

Interparents speech
Board of Governors
Action - 12 April 2011

Today, Interparents does not sit in the Board of Governors alone. Today, every parent sits in the meeting room with them. Every parent and future parent, with their child, or children, attending a European school, is in that room alongside Interparents, watching to see what the Board of Governors decide, to see what sort of schooling their children are going to have when they start school in September 2011. Will there be enough of their classmates choosing Chemistry in French to ensure that it will be a Baccalaureate option? Will that long awaited maths teacher finally be seconded? Will there be too many pupils so they have to split the class or not enough pupils that they have to merge classes? Will their child continue to be considered a SEN pupil and get the 'special educational needs' support they require? How many periods of learning support will there be? Will their child get a place at a European school, and if so, will it be the one near home?

Today, Interparents does not only sit in the meeting room. They also stand alongside every parent outside the meeting room, whether protesting, here or their school, or signing a petition or in an extraordinary general assembly. Today, Interparents speak simultaneously with one voice and many languages to ask the Board of Governors to:

- **Vote no** to decisions with no pedagogical value, aimed at cutting costs at the children's cost. Decisions, which are tantamount to changing the educational offer as defined in the Convention.
- **Vote no** to decisions which will be taken and which will have long-term consequences on the European schooling system as we know it today and as it has functioned for over 50 years.
- **Vote no** to decisions such as: the re-organisation of classes/groups; re-definition of SEN, ONL and SWALS pupils; re-definition of learning support and *rattrapage*.
- **Vote yes** to a well thought through cost reduction proposal across the system which does not affect the educational principles.

Vote no to decisions with no pedagogical value, aimed at cutting costs at the children's cost. Decisions, which in our view, are tantamount to changing the educational offer as defined in the Convention.

Today, we are all watching you, the Board of Governors, representatives of every Member State of the European Union, to see what you decide for our children, our schools and the system as a whole not just for this year but for many years to come. Education cannot be switched on and off like a tap. An option not available this year, means that child's education is fundamentally changed. No special needs education might mean you have to leave the school. You are deciding on all this today without even having made an impact assessment or proposing alternatives to those pupils whose parents, through no fault of their own, have chosen to come to work here, to work towards a better Europe, to work for one of the European institutions. You are deciding on all this today with no plan B, which could be fewer administrative meetings such as these for less representatives or a compromise solution with a planned transition, phase out or sunset clause. Today, we are all watching you, Member States of the European Union represented not only here but in other European Union bodies deciding on European schools and particularly the budget to be allocated, to see what your decisions will mean, first and foremost for those children already in the system and future ones.

Parents speaking with one voice and many languages ask you to rethink, with imagination and enthusiasm, ways to continue the noble idea which parents in 1953 had the imagination and enthusiasm to start, teachers to teach and Member States to enshrine in its own Convention four years later. I admire THAT Europe which, in the aftermath of two world wars, dared not only to dream but to actually implement radical ideas for educating young people to become Europeans and build the foundations of Europe together.

Let us start today a new partnership between parents, teachers and Member States and pursue with imagination and enthusiasm ways to continue, improve and expand our schools. As Androulla Vassiliou said, speaking of the 2010 OECD report *Education at a Glance*, “It confirms the value – I would say the necessity – of investing in education, particularly during the economic downturn. Do not tell us that OUR Europe has not the same courage and vision as the founding fathers who over 50 years believed in children ...

“Educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices, acquainted with all that is great and good in the different cultures, it will be borne in upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe.”

I thank you, parents thank you for your attention.