

## INTERPARENTS

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KARLSRUHE LUXEMBOURG I & II MOL MÜNCHEN VARESE**  
– *THE ASSOCIATION OF THE PARENTS ASSOCIATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS* –

Strasbourg 2 June 2011

Dear Member of the Culture Committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of Interparents, the umbrella association of all the parents associations of the European Schools. In a very short time you will be adopting a report on the future of European Schools and, even more importantly, about the European Education which is at the heart of these schools and at the heart of the European Baccalaureate. In 2002 and 2005 the European Parliament led the way for the opening up of the system but there is still a need for you to indicate what exactly the European Parliament meant by the ‘opening up of the system’, and to give it a much greater, more European vision whilst preserving the existing offer indispensable to all the European Institutions.

With the European schooling system, the European Parliament has a unique opportunity to breathe life into the Lisbon Treaty mandate to create a European dimension in Education, to support the Europe 2020 strategy and flagship initiatives, particularly Youth on the Move and other areas of cooperation in education and training, cultural dimensions, citizenship and participation of young people.

These very principles and objectives were behind the creation of the European Schools by parents and teachers over 50 years ago in the aftermath of the Second World War, its curricula and the European Baccalaureate. <http://www.eursec.eu/index.php?id=132>. The European schooling system is much more than the sum of its schools. It is a 50 year old Convention, an area where Member States have cooperated together on Education matters normally restricted in the national sphere and where they could cooperate further. It is a highly valuable asset for Europe. Increasing numbers of young people arise from multi-cultural environments, bi-lingual families and parents working outside their country of origin. They grow up in more than one Member State and form part of an increasingly mobile and flexible European society.

Better education is important for the future of the EU. Common political goals, such as investment in qualitative education and the importance of collaboration, will create more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market. This will in turn promote their active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity. Nor should we forget the importance of culture for developing children and young people’s creativity and the need to promote the inclusion of all children and young people regardless of their nationality or language, especially those with special educational needs and learning difficulties.

Why look further? European Schools have at their pedagogical heart a multicultural, plurilingual education, aimed at fostering European identity and values. This educational model leads to the attainment of the European Baccalaureate (EB), recognised by all Member States as a secondary qualification with access to higher education. That this type of education has been restricted mainly to EU staff children, is through no fault of their own but due to the previous restrictive regulations and a lack of motivation to promote this asset. See attachment for a few more common misconceptions about European schooling.

On 27 November 2009, EU Youth Ministers met in Brussels to adopt a new framework for EU cooperation in the youth field from 2010 until 2018. At that meeting, Maroš Šefčovič, then Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, said:

*"Our young people are a precious resource for Europe – they are our future, and we owe it to them to prepare them as best as possible for the challenges that await them. Based on the Commission proposal in April this year, on a new EU strategy for youth the Council will adopt on 27 November a new framework for EU cooperation in the youth field which sets the scene for policy collaboration on youth issues for the decade ahead, in the areas that affect young people the most: education, employment, creativity and entrepreneurship, social inclusion, health and sport, civic participation, and volunteering. This is good news for young people; it is good news for Europe's future".*

Today the European Parliament has a unique opportunity to give the impetus needed to move forward and ask Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth to explore the possible development of the European schooling system and the strengthening of the European Baccalaureate with Maroš Šefčovič, now Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration, and in charge of European Schools.

It is also an opportunity for the European Parliament to honour a system, which tries to put into practice what we all want – learning through languages, not language learning – living amongst others with respect, not merely imagining it – lessons for Europeans, not lessons on Europe – teachers exchanging best practice in a school environment, not during a training course. The “European dimension” is not an abstract concept, it is already here in the European Schools, a reality for many children, teachers, parents which it could be for many more.

We remain at your disposition for any further information and look forward to your report and proposals.

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