

Memo JTC October 2019

The Joint Teaching Committee welcomed a number of new members, notably newly installed inspectors from: Cyprus (secondary & primary), Latvia, Hungary, Spain (primary), Germany (secondary), Netherlands, Austria and Romania.

The Secretary General (SG) of the ES began his initial intervention with thanking the outgoing Greek presidency, particularly for achieving the adoption of the objectives for the Annual Plan for the ES system, and for the adoption of the Action Plan on Educational Support.

The incoming **Spanish ES presidency** informally presented its **priorities**. (They have now been published and formally presented to the Budget Committee meeting in November. They are available as Ref.: 2019-10-D-40-en-1.)

Concerning new initiatives, the Spanish presidency wants to focus on:

- Defining the roles and responsibilities in the governance of security in the ES.
- Revising and updating the role and responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General (DSG).
- Embedding and strengthening the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the ES curriculum (harmonisation of S6 tests; introduction of a cross-curricular project in S6-S7; implementation of a harmonised template for teachers' forward planning).
- Reviewing the inspectors' duties, workload and incompatibilities.
- Creating a coherent ICT strategy/policy (revision of present ICT curriculum for both primary and secondary cycles).

In a **Brexit** update, the JTC heard from the DSG that the UK delegation has confirmed that seconded teachers and the two inspectors will stay until at least the end of this school year in any circumstance, and if a Withdrawal Agreement is passed, probably one more school year. OSGES' main worry now is residence arrangements for locally recruited (LRT) UK teachers. The Brexit WG will meet about this and prepare a report for the Board of Governors' (BoG) meeting in December.

An initiative on **Alumni Educational Career Monitoring** had been launched as a pilot project in February 2017 in two schools, Mol and Luxembourg 1, and should now be rolled out to all schools, as the results from the pilot project were not representative. However, the leading OSGES member on this issue warned that the workload involved in such an undertaking might be too forbidding. It was pointed out that just such a study was undertaken in 2008. It was done by a professional company and commissioned as well as financed by the European Parliament. Interparents (IP) expressed their support for the initiative.

The DSG gave a short introduction about a new Working Group he is leading which is concerned with the **ES-wide events**: Eurosports, Science Symposium (ESSS), Arts Symposium (FAMES), Model European Council (MEC) and which started its work in May. "The starting point is about the resources which are not sufficient", he explained.

The chair of the WG on a “**Common Framework for Digital Competence**” (2018-09-D-32-en-1) announced that he seeks the teachers’ input to develop teaching and learning activities. IP expressed their support for the proposed framework, and stressed the importance of a place for digital competence in all ES syllabuses.

The **reports** on the Greek Presidency about the 2018/19 school year (2019-09-D44-en-1) and on the Whole School Inspections of ES Brussels IV (2019-03-D18-en-1) Mol (follow-up, 2019-09-D-23-en-1) and Varese (2019-07-D-1-en-1) were presented.

To the **Report on the implementation of the ‘Pilot Project on Early Identification’**, IP offered the following comments: “While not covering early detection in a broad sense, this report is to be applauded for looking at how to change the context rather than the pupil when trying to tackle challenging behaviour and fostering positive behaviour.” The deputy directors remarked that the resulting booklet could help teachers in the communication with parents but that teachers should be trained accordingly which will require substantial resources.

The WG which produced the yearly report on **school failures and repeat rates** (2019-09-D-25-en-1) announced that a detailed analysis of the report data will be presented at the February 2020 JTC meeting. Interparents welcomed the announcement, adding that “repeating is not a marginal phenomenon. A large part of this population then also leaves the ES system. We should make sure the system has provided support for these students before they leave or are forced to leave the system”.

An initial analysis of **S5 Final Marks data in the context of the New Marking Scale** (NMS) was orally presented by OSGES. It was claimed that “the overall picture is reassuring. Teachers are using the NMS, but questions remain on individual school level. Therefore, we encourage the directors to assess the situation in their school.”

IP remarked that the notion, formulated some years ago, of the NMS very much being a process, rather than something that is finalised on the day of entry into force is playing out clearly now. “We need feedback to the system on the progress. To this end, we suggest the creation of a small set of standard indicators with the help of which any individual school can follow up and compare their own situation with the overall one.” IP offered to suggest such indicators at the next JTC meeting.

IP also reminded OSGES and the inspectors of their responsibility to ensure that Member States (MS) correctly implement the guidelines on the NMS, thanking OSGES in particular for their efforts in that respect. Unfortunately, they do not seem to have had the desired effect.

“We urge all MS that have already modified their conversion tables, in particular Germany, to reassess them as soon as possible in the light of the statistical evidence presented today by OSGES.”

Later in the day, the discussion returned to the NMS, when the update to the **Guidelines for the use of the marking system of the ES** (2017-05-D-29-en-8) was on the agenda. While version 8 of the guidelines offers a final version for now, the DSG remarked that the process as such is at its half-way point and will not be concluded before 2021. Further additions might include a matrix with reference to competences for each written exam and an assessment record sheet for oral exams, it was suggested.

IP welcomed the augmented guidelines for the NMS and called for their effective implementation and for any relevant feedback to be taken into account in adapting them, adding: “there is one aspect that parents strongly feel should be added to this document, in particular for the BAC cycle, namely clear guidelines for the use of the A mark, and which competences should be linked to it, and which ones should be linked to the B mark. We have strong reasons to believe that application of the A mark varies widely, from essentially just reflecting the B mark to a reasonable competence-based application.”

In the meantime, both the report of the chairman of the BAC examining board 2019 (2019-09-D-21-en-1) and the draft report on the **2019 BAC session** (2019-07-D-22-en-1) had been presented. IP commented that from the parents' point of view the last BAC session was positive overall but that there was also room for improvement. IP concurred with comments by the Danish inspector who informally presented the inspectors' report on "Quality assurance of the 2019 European Baccalaureate written and oral examinations" that one weakness to be addressed was a lack of communication between internal and external examiners.

A report on **the evolution of the requests for special arrangements for the BAC cycle 2016-2019** (2019-09-D-30-en-1) was lauded by IP for its factuality and at the same time used as an opportunity to call for a thorough review of special arrangements, "in line with technological developments (tablets replacing laptops, e.g.), as well as of the evolution of regulations on national level". IP also called for a clearer policy on special arrangements in non-exam related situations. The DSG promised to look into it but stressed that any solutions would have to be fair and legally sound.

A new document outlining a **structure for all syllabuses in the system of the ES** (2019-09-D-27-en-1) will be approved by written procedure.

In the context of the creation of a new middle management level at the ES, two documents were presented and discussed: Draft implementing regulations for the appointment of **Assistant Deputy Directors of the ES** (2019-09-D-4-en-2) Pr/Sec) and Amendments to the staff regulations linked to the **introduction of a middle management** (2019-09-D-5-en-2). Both are authored by the DSG who explained that each school will get one Assistant Deputy Director for Primary and one for Secondary. Both are part of the school's management and will be open to seconded as well as LRT teachers. In schools with less than 1000 pupils, the posts will include a teaching assignment. The DSG then focussed on the main items which are still controversial. Could a MS propose one candidate for two posts? Would seconded teachers have automatic preference over LRT candidates? Would the inspector and staff reps be included in the preselection committee?

The Spanish Presidency explained that the issue had been at the last Board of Inspectors (BoI) meeting. Candidates can only apply for one post. The preselection committee should involve the inspector remotely online, but no staff reps as they are not involved in other selection procedures.

IP encouraged transparency in the selection process and stressed the importance of providing a career opportunity for LRTs. IP also stated its preference for an observer to be included in the pre-selection process, as well as an inspector.

The Deputy Directors called the difference in the proposed salaries for ADD Primary and ADD Secondary "completely unacceptable".

On new proposals regarding **change of languages** for students (2019-09-D-29-en-1) the SG pointed out that there had been some misunderstandings of these proposals. He explained that the proposals are not intended to change the general rules of L1, L2 and L3 changes but rather to adapt them to the new language policy. IP expressed its agreement with the option that all EU languages are in theory available for a L2 language change, within the existing rules.

OSGES proceeded to introduce a proposal for the creation of a WG for the **Harmonised Pedagogical Planning**, which emerged as desirable in discussions of the Pedagogical Reform WG. All members of the JTC agreed and expressed their interest to be involved and represented in the WG, including IP. The Inspectors explained that the WG's work should not only be about the creation of a common template but also about the harmonisation of planning as such, including for the 8 key competences.

A new document amending the **common framework for Whole School Inspections** (2019-09-D-24-en-1) has, in an effort to "focus more on teaching and learning", suggested 12 new criteria for the WSI. IP welcomed the changes and the document as such but expressed their desire for a better

involvement of parents in the process. The leading inspector responded that the common framework suggests meetings with parents, and parents' involvement in the self-evaluation of the school.

A new document on **Chinese language and culture in the ES** (2019-09-D-63-en-1) presented by the SG is aiming to renew an agreement with the Chinese mission to the EU which was signed 15 years ago and is now about to expire. The primary inspectors stated that they are not in favour of the proposal. The teachers and secondary inspectors stressed that they are in favour of promoting the Chinese language but warned about the involvement of the Chinese cultural institute (Confucius) which has recently been criticised for attempts at propaganda, notably by the Australian authorities. IP is generally in favour of renewing the previous agreement but calls on OSGES to ensure that any cooperation is based on the same principles established in the previous agreement. The students (COSUP) also stressed that only the language aspect would be positive.

The SG introduced **new regulations on Accredited European Schools** (2019-01-D-12_en-6) which he described as providing a "clear mandate". The document was welcomed in all interventions, including IP who also reminded the JTC that the aspect of competition between Type 1 and Accredited ES (AES), especially regarding attractiveness for teachers, should not be forgotten as it represents a real problem for some Type 1 schools. The SG responded that OSGES will remain attentive to the issue and make sure to draw the attention of the national authorities in charge of AES whenever there is a problem, due to, for example, the proximity of the schools.

Finally, in Other Business, IP suggested the creation of **two new WGs: - on inclusivity and tolerance at school, and on mediation at the ES** (2019-09-D-45-en-1), explaining that the first WG would seek a mandate to 1) draft a system-wide Diversity and Inclusion Charter and 2) propose the necessary measures to promote education on inclusiveness in the ES. The second WG would aim to propose modifications of the rules to implement dispute resolution procedures which are more in line with a de-escalating approach. IP explained that "we have the perception that there is a tendency to escalate conflicts which then easily lead to disciplinary action, appeals and other legal proceedings".

The European Commission (EC) stated that it does not oppose the first proposal as long as the mandate is the same as in any other WG. It had more doubts about the second proposal, particularly regarding an undefined time frame.

A subsequent discussion focussed on possible overlaps with existing WGs. The DSG volunteered to clarify the scope of the WGs for further discussion and reminded the participants that it is the JTC which will give the final mandate for the WGs if agreed.