

INTERPARENTS Meetings at the European School, Brussels I, UCCLE 3–4 October 2011¹

INTERPARENTS met at the Brussels European School on Monday afternoon, 3 October 2011 and all day Tuesday 4 October 2011. Thirteen of the 14 member Parents Associations were represented (Brussels III absent). Chair: Ana Gorey, President of Interparents. [Alumni Europaea](#) gave a presentation of new pupils network.

Latest developments: The UK hold the presidency; Mr. Kivenen will replace Mme. Christmann when she retires in December 2011 and a new Deputy Secretary General needs to be elected; the Ombudsman has written to the Commission on two of our allegations (lack of legal authority, non-conformity with the BoG decision and contrary to the legal certainty) while those concerning the Board of Governors are not within their remit; Mr. Cavada's report on "European schooling" was adopted on the 27 September 2011; the Petitions Committee have written to the Commission for explanations as to why parents so upset; the Budget Committee have maintained the Schools budget request but made cuts to the sum earmarked for the Type II schools pro-rata rate; an informal network for Type II and III schools was established at Bad Vilbel with a rotating presidency held by a school director assisted by Karin van Vrede; Interparents would join European Parents Association (EPA); GUDEE continues to follow ES progress closely and produces a newsletter "European Education"; the trade unions wish to continue already good collaboration enhanced during Action Day; MEET needs to clarify specific aim of Citizen's Initiative so as to broaden cooperation with others.

Top priorities and school news: fees and categories; small sections; overcrowding; 5th school; missing teachers; mother-tongue teaching; reduced hours for decharges; lack of options although some maintained with horizontal, vertical merges, reduced sizes and free "study" hours; budget cuts (maintenance, delayed investment); Luxembourg + Brussels IV transition new sites; need for mobility plan; phasing out of Culham, French section walkout; non-entitled SWALS; Karlsruhe 50th; policies such as health and safety, child protection, bullying...

The main point on the agenda was the preparation of the **Joint Teaching Committee on the 4 and 5 October 2011** where the issues were: reports by Slovak presidency, common general framework for team inspections in the European schools, new structure for all syllabuses, managerial staff in the European schools, measures to combat school failure of repeat rates, external evaluation of competences acquired by pupils (piza), assessment policy and its implementation, learning support, career guidance, quality assurance for the successful integration of swals and libraries. Interparents deplored the extensive use of oral reporting instead of documentation on issues such as SEN, SWALS and LS, in-service training courses, creation of the Language WG and the 2011 Bac report.

Reform of the BAC – the original goals were to: propose simpler arrangements for organisation of the examination; cut costs without jeopardising the Baccalaureate's quality; review and revise the examination's content and organisation, so that it meets the current requirements of the Universities and to take steps to publicise the certificate more widely and to make it more easily accessible. However, the last two have yet to be broached and several loose ends need to be tied up with regard to the ECTS and the transversal project (of 6 pilot schools non from Brussels or Luxembourg).

Interparents also discussed improvements to working methods, working groups, meeting schedules and financial procedures. Next meetings are: Frankfurt, 4-5 December 2011, where Sunday session will be an indepth analysis and strategy discussion of the Cavada Report and our General Assembly on the 6+7 February 2012.

Rapporteur: Ana Gorey.

N.B. This Webreport is issued for quick information of the member Associations under the responsibility of the Chair. It is not the Minutes of the meeting which will follow in due course after being approved by the participants.

Initial statement for JTC – October 2011

We would like to thank the Presidency for giving Interparents the floor and although many Committee members might be forgiven for thinking this is becoming an unfortunate habit of ours to intervene at the beginning of each meeting, a sort of "point of order" rather like Bartleby in Melville's short story, lamentably, the way things were managed last year and are being managed so far give us no alternative.

We're increasingly worried about the role of this Committee. We feel more and more, that papers, documents, decisions are being taken away from this body, that the Joint Teaching Committee is being skipped over, pedagogical discussions simply ignored. This is partially the consequence of the "budgetization" - reducing everything to the bottom line - but more importantly it reflects a way of working designed to make it more and more difficult for us to really contribute.

There are many examples, but in the interests of brevity, we will highlight but a few. The first example we all know, the now famous Document 33 on "the revision of BoG decisions concerning the organization of studies and courses", presented to this Committee last February, subjected to intense criticism not only from the parents' side, but also from many delegations and declared unacceptable, to the point that even our always very diplomatic minutes state: "Le CPM prend note du document et n'est pas en faveur de celui-ci". The rejected document was subsequently radically changed, sent to the Budgetary Committee, which also rejected it and then, as if with a life of its own, it went on to the BoG where it was approved despite a long critical discussion and without the prior adoption of the JTC who, in fact, never had a thorough discussion on the second (or third, or sixth) version, and never, ever approved it. In our view, this is a very dangerous way of proceeding and makes a mockery of the core functions of this Committee and the value of its deliberations.

There are also documents which completely bypass this Committee going directly to the BC. We have at least two points on the BC agenda, upon which the Joint Teaching Committee would doubtlessly have liked to have been consulted. We refer in particular to the "analysis of the linguistic structure of Brussels schools" and to the "simulation about the repercussions of reducing pupils from 30 to 28": these are not mere budgetary and pedagogically irrelevant points, and it would have appropriate to also discuss them here, maybe reinstating, let's say it by the way, a 2-day-duration of our works. Needless to say, if a document is not presented at the JTC, it goes to the BC to be discussed and approved of simply from a budgetary point of view and put on the BoG agenda as a written communication. In this way, this particular document will be adopted without ever having actually been discussed. This way of working is extremely dangerous, not only because it undermines our credibility and the essence of our existence as a Committee but also because it could be challenged in Court.

Continuing on the subject of written communications, they are the speediest way for a document to go through without objections and we seeing more, and more important, documents being presented as such or worse, being presented in an oral communication (the Bac report?).

It's really a pity for documents like, let's say, the common general framework for team inspections or the new structure for all syllabi. The latter is a subject on which the participation and the input of the whole school community (parents, teachers, directors, deputies, students) should be welcome, contrary to what happens to individual syllabi. Which is why we already ask the Presidency to grant us a further derogation, i.e. give us the floor again to comment very briefly on those two documents.

To finish, let me assure you that Interparents will be vigilant, Interparents invite you all to be vigilant, reconfirm our role here is not in danger of becoming irrelevant and reassure the system that pedagogical points of view are of value and won't be completely forgotten - or maybe just "cut".