenses relating to internal meetings. This budget line includes smaller amounts and experienced an increase of 59% with respect to 2022, which was partially affected by the pandemic, with some missions being replaced by on-line meetings and some training courses having been cancelled.

Finally, pedagogical expenses include reimbursements relating to the pedagogical training courses which are organised by the inspectors. These expenses were also partially affected by the pandemic in 2022, therefore expenses increased in 2023.

<b>Budget Line</b>	<b>Budget 2022 (Actuals)</b>	<b>Budget 2023 (Actuals*)</b>	<b>Variation %</b>
Expenditure related to seconded staff	1,312,875	1,341,301	2%
Expenditure related to administrative and ancillary staff	8,367,027	8,742,457	4%
Buildings	1,325,558	1,616,522	22%
Information and Communications Technology	1,582,622	3,192,713	102%
Office of the Secretary-General	2,407,627	2,707,344	12%
Miscellaneous administrative expenditure	309,967	491,623	59%
Pedagogical expenditure	84,559	129,644	53%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,390,235</b>	<b>18,221,605</b>	<b>18%</b>

\* figures from 24/01/2024

## B. Human Resources

The HR Unit oversees the management of HR issues within the OSG. It also deals with many Legal/HR related questions concerning the staff of the thirteen European Schools. Hence, the legal team had to be reinforced last year.

Other areas of responsibility, such as administrative management, processing of salaries, recruitment processes, training courses, building management, well-being at work, etc., including their financial and budgetary management, are handled by a particular member of the unit. However, in view of the continuously increasing workload and the upcoming simplification process, the need to develop a back-up system has become crucial but unattainable due to the limited number of resources within the unit.

### a) Recruitment procedures

Like in previous years, recruitment of new OSG staff members and school management staff constituted a significant proportion of the Unit's work in 2023.

Concerning seconded posts at the OSG, in December 2023, the Board of Governors renewed the mandates of the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General until 31 August 2027 and 31 December 2027 respectively. In addition, on behalf of the Board of Governors, the Secretary-General appointed a new Head of the HR unit as of 1 January 2024 and a Coordinator for Continuous Professional Development at the Pedagogical Development Unit as of 1 February 2024 at the OSG. A selection committee was organized to fill a new Educational Data Analyst position at the OSG, albeit without success. This post remains vacant and a new recruitment procedure has been launched

The number of administrative and ancillary staff (AAS) increased from eighty-three members at the end of 2022 to eighty-five members (including temporary staff) at the end of 2023.

A total of thirteen AAS members were recruited in 2023, including five permanent and eight temporary positions.

The permanent posts concerned the Secretary-General (DPO), Central Administration, ICT (Development cell), Pedagogical Development and HR Units. The purpose of the temporary recruitment of staff was to strengthen certain services, such as the Legal team at the OSG, the ICT System cell, the Central Enrolment Authority (CEA), the SAP cell, and to provide some replacement staff at the ICT Development cell, European Baccalaureate, Pedagogical development, Accounts and Central Accounting Units.

The HR Unit also conducted five procedures to recruit executive staff for the European Schools. Specifically, these selection procedures included three posts of Deputy Directors for the Secondary Cycle and two post of Deputy Director for Finance and Administration. The HR Unit also launched and took part in three recruitment procedures for a post of Assistant Deputy Director for the Secondary cycle.

Finally, the HR Unit, with the support from the ICC Unit, examined and closed the professional experience files that determined the entry salary step of 329 seconded teachers and 5 managerial staff members at the European Schools' System.

## **b) Training**

In order to comply with the requirements of the Policy on training for the administrative staff of the Office of the Secretary-General and of the European Schools (2021-12-M-2-en-1), the HR Unit had to follow different steps.

Firstly, the HR Unit conducted a survey to identify the training needs of administrative and managerial staff of the OSG and the ES. In total, 230 training needs were identified and analysed by the unit.

The HR Unit updated the training catalogue. The HR Unit made the Eu Learn platform available to OSG and ES staff members (including teachers of the Luxembourg ES) for training courses and oversaw administrative tasks related to the use of the platform. The HR Unit was also responsible for handling technical problems of users. In total, 378 staff members were active users of the platform in 2023.

When it comes to the OSG, the HR Unit elaborated a training plan for the ongoing year (2023) as well as for 2024. Moreover, it ensured close administrative follow-up of staff members' requests while managing the budget in accordance with the internal financial procedure. In total, the HR Unit dealt with 63 training requests.

### c) Participation in working groups

The HR Unit took part in a number of working groups (WG).

#### **AAS Working Group**

The AAS working group met several times in 2023 and clarified the practices in the ES in following areas:

- transfer of AAS staff,
- teleworking regulations,
- reimbursement of transport costs,
- compensation for working during European or national public holidays (e.g. May 9 or November 11),
- summer holidays,
- the right to disconnect as well as the harassment policy.

Further discussions will be needed in 2024 on the guidelines for European Schools concerning the reimbursement of transport costs, the European or National Public holidays May 9 and November 11, the statute of supervisory staff and the salary grid for science technicians.

Finally, the Working Group has been kept updated on the progress of the Simplification / Digitalisation process of the HR Services.

#### **Seconded Staff Working Group**

The Working Group was consulted about the amendment proposals which were validated by the Board of Governors of April 2023 concerning:

- Solidarity levy (Article 50)
- Resettlement allowance (Article 58.7)
- Reimbursement of expenses (Article 59.4)
- Severance grant (Article 72)

They also discussed the proposals of the ICC Unit related to the calculation of directors' special allowance, compensation allowance and the payment of the severance grant, as a follow up of the Observations of the Court of Auditors.

#### **LRT Working Group**

The questionnaire was launched in 2021 and the data analysis was carried out in 2022. Subsequently, the Working Group continued work on the harmonization of the payment method used by the European Schools for supervision hours and other overtime hours of locally recruited teachers.

The Working Group also discussed the following topics:

- access to Memorandums created by the BSG for the administration of the European Schools regarding the issues linked to the Staff Regulations.
- Reduction of the school fees for children of LRT Staff members (Art. 39): the possibility and financial impact of this change (requested by the Staff Representatives) is being assessed before further discussion.
- the impact of secondments on the LRT job contracts (35 % - 65 % rule and protected posts).

### **Joint Working Group (Seconded Staff and Locally Recruited Teachers)**

During 2023, the Working Group continued to work on the harmonization and the attractiveness of the statute of the Seconded Staff and the Locally Recruited Teachers.

Following topics were discussed and led or will lead to a modification of provisions in both the Staff Regulations for Locally Recruited Teachers and the Regulations for Members of Seconded Staff of the European Schools:

- Reimbursement of Removal Expenses (approved by the Board of Governors and published).
- Introduction of the obligation to provide an excerpt of the criminal record for educational and financial functions (amendments still pending).
- Payment of the salary to a bank account in the European Union (approved by the Board of Governors, to be published).

In addition, the Working Group focused its work on following policies:

- Harmonization of reimbursement of work-home transport costs for all the European Schools. Proposal of Guidelines to be continued in 2024.
- Guidelines concerning the right to disconnect within the framework of the different national legislations.

Both topics will require further developments in 2024.

The members were consulted and updated on the changes concerning:

- The evaluation procedure and templates.
- Reorganization of the professional training courses for AAS – ICT – pedagogical staff.

The Human Resources Unit remained very active in the work of the Simplification Working Group, especially in the project of Digitalization of Human Resources which found support of the Board of Governors in December 2022.

HR conducted numerous workshops, first with the pilot schools involved in the project, and later with the participation of all European schools. The purpose of the workshops, divided by specific HR functions, was to identify the current state of HR processes, in view of future digitalization and automation. HR helped to design a first version of future-state workflows and to spot major points of contention in terms of employees' interactions during those processes for further analysis. In addition, HR contributed to drafting the document to publish a call for tenders aimed at acquiring a HR digital solution for the entire ES system. The document containing administrative and technical specifications was shared with all European Schools. HR supported the Internal Control Capability Unit (Project Manager) in answering all questions raised by the schools in relation to the content of the tender document.

These efforts will lead to the future implementation of a digital HR solution (expected timeframe - September 2024).

#### **d) Legal matters**

The HR Unit provided first-rate legal support to the 13 European Schools. The HR legal team received and responded to an average of two legal questions per day. These questions were sent by the schools and covered all the European Schools' regulations or national law. Some of these questions required deep analysis and, in some cases, the drafting of Memoranda for the Schools to clarify certain provisions.

In October 2023, the HR legal team created an internal legal database in order to establish a common interpretation of the diverse regulations in place at various European Schools and to ensure consistency in their legal responses. They were supported by the ICT department and started its compilation. The aim of this legal database is to gather all the legal decisions in the HR field to create clear and precise case law within the European Schools' System.

Finally, the HR legal team worked with the OSG's external lawyers on litigation cases, which were pending before the national courts, to find solutions requiring out-of-court settlements.

#### **e) Health insurance**

The Sickness Insurance Fund Management Committee met twice in 2023 to examine specific questions relating to the Sickness Fund regime. The financial statements of the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme for the European School System for 2022 were presented by representatives of the Office for the administration and payment of individual entitlements (PMO). Data presented in the documents confirmed a stable situation on the accounts and indicated a slight decrease in expenses that may point to a return to the pre-Covid level.

In 2023, the works regarding a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to be signed between the OSG and the PMO European Commission was put on hold. This was mainly due to the internal changes within the PMO which resulted in a new distribution of responsibilities in their services. The file related to the creation of the SLA has been moved to the PMO-LAW, the unit which continues to work on a new draft proposal. 2024 should bring about a final compromise on the agreement and put in place a legal framework for collaboration with the PMO services.

As in the previous years, in October, the HR Unit, in collaboration with the PMO, organised a training session on health insurance and membership of the Sickness Insurance Scheme for new seconded staff who started working from September 2023 onwards. The JSIS Focal Points appointed by each school also took part, as did some directors. In total, there were 125 participants in the training session, which is 10% less than in 2022. The session was highly praised by all attendees.



#### f) Other HR activities

In 2023, the OSG as well the European Schools located in Belgium continued to work with Partena, the social secretariat, on the basis of the contract signed in 2020.

As from July 2023, the taxation of benefits in kind (“*avantages de toute nature*” or ATN), such as the private use of the professional laptops or mobile phones, was adopted for all staff members of the OSG in accordance with the Belgian legal requirements. A Memorandum 2023-06-M-1-fr-1 has been released to inform employees concerned by this change and the content of the payslips have been adapted accordingly.

In continuation of the adaptation of the internal policy on extra hours and guards’ duties with Belgian legal requirements performed in 2022 (2022-12-D-14), an agreement has been found and implemented in terms of compensation for the availability of ICT staff members, both during passive and active on-call duties. This compensation policy has been communicated and included in the Internal Regulations by document 2023-12-D-5.

The new policy, document with ref. 2022-12-D-14, has been included in the Internal Regulations. Another important document presented at the General Assembly was the new regulations relating to teleworking within the OSG. The new policy under the ref. 2020-12-D-22-en-2 entered in force as of 1 January 2023.

#### g) Well-being at work

In 2023, the Internal Prevention Adviser (IPA) was trained as a Person of Trust. Also, a Service for fire extinction and evacuation was established at the OSG. The IPA remained responsible for the coordination of the vaccination campaign against Covid for OSG staff and the five European Schools in Belgium at the European Commission Medical Service.

The IPA drafted the annual report of the Internal Service for Prevention and Protection at Work for 2022.

In addition, the IPA intervened in the resolution of internal conflicts and work-related issues and the reintegration of colleagues after long-term sick leave at the OSG.

## h) Building management

The assistant in charge carried out several operational tasks to ensure the proper functioning of OSG installations. In addition, he focused on the following objectives, in particular:

- External audit of the electrical installations in the server room and the resulting follow-up. Some modifications are needed in order to have a fully operational and secure electrical installation in the server room. They will be implemented in 2024.
- Inspection, by the “ANPI” accredited body, of the fire detection and extinction system in the server room and the resulting follow-up. Certain modifications are needed. The implementation already started in 2023 and will be completed in early 2024.
- Purchase of different types of furniture, including standing desks for an open space area for staff with particular back conditions.
- Participation in the drafting of the specifications for several framework contracts in collaboration with the procurement cell.
- Participation in a Facility Management professional training.

## C. Central Enrolment Authority

### **CENTRAL ENROLMENT AUTHORITY OF THE BRUSSELS EUROPEAN SCHOOLS (CEA)**

At the Brussels European Schools, enrolment and transfer requests are processed by the CEA in accordance with the Enrolment Policy developed according to guidelines adopted each year by the Board of Governors.

#### **1. Objectives and priorities for enrolments for the 2023–2024 school year**

The Brussels European Schools have been facing a significant overpopulation problem for a number of years, mainly in the secondary cycle.

Following its extraordinary meeting of 27 October 2022, at its meeting on 6, 7 and 8 December 2022, the Board of Governors approved a progressive approach to optimising the use of the Berkendael and Evere sites (which only accommodate the nursery and primary cycles) whereby, as of the 2023–2024 school year, parallel structures in any given school would be eliminated over time. This approach should make it possible to free up the Uccle and Woluwe sites to accommodate more pupils in the secondary cycle.

With this in mind, at the Brussels I European School, the progressive migration was organised of the nursery and primary cycles of the EN and IT language sections from the Uccle site to the Berkendael site and the DE section from the Berkendael site to the Uccle site. As for the Brussels II European School, migration of the nursery and primary cycles from the Woluwe site to the Evere site at this stage concerned the DE, EN, FR and IT language sections. Consequently, no more applications for the sections affected by the migration may be submitted for pupils without a special priority criterion.

Moreover, in December 2022 the Board of Governors decided on the future structure of the Brussels V European School, which is due to open for the start of the 2028 school year. In this context, new pupils enrolled as of the 2023–2024 school year in the nursery cycle of the EL satellite classes of the Brussels I European School – Berkendael site, with the exception of brothers and sisters of pupils enrolled prior to the 2023–2024 school year, as well as pupils in the nursery cycle up to s6 including in the IT and NL language sections of the Brussels IV European School, will be transferred 'wholesale' to the Brussels V European School in September 2028.

Since 2022–2023, enrolment and transfer applications have been submitted online on the Brussels European Schools enrolment portal. Two enrolment phases were organised; applicants for enrolment who were in post in the European Institutions (or engaging in a professional activity conferring entitlement for their children to be considered as category I and Eurocontrol pupils – from primary 1 upwards) on 31 December 2022 had to submit their application during the first phase.

The second phase was restricted solely to applicants for enrolment taking up their posts in the European Institutions in Brussels after 31 December 2022 (whatever the reason: new recruitment, transfer from another site, return to work, etc.), applicants for enrolment whose children were being educated outside Belgium during the 2023-2024 school year and applicants able to demonstrate a case of force majeure.

Ukrainian pupils could be accommodated according to the provisions set out in the Framework for the enrolment of Ukrainian pupils, in accordance with the decisions of the Board of Governors of 6, 7 and 8 December 2022.

## **2. Results of the 2023–2024 Policy on Enrolment**

The main data on the 2023–2024 enrolment session is as follows:

- 2,749 enrolment and transfer applications were received and processed, 2,722 of which were category I and II;
- of the 8 enrolment applications submitted for displaced Ukrainian children, 7 pupils were accommodated at the Schools;
- of the 20 enrolment applications submitted for children of NATO civilian staff, 10 pupils were accommodated at the Schools;
- of the 5 enrolment applications submitted for children of United Nations staff (international civil servants), 4 pupils were accommodated at the Schools;

- of the 2 enrolment applications received for category III pupils, the condition of already having a brother or sister at a school being met, only 1 place could be offered, which was accepted by the parents;
- **in total, at the start of the school year in September 2023, 1,775 new pupils were accepted at the Brussels European schools, distributed as follows:**

Brussels I Uccle site	Brussels I Berkendael site	Brussels II Woluwe site	Brussels II Evere site	Brussels III	Brussels IV	TOTAL
334	221	237	221	342	420	<b>1,775</b>

Of the 2,595 places offered, 2,023 were initially accepted, meaning that 22% of the enrolment applications (572) were refused upon receiving the decision of the CEA. The majority of the places refused had been allocated at the Brussels IV European School. Of these 2,023 places initially accepted, 250 offers were subsequently cancelled by the parents; 120 of these corresponded to an offer at the School of first preference.

In total, 822 enrolment applications were processed without resulting in new enrolments, i.e. a third of the total number of places offered (32%), a similar proportion to previous years (29% in 2022–2023).

Of the 2,749 applications received for 2023–2024, 78% were submitted in the first phase. For information, of the applications received during the second phase, 71 were submitted on the basis of a case of force majeure; 31 of these applications were deemed inadmissible.

Although numbers have stabilised in the nursery and primary cycles, overpopulation continues to grow in the secondary cycle year on year. At the start of the school year in September 2023, the situation of each School/site is as follows:

- at the **Brussels I School – Uccle site**, the overall numbers have increased, mainly in the secondary cycle;
- at the **Brussels I School – Berkendael site**, the numbers are close to full capacity.
- at the **Brussels II School – Woluwe site**, the numbers have fallen slightly, but only in the nursery and primary cycles, with the secondary cycle continuing to grow;
- at the **Brussels II School – Evere site**, opened in 2021, the numbers have increased to reach 40% capacity, distributed between the English language section (up to P3), the German language section (up to P3), the French language section (up to P5) and the Italian language section (up to P2);
- at the **Brussels III School**, the numbers have fallen, but only in the nursery and primary cycles, with the secondary cycle continuing to grow;
- at the **Brussels IV School**, the numbers have increased, mainly in the secondary cycle;

### 3. Policy on Enrolment for 2024–2025

With 14,607 pupils in October 2023 compared to 14,489 in October 2022, the increase in the population of the Brussels European Schools (+118 pupils) was less than the usual average of 400 pupils.

The overpopulation situation, mainly in the secondary cycle, continues to be a subject of major concern.

In this context, the main objective of the Policy on Enrolment for the 2024–2025 school year is to continue to implement the decisions taken by the Board of Governors in October and December 2022, in order to make optimum use of the resources of the Evere site and those of the Berkendael site to free up the other schools/sites and enable them to use the available rooms to accommodate pupils in the secondary cycle.

It is important to note that the Complaints Board confirmed that the approach adopted by the Board of Governors, i.e. that a modulated and clearly defined exemption to the principle of the regrouping of siblings may be deemed acceptable, since the rule is sufficiently precise and conditional and does not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objective of general interest.

In parallel, preparation should be made for the opening of the Brussels V European School, scheduled for 2028.

A third objective of the decisions taken by the Board of Governors in October and December 2022 was to reduce the number of SWALS pupils. Thus, by decision of the Board of Governors of 12, 13 and 14 April 2023, the LV and SK language sections will be extended into the secondary cycle at the Brussels I European School – Uccle Site, starting with S1 and S2 in 2024–2025.

The creation of the SL language section was approved at the meetings of the Board of Governors on 5, 6 and 7 December 2023, starting with the nursery cycle in 2024–2025.

Ukrainian pupils will continue to be accommodated for the 2024–2025 school year (still under the Framework for the enrolment of Ukrainian pupils, as decided by the Board of Governors on 5, 6 and 7 December 2023).

Consequently, the guidelines for the 2024–2025 Policy on Enrolment, taking into account all of the above decisions, were approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting in December 2023.

The schedule for the submission of online enrolment and transfer applications on the enrolment portal is organised in exactly the same way as in previous years: applications for category I and Eurocontrol pupils (from primary 1 upwards), one of whose parents was in post on 31 December 2023, must be submitted during the first phase. The second enrolment phase is reserved for applicants taking up their posts in Brussels after 31 December 2023, except where they can establish a case of force

majeure based on evidential documents or where the pupils concerned were educated outside Belgium during the 2023–2024 school year.

The 2024–2025 Policy on Enrolment is available on the website of the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools [www.eursc.eu](http://www.eursc.eu) under *Enrolments/Policy on Enrolment in the Brussels European Schools*.

## D. Legal aspects

### Appeals

**In 2023, 110 administrative appeals** were processed by the Office of the Secretary-General, which also provided monitoring for 48 contentious appeals. These figures are lower than those recorded in 2022 (149 administrative appeals and 68 contentious appeals) and attest to a return to normality in terms of grounds for contesting, while 2022 was still marked by the COVID-19 health crisis justifying the processing of cyclical disputes linked to the measures adopted in this context.

At this point we will recall that in 2022 more than 70 members of staff seconded by Germany contested the fact that the amounts paid out to them as a 'coronavirus bonus', through their national remuneration, had been deducted from their European supplement based on the mechanism established in Article 49.2.b of the Regulations for Members of the Seconded Staff

This collective movement brought the number of appeals submitted by teaching staff to 81. However, this number reached no higher than 15 in 2023 and the reasons cited in support of the appeals, individual to the applicants, concerned the everyday management of human resources. Thus, above all, what was being called into question was the definitive differential adjustment calculations for seconded staff and dismissal decisions for locally recruited teaching staff.

Although teachers' contentious appeals are therefore falling, others are slightly increasing: we have recorded 35 administrative appeals against a Class Council decision (compared to 24 in 2022) and 40 concerning Baccalaureate and pre-Bac results (compared to 33 in 2022). However, the gaps recorded remain fairly marginal and reflect normal school activity, necessarily fluctuating from one year to the next.

Moreover, in the 'miscellaneous' category (*'appeals not falling into any of the above categories'*), we see the appearance of a new type of contentious appeal in relation to the allocation of a class/group to a specific teacher. Two appeals of this nature were submitted in 2023, were rejected by the Secretary-General in the administrative phase and are currently under examination by the Complaints Board.

The position of the European Schools is that decisions whereby directors allocate classes/groups of pupils to teachers in the context of the powers devolved to them under Article 3 of the General Rules, are not subject to appeal and therefore reversal by the Complaints Board.

It is consequently, in addition to their grounds, the very admissibility of these appeals that is contested by the European Schools (admissibility *ratione materiae*, given the nature of the contested act) and the question on which the Complaints Board should rule first.

It goes without saying that a judgement in favour of the applicants – by which the Board justified itself in reversing a decision to allocate a class to one teacher rather than another – could have significant consequences both for the organisation of the Schools and in terms of potential appeals to be managed by the Office of the Secretary-General.

Finally, another question of principle that is also under examination, through a request for referral of which the Complaints Board was informed under Article 40b of its Rules of Procedure, is that of the admissibility of a contentious appeal when this has not been preceded by a prior administrative appeal, the requirement for which is based on reasoning by analogy.

Besides the fact that the decision to be made is likely to shed interesting light on the admissibility conditions for appeals and the right to effective legal protection, we will note that the referral mechanism (before a chamber of 5 judges) has very rarely been used since its establishment in 2016 (there are no more than one or two applications per year) and that the exceptional usage that is made of it, in itself, justifies paying particular attention to it.

All of the administrative and contentious appeals are presented in detail as follows, by domain or decision-making body:

Administrative appeals	Contentious appeals
	<p><b>28</b> appeals against decisions of the Central Enrolments Authority (of which 1 in referral)</p> <p>3 accepted – 18 rejected – 6 withdrawn</p>
<p><b>35</b> appeals against the decision of a Class Council</p> <p>11 accepted – 24 rejected</p>	<p><b>2</b> appeals against the decision of a Class Council</p> <p>1 accepted – 1 rejected</p>
<p><b>9</b> appeals concerning enrolment applications for Schools other than the Brussels Schools and linguistic choices (determination of L1 and change of L1/L2)</p> <p>3 accepted – 5 rejected – 1 withdrawn</p>	<p><b>2</b> appeals (of which 1 referral) concerning enrolment applications for Schools other than the Brussels Schools and linguistic choices (determination of L1 and change of L1/L2)</p> <p>2 withdrawn</p>
<p><b>15</b> appeals concerning teaching staff, of which 12 submitted by seconded teachers and 3 by locally recruited teachers</p> <p>11 rejected – 4 withdrawn</p>	<p><b>6</b> appeals concerning teaching staff, of which 5 submitted by seconded teachers and 1 by a locally recruited teacher</p> <p>1 accepted - 3 rejected – 2 pending decision</p>

<p><b>40</b> administrative appeals against European Baccalaureate results (20 in the Pre-Bac + 20 in the Bac)</p> <p>13 accepted, of which 2 partially (12 in the Pre-Bac + 1 in the Bac) – 27 rejected</p>	<p><b>4</b> appeals against European Baccalaureate results</p> <p>2 rejected, 1 withdrawn, 1 pending decision</p>
<p><b>0</b> appeals concerning pupils with specific needs</p>	<p><b>0</b> appeals concerning pupils with specific needs</p>
<p><b>7</b> appeals against a pupil's disciplinary sanction (5 decisions of temporary exclusion, 1 expulsion, 1 warning)</p> <p>7 rejected</p>	<p><b>0</b> appeals against a pupil's disciplinary sanction</p>
<p><b>0</b> appeals concerning payment of the school fees</p>	<p><b>1</b> appeal (referral) concerning payment of the school fees</p> <p>1 pending decision</p>
<p><b>1</b> appeal against a decision of the Board of Governors</p> <p>1 rejected</p>	<p><b>1</b> appeal against a decision of the Board of Governors</p> <p>1 rejected</p>
<p><b>3</b> appeals not falling into any of the above categories</p> <p>3 rejected</p>	<p><b>4</b> appeals (of which 2 in referral) not falling into any of the above categories</p> <p>2 rejected (the 2 referrals) – 2 pending decision</p>
<p><b>TOTAL: 110</b></p>	<p><b>TOTAL<sup>1</sup>: 48 (of which 3 referrals)</b></p>

### State of play and future perspectives

In 2023, two decisions of the Complaints Board were particularly awaited, namely:

- that as to what should be done about the 'coronavirus bonus' paid out to German seconded staff, who were contesting the fact that it was taken into account for the purposes of calculation of their European supplement;

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<sup>1</sup> This number may not correspond perfectly to that presented by the Complaints Board in its annual report due to a data lag between one year and the next.



- and that on the administrative appeal initiated by Interparents and eight Parents' Associations, seeking annulment of the decision of the Board of Governors amending Articles 5, 14, 15, 35 and 38 of the General Rules.

These two decisions were issued on 22 September 2023 in the context of the appeals registered, respectively, under numbers 22/64 and 23/03. In the first case, the Complaints Board validated the case presented by the Schools according to which the exceptional payment linked to the coronavirus pandemic constituted one of the elements of remuneration to be taken into account and therefore part of '*national emoluments*' within the meaning of Article 49.2.b of the Regulations.

In the second case, the Complaints Board responded point by point to the applicants' argumentation and confirmed the organisational power of the Board of Governors to add provisions to the General Rules aimed at clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Schools themselves and of other operators offering services on the Schools' premises.

The Complaints Board ruled, moreover, that the changes made did not contravene either the principles of legal certainty and legitimate expectations or the principles of good administration and proportionality, nor were they the result of a manifest error of assessment.

These two decisions, in addition to the clarification that they bring, reassure the European Schools of their approach and are a gauge of legal certainty for the future. The second, especially, validates the existing legal framework for safety and security, making this framework a solid legal basis for managing and developing relations between the Schools and the Parents' Associations.

Finally, by way of a general observation, we will note that the legal workload was significant in 2023 and that the outlook indicates similar future challenges. One can therefore only celebrate the recruitment of two new lawyers in the first quarter of 2023.

The first was hired to replace the Legal Assistant who left the Office of the Secretary-General at the end of 2023, who had been working full-time hours distributed equally between the Human Resources Unit and the Legal Department. It was decided, for operational reasons, that their replacement would be assigned uniquely to the Human Resources Unit. The second Assistant was initially hired to boost the Legal Department but also offers her support to the Human Resources Unit, whose needs for legal expertise are very high.

## Achievement of 2023 objectives

### Objectives common with the Schools

<b>Specific objective 1</b>	<b>Budget: Limit the budgetary surplus of 2023 to max 1.0% of the total ES budget (final adopted budget) - accepting exceptionally a surplus of 1.3% for specific schools if the overall surplus is below 1%.</b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Provide proper analysis of Budget implementation projections in July 2023</li> <li>– Provide realistic assessment of budgetary needs for Amending Budget in September 2023</li> <li>– Ensure close monitoring of budget implementation up to the end of 2023, including carry forward to 2024</li> </ul>
Achievements	Above mentioned steps were thoroughly done.
Results of Performance indicator(s)	Budget implementation equals 98.65% (Adopted budget 18.470.269 vs Actuals 18.221.605) and is therewith just over 1.3%.
Further necessary steps	<p>Maintain awareness on budgetary orthodoxy as a golden rule towards the organization.</p> <p>Provide detailed analysis/reporting to the different budget owners offering the dedicated tools to an optimized budget follow up.</p>

<b>Specific objective 2</b>	<b>Procurement: Monitoring of procurement contracts not compliant with the procurement rules (&gt; 1 year)</b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Maintain an updated list of procurement contracts with action plans</li> <li>– Submit to Internal Control</li> <li>– Follow-up the implementation of the action plan</li> </ul>
Achievements	<p>The list of contracts is still in use and continuously updated.</p> <p>In 2022 there were 2 contracts not compliant with the procurement rules (SMS Myschool and Isabel)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SMS Myschool: the contract was extended for a period of 3 years (based on a decision and timeline approved by the Board of Governors)</li> <li>- Isabel, a contract was awarded following the procurement rules in 2023</li> </ul>
Results of Performance Indicator(s)	In 2023, there are no other contracts which are not compliant with the procurement rules

Further necessary steps	Our prioritised procurement agenda takes the contracts list into account. This list also takes into account the end dates of contracts in order to be able to relaunch contracts in time
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<b>Specific objective 3</b>	<b>Fixed asset accounting: Ensure rigorous application of fixed asset accounting rules</b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure that the capitalization threshold used for each item and group of assets is correctly applied.</li> <li>– For ICT equipment: set up an annual reporting channel between the member of staff responsible for ICT and the Local Accounting Correspondent.</li> <li>– Ensure that a complete physical check of the fixed assets recorded in the inventory is carried out, at least every 3 years, and in accordance with the new model distributed in December 2021 (Guidelines on the physical verification process of the inventory, ref: 2021-12-D-38).</li> </ul>
Achievements	<p>Regarding fixed asset accounting, the review of the 2022 accounts carried out in 2023 by the European Court of Auditors, was not subject to any comments and did not reveal any errors in the application of accounting rules related to the recognition of fixed assets and the capitalization threshold to be applied.</p> <p>For ICT equipment, specific instructions have been shared by the Central Accounting Unit regarding the partial review of IT equipment to be carried out at each closing. A physical review of IT equipment was performed by the OSG during the first quarter of 2023.</p> <p>A complete physical check of the fixed assets recorded in the inventory was performed by the OSG in accordance with the new Guidelines distributed in December 2021 by the Central Accounting unit. In this context, a copy of the signed certification letter and the supporting documents have been sent to the Central Accounting Officer in September 2023.</p>
Further necessary steps	<p>In order to facilitate the accounting and maintenance of the inventory of IT equipment, an internal restructuring of certain related tasks will be implemented from February 2024.</p> <p>In this context, goods (i.e. IT equipment) will in future be received by the IT Unit and the creation of purchase orders linked to IT Unit purchases will be carried out by the secretary of the IT Unit, thus reducing the risk of error. Specific accounting training was given by the Central Accounting Unit in early 2024 to the people concerned in the IT Unit.</p>

<b>Specific objective 4</b>	<b>Safety and Security: Implementation of remaining IAS recommendations on the governance of security (continued from 2022)</b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Finalization of the security policy for the ES system.</li> <li>– Preparation of video surveillance and AMOK policy for the ES system.</li> <li>– Implementation of the access management policy in the OSG.</li> <li>– Training of the management of the OSG concerning their roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Finalization of the Physical Security Policy and the Amok Policy for the ES system.</li> <li>– Implementation of the Physical Security Policy in the OSG.</li> <li>– Training of the management of the OSG and the schools concerning their role and responsibilities in terms of managing psycho-social risks.</li> </ul>
Further necessary steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Training of the management of the OSG concerning their role and responsibilities in the field of occupational health.</li> <li>– Implementation of the modified access procedures linked to the installation of a new access control system at the OSG.</li> </ul>

## A. Objectives of different units

Specific objective 1	<b><u>Increase the Attractiveness of the European School system for teaching staff (continued from 2021)</u></b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Analyze the feedback received at Board of Governors meeting in April 2022.</li> <li>– Develop and present proposals that can be presented for Board of Governors approval in April 2024 for members of teaching staff linked to the recognition of relevant job experience of locally recruited teachers and the wage disparity between the nursery/primary cycle and the secondary cycle.</li> <li>– Foresee the entry into force of potential measures as of the 2023/24 school year.</li> <li>– Professional development: offer training courses with a focus on practical matters (form of workshops).</li> <li>– Harmonize rules across the ES system: the interpretation of certain rules in the Staff Regulations and Memoranda sometimes varies greatly from one ES to another: a harmonisation of these interpretations is necessary to ensure equal treatment of all Teaching staff (e.g. among these, the system of reimbursements of transportation costs from home to the place of work for all teachers).</li> </ul>
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Given the structural differences in the educational systems amongst the members states, a proposal was submitted in 2021 to the Board of Governors but it was rejected. In addition, regardless of the approach, the budgetary implications were too important to support the project. Since then, discussions in Working Group LRT have been on hold.</li> <li>- Two online sessions of 25 hours each were organized by the Pedagogical Development Unit: one course with practical guidance on 'Inclusion and Accessibility" for ES and AES teaching staff (circa 500 participants) and one course with practical activities on 'Universal Design for Learning' for ES teaching staff (40 participants). In addition, ten webinars for teachers dedicated to teaching methods and tools were organized with internal and external stakeholders.</li> <li>- Frequent discussions are organized between the OSG and the Schools concerning a concrete and harmonized implementation of rules/Memoranda within the ES system.</li> <li>- During these exchanges of points of view, it has been pointed out that the implementation of the common HR digital platform could solve many issues in this area.</li> <li>- The reimbursement of transportation costs from home to the place of work for all teachers has been discussed several times at the Joint Working Group (LRT/Seconded), but the draft projects were systematically rejected by the European Commission representative.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A project of simplification of the calculation method for removal expenses for teaching staff was approved by the Board of Governors in April 2023 and will enter into force on 1 January 2024.</li> </ul>
Further necessary steps	

<b>Specific objective 2</b>	<b>Increase the Attractiveness of the European School system for administrative staff (continued from previous 2 years)</b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow-up and implementation of the decision of the Board of Governors taken in December 2022 with respect to the recognition of seniority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Provided the necessary means are approved by the Board of Governors in April 2023, grant one additional step on 1 January 2024 to staff members who were in the Annex 2 category prior to the reform of 2019.</li> <li>o One year later, provided the necessary means are approved by the Board of Governors, grant one additional step on 1 January 2025 to the staff members who were in the Annex 2 category prior to the reform of 2019 and one step to staff members in the Annex 3 category</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Achievements	Following the approval of the necessary means by the Board of Governors in April 2023, an additional step was granted to staff members concerned by Annex 2 category prior to the 2019 reform.
Further necessary steps	Make a request at the Board of Governors meeting in April 2024 for additional means to execute the second part of the decision of December 2022 by granting one step to staff members concerned by Annex 3 category.

<b>Specific objective 3</b>	<b><u>Simplification: Prepare for the implementation of an HR platform (&gt;2023)</u></b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyze in detail HR processes that should be digitalized in the future.</li> <li>- Develop harmonized processes across the ES system, take in consideration the proposals of the Simplification HR sub-working group.</li> <li>- Perform tender procedure.</li> <li>- Develop harmonized templates for the different HR subprocesses.</li> <li>- Ensure all Schools are taken on board and legal aspects of host countries are reflected.</li> <li>- Prepare pilot phase to start at the beginning of 2024 (design processes and developments), if financial resources are available.</li> </ul>

Achievements	<p>The project team was formed in 2023, led by the HoU HR and is made up of a mix of staff from the OSG and from the two pilot schools (Ixelles and Bergen) designated for this project.</p> <p>The HR processes were analysed in detail (organisation of workshops, design of flowcharts) to identify the parts that could be digitalised and included in the future HR platform.</p> <p>Based on these analyses, the technical and administrative specifications were drafted and discussed with the pilot school/all the schools on several occasions. Furthermore, demos were organised with potential service providers in order to better understand the existing possibilities on the market.</p> <p>The tender was drafted and the technical specifications were taken into account. The tender was submitted to the members of the project team and the OSG's DPO for review.</p>
Further necessary steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalization, publication, and follow-up of the tender.</li> <li>• Preparation for the implementation of the HR platform (gather templates, scan HR files).</li> </ul>

<b>Specific objective 4</b>	<b><u>Simplification: Start the implementation of the approved measures of the Budget sub-Working Group (&gt;2023)</u></b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Centralisation of the payroll of seconded staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Start the creation of a central payroll team for seconded staff</li> <li>○ Widen access to TaxBox to seconded staff</li> <li>○ Develop concrete plans for the relocation of staff/posts to the OSG to perform this process</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Centralisation of the invoicing to third parties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop a project plan for the centralisation of invoicing (analysis of the work needed to adapt modules in SAP accordingly)</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Procurement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reinforcement of the OSG procurement team by allocating posts from the schools to the OSG via internal recruitments</li> <li>○ Digitalisation of procurement procedures by deployment of the EU COMs IT solution (Public Procurement Management Tool - PPMT)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralization of the payroll of seconded staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ First discussion about the concrete process have been started, but will only be implemented after the implementation of the HR platform.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>The tool is needed to facilitate the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralisation of the invoicing to third parties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The project plan has been developed and works on the necessary design of the process in SAP have been started.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Procurement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Cooperation with the European Commission has been continued to implement the Public Procurement Management Tool</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Further necessary steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralisation of payroll: After implementation of HR platform</li> <li>- Centralisation of invoicing: SAP to be prepared in 2024 for an implementation in 2025</li> <li>- Procurement: As soon as PPMT is in place, the process of dedeploement of posts to the OSG will be started.</li> </ul>

<b>Specific objective 5</b>	<p><b>Finalisation of re-organisation of governance:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Clean-up of master data in SAP</b></li> <li>2. <b>Validation of accounting system</b></li> </ol> <p>Continued from 2022</p>
Achievements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Clean-up master data in SAP</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A first draft of the master data management policy was made but will need further changes.</li> <li>- No further progress was achieved on the clean-up of the three different categories of master data. The clean-up of the vendor master data was finalised in 2022.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <u>Validation of accounting system</u> <p>Regarding validation of accounting systems, powerful SAP profiles were checked in mid 2023 for the full year 2022, to ensure no unauthorized actions had been performed during the course of the year. All sensitive activities were reviewed and justified by the internal control department for appropriateness. This review process was further validated externally by PWC, which confirmed that the assessment had been correctly performed.</p> <p>Separately, at the end of 2023, the European Schools began a validation of the SAP HCM system (seconded staff) with the purpose of reviewing the accounting treatment of calculated payroll amounts. Completion of this review, which is being conducted by PWC, is expected during the first quarter of 2024.</p> </li> </ol>



Further necessary steps	<p><u>Clean-up master data in SAP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finalise the master data management policy.</li> <li>- Continue cleaning up the various master data categories.</li> </ul> <p><u>Validation of accounting system</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete the process of validating the accounting treatment by HCM.</li> <li>- Consideration is to be given to performing an additional review of powerful SAP profiles.</li> </ul>
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<b>Specific objective 6</b>	<b><u>Implement procurement priorities in full compliance with the Financial Regulation</u></b>
Main steps	<p>The following main call for tenders shall be performed and assigned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SMS Myschool Basic (&gt;2023)</li> <li>- SMS Myschool Invoicing (to be decided if a contract is needed or inhouse development)</li> <li>- Online-correction</li> <li>- Cleaning</li> <li>- Gardening</li> <li>- School furniture</li> <li>- HR tool</li> <li>- Cabling data room</li> <li>- Secondary school material</li> </ul>
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SMS Myschool Basic (&gt;2023): the contract was extended for a period of 3 years (based on a decision and timeline approved by the Board of Governors)</li> <li>- SMS Myschool Invoicing: ongoing, FWC from the European Commission</li> <li>- Online-correction: awarded in 2023</li> <li>- Cleaning: awarded in 2023</li> <li>- Gardening : ongoing, tender to be published in February 2024 (end of current contract 10/2024)</li> <li>- School furniture: awarded in 2023</li> <li>- HR tool: ongoing, tender to be published in Q1 2024</li> <li>- Cabling data room: awarded in 2023</li> <li>- Secondary school material: will be globalized with the tender 'primary school material' which will be launched in 2024</li> </ul>

Performance Indicator(s)	– <i>Number of calls for prioritised tenders completed</i> 4 (+ SMS Myschool Basic and SMS Myschool Invoicing: no tender needed).
Further necessary steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gardening: tender specifications are at the finalization phase</li> <li>- HR Tool: tender specifications are at the finalization phase</li> <li>- Secondary school material: drafting of the specifications will start with the renewal of the Primary school material tender (end of 2024)</li> </ul>

## B. Objectives related to the AES

<b>Specific objective Accredited European Schools</b>	<b>Improve quality of accreditation and audit process</b>
Main steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training/information session for the AES management related to the audits</li> <li>• Regular analysis of the audit recommendations and feedback provided to schools (via a general Audits report)</li> </ul>
Achievements	<p>A training session was run, in May 2023, for the AES management involved in the Autumn audits. In view of the large number (17) of audits carried out in Autumn 2023, the training session was essential to improve the efficiency of the audit process. The training tools were shared, post-training session, with the Directors using the AES Management TEAM so that they could be consulted throughout the audit process.</p> <p>A general audit report, 2023-03-D-8-en-1, was prepared and shared with all the Accredited European Schools. The report highlights the areas where schools are doing well and those areas where the most recommendations are found. The report also provides suggestions to schools on how to avoid repeat recommendations and how to properly prepare for the audit.</p>
Further necessary steps	<p>The annual training sessions for the AES audits, given to experts, audits and inspectors will be maintained in a continued push for ever more efficient and productive audits.</p> <p>Schools will be encouraged to update their dossiers of conformity, where necessary, so that they are more in line with current practices and to reduce the number of repeat recommendations made by audit teams in this area.</p> <p>The AES Working Group is suggesting changes to the audit process. Resources will need to be developed in line with the recommendations.</p>

## 6. Financial Management and internal control

### A. Set-up of the Financial Management System

#### SAP Accounting System

With respect to the SAP accounting software, the following was achieved in 2023:

- SAP was set up to manage budgetary school trips: the profit centers are now also used for expenses, which enable the profitability of each individual school trips to be determined.
- FM was reviewed to correct the remaining rare cases of budget availability control issues.
- The automatic accounting postings from HCM were enhanced (management of the seconded staff members salary) for a better follow-up of the debts, reserves, loans and reimbursements from seconded staff members.
- A new workflow was developed to ensure that no document can lead to payment without proper validation from Verificator and Authorizing officer.
- The 'Enhanced Invoicing Process' project was initiated. In general, it aims to migrate the invoicing functionalities from SMS to SAP.
- The quarterly audit review was systematized.
- 1285 tickets (requests for support) were processed.

#### Segregation of duties(SOD)

The 2023 updated version of the memorandum on segregation of duties initially issued by the Secretary-General in 2018 was applied. All changes to the table of segregation of duties were communicated to the Internal Control Capability Unit who approved them prior to putting the changes into production in SAP.

The SOD table was also updated together with the guidance in October 2023. This update was mainly aimed at solving the issue of LAOC backup, having the right to access and amend employee master data when acting as salary initiator and, more specifically, IBAN references. In this context, the SAP system was configured to avoid such issues, and the SOD table was updated accordingly.

The SOD table of the Office of the Secretary-General is fully compliant with segregation of duties.

#### Payments and online banking system

The SAP system is linked to the ISABEL online banking system. All payments (except direct-debited bank charges and Isabel fees) are initiated in SAP and automatically sent to the online banking system, where two employees, who are authorised to sign, release them (signature 1: Office of the Secretary-General Accounting Officer Correspondent/back-up of the Office of the Secretary-General's Accounting Officer Correspondent; signature 2: the Central Accounting Officer or their team).

## Ex-ante control

Each financial transaction is subject to at least one ex-ante control at school/OSG level. After registration by the initiator, all transactions are submitted via workflow to the Verificator for ex-ante control (four-eyes principle) and subsequently to the Authorising Officer for approval (six-eyes principle).

## Simplified model

The SAP system offers the option to delegate from the Authorising Officer to the Verificator (simplified model of segregation of duties). The workflow ends with a check of the Verificator (four-eyes instead of the usual six-eyes principle). A prerequisite for the use of the simplified model is a risk assessment and an act of sub-delegation.

The Office of the Secretary-General made use of the simplified model for the following transactions:

- Authorise fund precommitments up to the limit of €5,000;
- Authorise purchase contracts up to the limit of €5,000;
- Authorise purchase orders up to the limit of €5,000;
- Authorise FI Invoices up to the limit of €5,000;
- Authorise MIRO Invoices up to the limit of €5,000.

The delegations remain valid until they are expressly amended or revoked, or until the delegate ceases to perform their duties.

## Delegation of the Authorizing Officer by delegation and by subdelegation (art. 30.1 et 30.2 FR 2020)

The Secretary-General of the European Schools, Mr Andreas Beckmann, delegated his powers as Authorising Officer for implementation of the budget to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General delegated his powers as Authorising Officer by delegation to the Head of the Human Resources Unit and the Executive Coordinator. They were Authorising Officers by subdelegation for the following transaction types:

Authorisation of commitments of expenditure, and validation and authorisation of expenditure for an unlimited amount for all items and articles of the section “Office of the Secretary-General” of the Budget. The Authorising Officers were more specifically empowered to:

- Authorise budget documents in SAP for an unlimited amount;
- Authorise funds precommitments for an unlimited amount;
- Authorise purchase contracts for an unlimited amount;

- Authorise purchase orders for an unlimited amount;
- Authorise FI Invoices in SAP for an unlimited amount;
- Authorise MIRO Invoices in SAP for an unlimited amount;
- Authorise salary postings in SAP for an unlimited amount;
- Establish sales orders and recovery orders for all items and articles in the “Office of the Secretary-General” section of the Budget, for an unlimited amount;
- Authorise the deletion of assets;
- Authorise Employee Master Data in SAP.

The delegations remain valid until they are expressly amended or revoked, or until the delegate ceases to perform their duties.

## **B. Summary conclusion of the assessment of the implementation of the internal control system**

The assessment of the Internal Control Standards reveals that the standards have been met up to an average level with no standard assessed as red (assessment of standards: 10/16 green, 6/16 yellow and 0/16 red).

Nevertheless, the following weaknesses have been detected:

- Mission and values: there is a need to update the mission, principles and objectives of the ESS in the form of a new ‘ESS charter’.
- Procedures: further improvement of IT System documentation at the OSG including policies, procedures.
- Mail and document management: the document management policy and archiving policy need to be finalized.
- Audits: lack of implementation of audit recommendations within foreseen deadlines.
- Continuity of operations: absence of a business continuity plan.
- Assessment of the compliance with ICS: lack of remediation of identified weaknesses within foreseen deadlines.

## **C. Register of exceptions**

The OSG registered six exceptions in 2023 related to non-compliances with rules, regulations and procedures in the areas of accounting, procurement and payment. The six exceptions had a financial impact amounting to a total of €8,869.

Three exceptions were linked to accounting non-compliances. Non-compliances with financial regulations were due to receiving late invoices for services provided in 2021 and 2022. Moreover, there was one exception for the mass scrapping of fixed assets.

Two exceptions were related to procurement. In one case, the OSG ordered an IT license from a vendor based outside the European Union, and in the other case, it signed a contract with a vendor without a call for a tender.

Finally, one payment-related exception was reported because an invoice was paid without payment request and purchase order.

## D. Risk management

The European Schools' main risks and their evolution during 2023 are shown in the following table:

European Schools' system risks	Assessment Feb 2023	Assessment Oct 2023	Explanation
Unfilled secondment positions (for teachers)	16	16	The risk has not changed in 2023 because the cost-sharing agreement, which foresees more needs-based language coefficients (FR, EN, DE but also ES, IT, GR, NL), will enter into force in school year 2024/25 and show its effects only thereafter.
Difficulties in retaining and recruiting highly qualified and specialized AAS (ICT)	20	16	The risk has decreased in 2023 because of the stability noted in the Development cell. However, the risk remains significant considering, on the one hand, the difficulties in attracting experienced ICT staff with the conditions that we can offer and, on the other hand, the high demand for these types of profiles.
Dependence on small number of IT experts	6	6	The situation remains challenging in the System cell (recruitment of System engineers).
Follow-up of audit recommendations and conclusions not as thorough as necessary in the AES	8	8	The AES Working Group has started to work on ideas to improve the quality assurance process. However, at present, it is too early to establish whether concrete improvements will be made.
Proper recognition in the member states of the new marking system	4	4	Mitigating measures in form of discussions with Member States are still ongoing, but the risk 'Lack of correct implementation of the new marking system' remains unchanged since its last assessment, particular because of legal procedures continuing in two Member States.

Insufficient availability of some inspectors in the System	12	12	This new risk was identified in 2023 because certain inspectors cannot devote the necessary time to the system of the European Schools. Also, some inspectors left the System without following existing procedures. This has led to an uneven distribution of tasks and some contributors being overloaded as well as a lack of decision making or availability of information.
Fifth School in Brussels (expected to open in 2019) will not be available before 2028	20	20	<p>The site opened in Evere will be fully occupied in 2026.</p> <p>The current planning of the fifth school is confirmed for 2028 by the “Régie des Bâtiments” and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister.</p> <p>This will lead to a mismatch between the capacity needed and the capacity available for at least 2 years.</p> <p>Hybrid solutions are foreseen in the future but further discussions are needed.</p>
Cyber attack	20	20	<p>The increased use of digital tools has created opportunities for hackers and the development of ransomware attacks.</p> <p>Reinforcement of information technology security is ongoing but further improvements are needed.</p>
Critical system failure	6	6	The decrease of critical IT incidents is not sufficient to reduce the risk and the efforts to implement the infrastructure reinforcement plans, the new IT incident management policy and the new monitoring solution will be continued.

The OSG updates the risks in February and October.

## 7. Results of external and internal audits

### A. Audits by the Internal Audit Service (IAS)

In 2023, the IAS approved the implementation of the following four recommendations that were marked “ready for review”:

- Appointment of examining board members, experts, and members of staff – very important
- Processes and procedures for planning, organising, and reporting on the annual European Bacculaureate session (EB) – important.
- Ethics arrangements over the European Bacculaureate – Very Important.
- Roles, responsibilities, and tasks on security and/or safety at central and local level – Important.

The critical recommendation related to roles and responsibilities of the Parents’ association on security remained open. However, progress has been made to implement the pending actions, mainly the amendments of the General Rules and the signature of conventions in some schools. The recommendation has again been set as “ready for review”.

Significant efforts were also made to fully implement the related recommendation “Roles and responsibilities of the safety and security committees” and it was also marked as “ready for review”.

With this, seven recommendations remain open at the end of 2023:

- Legal advice on the applicable laws and local rules concerning security – Important (original implementation date 30/06/2018, revised implementation date 30/04/2024): good progress has been made with the finalization and issuance of the memorandum on AMOK and lockdown policy. The development of the CCTV policy has started but is still ongoing with new resources.
- Internal repository of documents and underlying document management policy – Important (original implementation date 31/12/2018, revised implementation date 31/07/2024): the process of drafting the guidelines for the creation of documents, including type specific templates, and an overarching document management policy have started. Limited resources impede the progress on this recommendation.
- Information / IT Security – Very important (original implementation date 31/07/2023, revised implementation date 30/06/2024): progress has been made in the finalization of the IT/physical security risk assessment on the European Bacculaureate process. The next steps foreseen aim to: (a) Finalize the draft guidance document related to the preparation of the exam proposal and instructions on the handling of sensitive EB documents; (b) Review and finalization of the four eye-principle guidelines.
- Data and School Management System (SMS) supporting the EB organisation in all schools – Important (original implementation date 31/12/2023, revised implementation date 31/12/2024): in April 2023, the Board of Governors (Board of Governors) approved the proposals for the project with regard to the prolongation of and gradual replacement of the MySchool Management System software: - Extend the current contract with SMS for three more years; - implement a gradual replacement of the functionalities in SMS during that period; - replace the core system at the end of the extended contractual period.



The SMS replacement project has started. Among the sub-projects, the development and introduction of a new BAC exam solution is foreseen which is estimated to be finalized in 2026. Due to the extension decision taken by the Board of Governors, the implementation of the recommendation will take more time than previously envisaged.

- IT governance supporting practices – Very important (implementation date 31/12/2024): The recommendation has seven sub-action plans. The implementation of the recommendation is in progress, and the following actions have been taken:
  - o A Business case template was shared with schools/OSG and is accessible on a dedicated SharePoint; training courses on PM2 have been organized.
  - o The list of benefits baselines has been established and will be part of the IT Project Management Policy.
  - o A template to define the Total Costs of Ownership has been defined and shared with the OSG.
- IT security governance – Very important (implementation date 31/07/2025): this recommendation has five sub-action plans. The following actions have been implemented:
  - o The identification of major IT systems has been carried out.
  - o Negotiations have been started with CERT-EU and the “zero trust” approach has been initiated as part of the ICT plan 2023.
  - o The IT asset management has started to be introduced in the OSG and related information has been provided to schools.
- IT risk management – Important (implementation date 31/12/2024): progress has been made in the development of a template with IT risks which was shared with schools. The process of drafting guidelines for IT risk management is still ongoing.

In accordance with the 2023 IAS audit plan, the IAS has started to perform the audit of “the centralized accounting model” and the preliminary phase was finalized in 2023. The objective of the audit is to assess whether the roles and responsibilities and underlying processes of the Central Accounting Officer and Local Accounting Officers (i.e. correspondents) of the European Schools are adequately designed and efficiently and effectively implemented. The result of this audit is expected before the summer 2024.

## B. Audit by the Court of Auditors (ECA)

In 2023, the ECA performed a review of the accounts and internal control systems (in the areas of recruitment, procurement, payments and revenues) of the ES Frankfurt, ES Luxembourg I and the OSG, as well as a review of the consolidated accounts for 2022.

The ECA did not identify any material errors in the final consolidated financial statements for 2022 and noted that the Central Accounting Officer had not issued a reservation for the consolidated Financial Statements. It also noted that six out of the seven Schools (Alicante, Brussels I, Brussels II, Brussels III, Brussels IV and Karlsruhe) that were audited by the external auditor Deloitte obtained an unqualified audit opinion, meaning that the accounts provided a true and fair view of the financial situation of the corresponding School. Deloitte qualified its opinion in its 2022 audit report for the School of Munich as it was unable to issue a conclusion on the accuracy of the material amounts of debts outstanding to Member States for the reimbursement of seconded staff's national salaries.

In the area of accounting, the Court raised the need to align the yearly specific contracts of the external auditor and the framework contract by 2026.

In the internal control systems of the OSG and of the two Schools selected, the Court found some shortcomings as regards their recruitment (although no new recommendation was raised in this area), procurement, payment and revenue procedures, where recommendations were issued:

- In Procurement procedures, some weaknesses remained, in particular related to inappropriate or a lack of procurement procedures (use of outdated contracts) and non-compliance with the implementation of the procurement procedures (estimated value not published, missing signatures on absence of conflict of interest, or evaluation report). As a result, the Court recommended launching calls for tenders as soon as possible, to remedy or prevent any cases without or with inappropriate procurement procedures.
- In Payments, it mentioned that weaknesses continue to exist in relation to the monitoring of open vendor items and to missing supporting documents for payments to seconded staff. The Court therefore recommended improving the reporting and the availability of supporting documents.
- Finally, as ex-post controls performed since 2020 had not covered Revenues, it recommended ensuring that the annual plan for the Internal Control Capability's ex-post controls for 2024 include controls on revenue.

In its replies, the OSG and the Schools committed to working immediately on the weaknesses identified and pointed out that in certain areas this work has already been started.

In December 2023, the ECA announced an update of their approach including a yearly review of all schools that are not in the scope of the external financial auditor (so six instead of two schools/year will be in the scope), which will be applied as of 2024.

# DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE OF THE AUTHORISING OFFICER BY DELEGATION

article 33 FR 2020

I, the undersigned, **Manuel BORDOY**,  
Deputy-Secretary General of the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools,  
in my capacity as **AUTHORISING OFFICER BY DELEGATION IN 2023**,

- declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view<sup>2</sup>;
- state that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guaranties concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

The reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment of the implementation of the internal control standards, results of ex-ante and ex-post controls, the observations of the Head of the Internal Control Capability unit, the observations of the Internal Audit Services and the lessons learnt from the Court of Auditors and other external auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration;

- confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interest of the Office.



(signature)  
Brussels, 16.02.2024

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<sup>2</sup> True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view of the state of affairs in the Office.